

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE PRESIDENT
AND THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE VILLAGE OF MORTON GROVE
RICHARD T. FLICKINGER MUNICIPAL CENTER COUNCIL CHAMBERS
JUNE 25, 2024**

CALL TO ORDER

- I. Village President Dan DiMaria convened the Regular Meeting of the Village Board at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of Village Hall and led the assemblage in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- II. Village Clerk Eileen Harford called the roll. Present were Trustees Saba Khan, Rita Minx, Ashur Shiba, John Thill, Connie Travis, and Janine Witko.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- III. Mayor DiMaria asked for a motion to approve the Minutes of the June 11, 2024 Village Board Meeting and the Special Board Meeting of May 29, 2024, as presented. Trustee Minx so moved, seconded by Trustee Khan. **Motion passed via voice vote with 6 ayes, 0 nays.**

SPECIAL REPORTS

- IV.
 - a. Mayor DiMaria and Trustee Travis moved to the podium where Chief Simo and Michael Simkins, Chairman of the Fire and Police Commission introduced Detective Mike Johanson. This evening, Detective Johanson is being promoted to Sergeant. Mr. Simkins asked Mike to introduce the members of his family accompanying him this evening. Mike introduced his wife, his parents, his in-laws, and a brother and sister-in law.
 - b. Mr. Simkins provided some background on Mike: In 2008, he graduated Carroll University with a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice. He then began his career with the Morton Grove Police Department in September of 2009. After graduating the Suburban Law Enforcement Academy, he worked in the Patrol Division, and in October of 2014, was selected to join the Investigations Division as a Detective.
 - c. While in Investigations, Mike not only served the Village of Morton Grove, but as a task officer, he also assisted nearby towns and the Illinois State Police. In 2018, he became an Inspector the Illinois State Police Ruse Burglary Task Force. He was also on the North Regional Burglary Task Force, where he excelled. In 2019, Mark was promoted to the rank of Team Leader.
 - d. Mr. Simkins then stated the oath of office, and upon its conclusion, Mike's wife pinned on his badge. The Board and assemblage welcomed Sgt. Johanson enthusiastically.

V. **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

NONE

VI. **PLAN COMMISSION REPORTS**

NONE

VII. **RESIDENTS' COMMENTS (AGENDA ITEMS ONLY)**

NONE

VIII. **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

1. Mayor DiMaria announced that Morton Grove Days is taking place Wednesday, July 3 through Saturday, July 6. The event will feature a carnival, a parade, fireworks, live music, a beer garden, food, and loads of family entertainment. He encouraged everyone to celebrate the Fourth of July at Morton Grove Days! He noted that more information is available at mortongrovedays.org, especially about ways to save money by purchasing Megabands. Money-saving carnival Megabands information is also on the event website. And, new this year, on July 6, there will be a Morton Grove Days Market from 10am to 4pm.
 - a. Mayor DiMaria added that volunteers are needed for the Morton Grove Days festival. Schedules are flexible and event organizers will do all they can to meet volunteers' needs! Any amount of time a person willing to commit to is welcome!
2. Mayor DiMaria noted that, on Tuesday, August 6, from 5:30 to 8:30pm, the Morton Grove Police Department will host "National Night Out." This is a free event to enhance the relationship between residents and law enforcement while fostering a greater sense of community. It gets bigger and better every year! Family-friendly activities, entertainment, and refreshments will be available. This event takes place in the parking lot of the American Legion Memorial Civic Center, 6140 Dempster.
3. Mayor DiMaria said that the Village is seeking volunteers beyond the Morton Grove Days event. There are various events throughout the year that require volunteers. Get involved! Sign up on the Village's website or contact Village Hall.

IX. **CLERK'S REPORT**

Clerk Harford had no formal report this evening.

X. **STAFF REPORTS**

A. Village Administrator:

Mr. Czerwinski had no formal report this evening.

B. Corporation Counsel:

Corporation Counsel Liston had no formal report this evening.

XI. **TRUSTEES' REPORTS**

A. Trustee Khan:

1. Trustee Khan presented **Ordinance 24-10, Authorizing the Transfer of Funds from the Lehigh Avenue/Ferris Avenue Tax Increment Financing District to the Lincoln/Lehigh Tax Increment Financing District Within the Village of Morton Grove, Cook County, Illinois.**

- a. This is the second reading of this Ordinance.

Trustee Khan explained that the Tax Increment Allocation Redevelopment Act allows the Village to transfer funds from one TIF District to a contiguous TIF District. This Ordinance will authorize the transfer of \$2,750,000 from the Lehigh/Ferris TIF to the Lincoln/Lehigh TIF. The funds will be used to further redevelopment projects within the Lincoln/Lehigh TIF District.

Trustee Khan moved to adopt Ordinance 24-10 as presented; Trustee Witko seconded the motion.

Motion passed: 6 ayes, 0 nays.

Tr. Khan	<u>aye</u>	Tr. Minx	<u>aye</u>	Tr. Shiba	<u>aye</u>
Tr. Thill	<u>aye</u>	Tr. Travis	<u>aye</u>	Tr. Witko	<u>aye</u>

B. Trustee Minx:

Trustee Minx had no formal report this evening.

C. Trustee Shiba:

Trustee Shiba had no formal report this evening.

XI. TRUSTEES' REPORTS (continued)

D. Trustee Thill:

Trustee Thill had no formal report this evening.

E. Trustee Travis:

Trustee Travis had no formal report this evening.

F. Trustee Witko:

Trustee Witko had no formal report this evening.

XII. WARRANTS

Trustee Khan presented the Warrant Register for June 25, 2024 in the amount of \$348,012.20. She moved to approve the Warrants as presented, seconded by Trustee Shiba.

Motion passed: 6 ayes, 0 nays.

Tr. Khan	<u>aye</u>	Tr. Minx	<u>aye</u>	Tr. Shiba	<u>aye</u>
Tr. Thill	<u>aye</u>	Tr. Travis	<u>aye</u>	Tr. Witko	<u>aye</u>

XIII. OTHER BUSINESS

Mayor DiMaria said, as this is Mr. Czerwinski's final Board Meeting, that many people wanted to speak in tribute to the departing Village Administrator.

1. First, he introduced **Habeeb Quadri and Mazhar Khan**, speaking on behalf of the MCC. Mr. Quadri said the MCC includes Skokie, parts of Chicago, Glenview, and Morton Grove. He thanked the village for letting him speak tonight, and thanked the Board for coming to the MCC's Food and Fun Fair. He also thanked the Public Works Department, Fire Department, and Police Department for having interactions with the Muslim community.
 - a. Mr. Quadri said there are three things he's learned from Mr. Czerwinski over the past 20 years. First, he is always open to having a discussion. Second, he is always open to finding solutions to any problem. And third, he makes decisions that are the right thing to do, not the popular thing to do. He thanked Ralph and said he very much appreciated the friendship and partnership Ralph's had with the Muslim community. He said he was asking God to protect Ralph, guide him, and bless him and his family. Mr. Quadri gifted Ralph with a beautiful plaque.

XIII.

OTHER BUSINESS (continued)

2. Next, Mayor DiMaria introduced Debbie Manno, representing the Morton Grove Chamber of Commerce. She presented Mr. Czerwinski with a Certificate of Honor, in recognition of his exemplary service to the people and government of Morton Grove, upon his retirement as Village Administrator, and previous service as Fire Chief. She thanked him for all his years of service.
3. Mayor DiMaria said that next up will be some acknowledgements from Village staff members. He said Ralph will long be remembered for his outstanding service to the Village of Morton Grove, and the legacy of hard work and commitment he leaves behind. Mayor DiMaria added, "A mayor, a board, an organization, is only as good as the people they surround themselves with—or hire." Ralph has led the Village to many successes—just to name a few, Sawmill Station (Mayor DiMaria's vision; Ralph got it done); Moretti's (Ralph got it done); the Morton Grove-Niles Water Commission (Ralph got it done).
 - a. Mayor DiMaria said that Ralph has always made his job easy and always has made him look good, adding "I can't imagine having any or all the successes we've had as a Village Board for the last eleven and a half years without Ralph as my right-hand man." Mayor DiMaria then invited the staff to acknowledge Ralph.
4. Ralph Ensign, the Fire Chief, thanked Ralph Czerwinski from bringing him on board. He noted that Ralph C. had started his career in Morton Grove in 1975 as a Firefighter. He quickly rose through the ranks and became Fire Chief in 1990. Over the next 13 years, he transformed the department into the professional, well-trained, service-oriented organization it remains today. Ralph C. was instrumental in creating the Northern Illinois Public Safety Training Academy (NIPSTA), developing the Regional Emergency Dispatch Center (RED Center)—which is still used today—and leading the Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS) Division 3. He directed the remodeling of Fire Station #4 and solidified his reputation of being a strategic, innovative, caring, and hands-on leader, always guided by the core values of the MG Fire Department: adaptability, confidence, and vision.
5. Next, Chief Mike Simo of the Police Department said that, to him, Ralph was a great Village Administrator, because, as a retired Fire Chief, he understands "public safety" from all sides. He said "we kid each other because that's what cops and firemen do, but it's always based on mutual respect, and I always knew he would get us what we need." Chief Simo said Ralph took on several projects that benefitted the Police Department, and some required a departure from the traditional way of doing things here. He said, "Ralph listened to our ideas and funding plans, and trusted our judgment that they were the best thing for the Police Department." He was able to balance the cost of doing business with thoughtful and cautious use of the Village's budget. Chief Simo said, "I always felt like he was a partner, rather than "the boss," and expressed his appreciation of that relationship. He said his philosophy is "Don't be sorry that it's over, be glad it happened." He said he was glad it happened, and hoped that Ralph was too.
6. Mike Lukich, Director of Public Works, said he was speaking on behalf of the wonderful Public Works Department. He said, during Ralph's tenure as Village Administrator, he was a key component in the Public Works Department maintaining its outstanding reputation for public service.

XIII.

OTHER BUSINESS (continued)

- a. During Ralph's tenure, he worked with three separate Directors. Ralph ensured the Department's "resident focus" and "can-do" approach to snow plowing, street maintenance, tree trimming, and water service remained the pride of the Morton Grove community. Ralph's mission-focused leadership style was key to the Department's success. Ralph provided valuable support for transitioning the Village's water supply from the City of Chicago to the City of Evanston. He assisted in the construction of and made sure the Oakton Street multi-use path was completed successfully. Ralph witnessed the reconstruction and resurfacing of numerous streets and underground utilities throughout the Village. He also improved the Public Works facility and upgraded the Department's equipment. Ralph has also fostered the Village's sustainability efforts, and many other numerous initiatives to continuously improve the Village of Morton Grove. Mr. Lukich offered his thanks and that of the Public Works Department as he congratulated Ralph on a job well done.
7. Zoe Heidorn, Assistant Village Administrator recounted that, immediately upon becoming Village Administrator, Ralph initiated the Village's efforts to stabilize its water rates, which had skyrocketed over the last decade. Ralph worked with the Village of Niles to evaluate alternative water suppliers before choosing Evanston and spearheading efforts to negotiate a long-term water purchase agreement between Evanston, Morton Grove, and Niles. Ralph was instrumental in forming the Morton Grove-Niles Water Commission and establishing intergovernmental operating agreements for the Commission. The Commission then engaged with engineers to develop plans to construct a supply system to transport the water from Evanston to Morton Grove and Niles. Ralph led efforts to route the system through streets in Morton Grove, purchasing land and constructing a booster station—a state-of-the-art reservoir. This \$100 million project includes the reconstruction of miles of obsolete Village streets, and was financed with low-rate IEPA financing and long-term bonds—without raising water rates. The savings to Morton Grove and Niles from this project are estimated to be \$240 million over the next 50 years.
 - a. Ms. Heidorn continued, stating that, decades ago, Morton Grove was known for its restaurants, but by 2000, many of the popular restaurants had closed, causing residents to clamor for new dining opportunities. During his term as Village Administrator, Ralph prioritized the Village's efforts to attract new restaurants and assisted existing Morton Grove restaurants to stay open, especially during the COVID pandemic. These efforts resulted in the opening of popular restaurants such as Moretti's, Coopers Hawk, Tava, and Boba Burger. Ralph facilitated the reopening of nationally-known Burt's Place, and supported the retention of popular restaurants including Pequod's, Kappy's, Giordano's, and the Bringer Inn. Ms. Heidorn concluded with a heartfelt "thank you, Ralph."
8. Brandon Nolin, Community Development Administrator, introduced himself, as he's only been with the Village since January, and said he's "the new Zoe." In spite of the short length of time he's been with the Village, he said it took him about 30 minutes to realize a fraction of Ralph's impact. He said it's impressive and inspirational. Ralph served as lead negotiator and spokesperson for the Village's efforts to attract and retain quality businesses to provide desired products and services to residents and visitors, as well as needed property and sales taxes. Ralph managed the highly successful Lehigh-Ferris TIF District, which is expected to add \$1 million per year in tax revenue to local public schools.

XIII.

OTHER BUSINESS (continued)

- a. Ralph also managed the Sawmill Station TIF and the Lincoln-Lehigh TIF, both of which will have short- and long-term positive impacts on the Village. He streamlined permit processing and updated building and development codes, improved construction standards and made it easier to do business with the Village. Ralph's fiscal responsibility in economic development initiatives helped increase sales tax revenue and equalized assessed value, while improving the Village's overall financial health. Brandon concluded by saying he's already learned a lot from Ralph, and wishes he'd known him longer.

9. Jim English, Building Department, said for years, the 26-acre shopping center at the southeast corner of Dempster and Waukegan, sat in decay. The Canadian owner of the property had decided it was not financially advantageous to invest in the shopping center, and filled it with sub-par tenants. After unsuccessfully trying to renegotiate a development agreement with the owner, Ralph implemented a strategy of issuing citations for all the non-compliant conditions in the center, forcing the owner to sell it to a new developer. Today, as a result of Ralph's efforts, Sawmill Station is a popular destination for residents and visitors, offering luxury apartments, an Amazon Fresh grocery store, a modern fitness center, clothing stores, service facilities, and restaurants. Jim thanked Ralph on behalf of the Building Department, saying, "Thanks for the last eight years."

10. Hanna Sullivan, Finance Director, said that Ralph has improved the financial position of the Village by implementing a number of measures. Through economic development, he increased revenue while controlling expenses, which increased the Village's reserves. He increased funding for Village pensions and paid down Village debt. He increased the Village's equalized assessed value by 65%, from \$696M to \$1.06B. All of these measures have stabilized the Village's bond rating, which will put the Village in the best position to facilitate future funding for a much needed Village Hall and Police Station.
 - a. Hanna added, Ralph has revamped the budget process and budget document to be more user-friendly. He has secured multiple grant awards for capital improvements. He transitioned the Village's private pension to IRMF, which will save the Village money long-term, while making it easier to attract qualified municipal employees. Ralph has positioned the Village to face future challenges. Hanna thanked Ralph for his guidance and support, and said she will miss collaborating and problem-solving with him.

11. Tom Friel, Assistant to the Village Administrator, spoke next. He said he's known Ralph for 39 years; in fact, Ralph was Tom's first lieutenant in the fire service. Tom noted that the coronavirus disease was implicated in almost seven million deaths worldwide, from 2020 to 2023. Sixty of those deaths occurred in Morton Grove. He said Ralph's leadership skills went into overdrive during this period. His priorities included ensuring first responders had adequate personal protective equipment, safeguarding employees' health, providing paid furlough and work-at-home options for some employees, and promoting the enforcement of social distancing guidelines. Ralph worked tirelessly to provide current, comprehensive information to residents and businesses. He implemented creative new policies, like outdoor seating, so that local restaurants could stay open and safely serve the public. Tom told Ralph, "Well done!"

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OTHER BUSINESS (continued)

12. Boyle Wong, Technology and Communications, said Ralph was instrumental in completing the Village's 2015 Strategic Plan and its 2023 update. He was also involved in developing the Village's new logo and tagline "Incredibly Close. Amazingly Open." In response to resident surveys, Ralph initiated a variety of community events and activities including Neighborhood Outreach meetings, the Adopt-a-Planter Program, Community Garage Sale, Community Cleanup Day, and the Sustainability Expo. Ralph also took a lead role in continuing and expanding traditional events, such as Morton Grove Days and Santa Comes to Town. Ralph improved resident communication through reverse 911 calls and enhanced newsletters and periodic informational postcards. Ralph expanded eNews and the Village's social media presence, and developed a comprehensive resident handbook. Anecdotally, Boyle said, in a department head meeting several years ago, Ralph had told everyone that if request came to him without the new Village logo, it would be immediately denied. And although it seems rather severe, Boyle said that Ralph recognized that perception matters, quality matters, and consistency matters, in small things and in large things. And THAT is a good thing!

13. Terry Liston, Corporation Counsel for the Village, spoke next. She said Ralph's public service extended well beyond his professional achievements. After 9/11, he organized a "Lest We Forget" fundraiser to support the families of fallen first responders. After Hurricane Katrina, he spearheaded a community-wide effort, getting all of the different organizations of the community together to raise funds for the people of Slidell, Louisiana. Ralph has been honored by the Chamber of Commerce as its VIP; he has served as Treasurer of the Illinois Fire Safety Alliance; served on the Board of Directors of the United Way of Skokie Valley; and served as President of the Rotary Club of Skokie Valley. Terry said Ralph volunteered countless hours on the Board of the Morton Grove Foundation, including acting as its Chairperson, managing the Queen of Hearts raffle, and serving as the Chairperson of the second most successful Taste of Morton Grove in the Village's history.
 - a. Terry said, the work of a vibrant community like ours is never ending, but Ralph leaves the Village positioned for more success. He has laid the groundwork to ensure the Village's financial health. He has mentored and supported the next generation of community leaders. He completed the architectural plans for the new Metra station and the adjacent Gateway Plaza, which will be built within the next year. He has negotiated contracts for the purchase of the Fifth Third Bank property, an under-utilized property which can and should be turned into a repurposed Village Hall and Police Station. Terry added, "Most importantly, Ralph has instilled a sense of community and pride throughout the Village. He has led by example and challenged all of us to be better. He's melded us—all different personalities, all different talents—into a winning team, and under the Mayor and Board of Trustees, with Ralph's leadership, this team has accomplished success for this Village which will be felt by and improve the lives of our residents for generations to come. For this, and so much more, we are grateful."

14. Terry told Ralph that this presentation has been turned into a keepsake book for him, and she asked Mayor DiMaria to join her at the podium. Mayor DiMaria presented the bound book, titled "What Gets Measured Gets Accomplished," (a favorite saying of Ralph's), as a tribute to him from the Board, the staff, and the residents of Morton Grove. Mayor DiMaria and Mike Lukich also gave Ralph what the mayor called "the longest street sign in the Village." It's a street sign that will be installed at Capulina & School Street, and at Capulina & Austin Avenue, reading Ralph E. Czerwinski Way.

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OTHER BUSINESS (continued)

Mayor DiMaria said that the members of the Board of Trustees also have some remarks.

15. Trustee Khan told Ralph, "As you retire, we want to take a moment to express our heartfelt gratitude for your many years of dedicated service. Your commitment, hard work, and unwavering dedication has truly been inspiring. Your presence has made a lasting impact on all of us, and on every soul that you have touched during your career here. Over the years, you have not only achieved remarkable milestones, but also set a high standard of excellence and integrity." She wished Ralph's successor, Chuck Meyer, good luck, noting that Ralph raised the bar for him. She said, "Ralph, as you embark on this new journey, we wish you health, happiness, and fulfillment in all your future endeavors. You will be greatly missed by all of us. Congratulations on having the longest street sign, and thank you once again for everything you've done for Morton Grove."
16. Trustee Minx said she's known Ralph for almost 20 years. Ralph's been an advisor, a mentor, a colleague, a co-worker, and above all, a friend. She said, "Ralph's can-do attitude is something I've learned and carried with me through all my years of service in the Villages I have worked for and served as a trustee. You are compassionate, ready to lend a helping hand, and to jump in and problem solve wherever you're needed. I've never seen you with less than a dozen things happening at once!" Trustee Minx wished Ralph and Michelle a long, fun-filled retirement doing all the things he never had time to do when he was working. She thanked Ralph for being there for her, the Village employees, and the residents. She said, "You're one heck of a guy, and we will miss you."
17. Trustee Shiba said that he's been here the shortest time, but has learned a lot from Ralph. He loved being able to drop in and have discussions with Ralph. Trustee Shiba said he was truly honored to have worked with Ralph, and was proud to have had Ralph as a mentor and a friend.
18. Terry Liston said to Ralph, it's almost 30 years ago that we met. You were sitting there; I was sitting here, listening to a room full of people talking about how wonderful you are. 30 years later, and here we are again. Tonight is a night for me to show respect and regard, and thank you. I try to imagine how it'll be, working without out. Every document I've every submitted, you've changed. Every suggestion I've made, you took some and made them better. It was always "how do we make this better?" Terry said she remembered one of Ralph's pet sayings—If you take your hand out of a bucket of water, the water fills in." She did some research and learned that it was part of a poem about great but humble leaders, and that General and President Dwight D. Eisenhower kept it in his pocket, and read it to the crowd at the 20th anniversary of D-Day. She told Ralph, "Because of you, we have what it takes to be successful. Because of you, we have what it takes to move the Village forward. And you should know that you've done a good job. You're entitled to and deserve this retirement." Terry read the poem and said the moral of it is "Do the best you can. Be proud of yourself. Remember, there's no indispensable man."
19. Trustee Thill told Ralph, "You've raised your family probably as much as you raised this Village." He said, "We're all familiar with your major accomplishments that have come to fruition under your tenure as Village Manager. You could have been the CEO of a Fortune 500 company! Some of the areas that haven't yet been mentioned are:

XIII.

OTHER BUSINESS (continued)

- The “Dream Team” that you have assembled and guided over the last nine years: Mike Simo, Ralph Ensign, Mike Lukich, Zoe Heidorn, Tom Friel, Terry Liston, Hanna Sullivan, Boyle Wong, Jim English, Brandon Nolan, and Saba Koya. Also 73 Police Department personnel; 46 Fire Department personnel, 54 Public Works personnel, and 20 staff members in Village Hall—that’s approximately 193 people you’ve been the CEO of over the last nine years.
 - Your model of gathering information: Listening to all sides and then consulting with your staff to arrive at a solution was an uncanny road to success. Other people should follow this example.
 - When COVID hit, the Niles Twp. Food Bank had to close. You came up with a solution to keep food pantries open during COVID.”
- a. Trustee Thill said, the other night at Ralph’s retirement party, he had had a conversation with a person who had worked with Hanna at the Village of Winnetka. This person said he learned a lot about finance from Ralph. Trustee Thill said, “Many days, you were the one turning the lights on in the office in the morning and turning them off at night. Your commitment to the Village and its residents is unmatched.” The Village’s finances were in trouble; but Ralph and Hanna righted that ship and got the Village’s bond rating raised several times. The relationships we had with other governing bodies in the Village were strained when you came on board. Not only have they improved, we’re now working together! Schools were complaining that our Village is “too” successful. The enrollment is going up. The best thing that our Mayor has ever done was to bring you on board. The mayor’s a good salesman—there’s no doubt about it—but it was you who took the reins, and turned his ideas into reality.” Trustee Thill said he used to tell people that they couldn’t find Morton Grove on a map; and it was true. You’d see a lot of other municipalities, but not Morton Grove. He told Ralph, “YOU put us on the map.”
 - b. Trustee Thill thanked Ralph’s wife and children for their patience and for sharing him with the Village for all these years. He told Ralph, “You are still young enough and healthy enough, so enjoy your retirement.” He mentioned he had told his wife, “Ralph let me down on only one thing in all these years.” It was something Trustee Thill had brought up years before, namely, that all dwellings should display their address on the front of their house to help first responders ensure they were getting to the right house. Ralph had told him, “It’ll get done, but we’ve got a lot of other things to take care of first.” Trustee Thill said, the day after he’d mentioned this to his wife; he received the Village newsletter....and within it was a little article stating that people should be putting their address on the front of their house to help emergency vehicles in identifying where they need to be. He thanked Ralph, and led the Board and assemblage in singing “For He’s a Jolly Good Fellow.”
20. Trustee Travis said her appreciation for Ralph is endless. She told him, ‘Your immense patience, your willingness to listen and understand, and your ability to problem solve had been a model of leadership.’ She also thanked him for his constant communication, noting “it has truly helped me to have the necessary information to make informed decisions in my role as Trustee.” She cited Ralph’s hard work and dedication, and that fact that he always put the Village first. She said his deep knowledge of the community has guided the Board through any challenges we may have faced.

XIII.

OTHER BUSINESS (continued)

- a. Trustee Travis told Ralph, “Your contributions to the Village have made a lasting impact and for that, I am profoundly grateful. As a lifelong resident, I couldn’t be prouder of Morton Grove today, thanks in part to your time as Village Administrator.” She said she was thankful that Ralph’s family shared him with the Village, and was happy knowing that now he’ll be able to spend more time with them. She extended best wishes for Ralph’s retirement, and thanked him again for everything he’s done for the Village of Morton Grove.

21. Trustee Witko expressed her deepest gratitude to Ralph for his years of service to the Village. She said, as a Trustee, she has had the privilege of working closely with Ralph in his Administrator role, and said “your guidance and support have made my role significantly easier.” She added, “What I appreciate most about you is not just your willingness to answer my questions, but your patient efforts to make sure I truly understood the complexities of each issue we faced. Your ability to teach goes beyond simply providing information. You imparted a deeper understanding that has been invaluable to me.” She said Ralph’s leadership has left an indelible mark on the Village, and his absence will surely be felt. She told him, “You have my utmost respect and gratitude, and I thank you once again for everything you’ve done for our community. Enjoy your retirement!”

22. Clerk Harford said, “For years, you have tirelessly served our Village, always doing what was right for the community. You’ve worn many hats, both as the Fire Chief and twice as Village Administrator. Your leadership and dedication have left an indelible mark on our Village. Personally, you guided me in the role of Village Clerk with wisdom and patience. But what stands out the most for me are your kindness, compassion, and the sincere friendship you showed my dad in his final years as Mayor. That will never be forgotten. As you embark on the next chapter of your life, I hope your retirement is filled with relaxation, enjoyment, discovery, and special moments with the people who mean the most to you. Your presence in the Village will be dearly missed, but your legacy will continue to inspire all of us. Congratulations!”

23. Mayor DiMaria, said, “Obviously, I agree with everything that’s been said tonight.” He said that he, Ralph, and Terry Liston shared a special relationship. He said, “All of the successes people see come from Ralph getting it done. When I ran for mayor, I had big dreams for Morton Grove—crazy dreams.” He said he assessed things at Village Hall for the first few months and decided he needed someone who could get those dreams fulfilled and execute what he needed to be done. He felt that was the only way he and the Village Board could be successful. Only one person came to mind, and that was Ralph Czerwinski. Ralph knew how to run the Village; he knew the departments, he had the experience—he was the perfect fit for the Mayor’s administration and for the Board at that time and the Boards to come. The mayor said, “You always think you know what to do, but then things come up, like COVID, like the Highland Park shooting. And then you need to make decisions quickly. Ralph helped make my job easier in those times—the toughest times of my administration. I’d call him and we’d put together a game plan, and of course, he always knew how to execute it. He knew what we needed to do to make sure the Village was functioning safely and we could go about our daily business with minimal impact.” Anything he or the Board needed to get done, he’d call Ralph, and Ralph would get it done.

XIII.

OTHER BUSINESS (continued)

- a. Mayor DiMaria said “Ralph is very detailed. He’s a “dot the I, cross the T” kind of guy. I’m not. To have that balance—that’s what worked for us. Same thing when I’d meet with Terry. The three of us weren’t always on the same page, but the goal and the mission was our commonality. Then Ralph would be the person to execute the plan, and he did it, time and time again.” He gave a football analogy, saying to Ralph, If this was the NFL, you’d be three things: the General Manager, the Coach, and the punter, because you know how to punt!” Thank you for the hours and hours you were here. If it was needed, you were getting it done.” Mayor DiMaria also thanked Ralph’s family, saying they had sacrificed a lot, and, with the assemblage, gave them a round of applause.
 - b. Mayor DiMaria told Ralph, “The admiration and respect your peers in other municipalities have for you is incredible! You don’t even know how many times I’ve been told how lucky we are to have you. Whenever I’d walk into an event with you, I held my head high, know that I had the best in the game. You’ve made me better, and—I can’t say it enough—everything you see here is because Ralph knew how to get it done.” The mayor said, “Chuck, if you’re watching, you have some huge shoes to fill. But don’t try to fill them! If your shoes are half the size of Ralph’s, we’re going to be just fine. So, thank you for everything...love you!”
24. Ralph addressed the room. He said, “I had no idea about this. We were supposed to have a short meeting. THIS has been mind-blowing!” He said, “Life is a wonderful thing. And we’re all enjoying it. There are aspects of it. A personal aspect that’s fulfilled with family and friends and cohorts and relationships.” He recounted how, in 1975, Mary Jo LeBeau had called him and told him to come in to have a physical. And he got hired! He said, ““Professionally, I have been so lucky. There I was, 50 years ago, riding on the back of the rig, which was really cool. You get an alarm, you get things done. You get a minute and a half to get on the rig, you’ve got three minutes to get to the fire, and you’ve got to make quick decisions.” There’s nothing like that when you’re the Village Administrator. Nothing’s burning; nobody’s dying, let’s slow down and figure out the right thing to do. Ralph said, “I’m really blessed in having two worlds, one in the fire service, which was a heck of a lot of fun, moving up through the ranks, good comrades, and good staff.” He thanked Mary Jo for all the times she “carried” him in his early years, and gave her a round of applause.
- a. Ralph recalled of the Boards he’s worked with, noting that the current Board is the most cohesive he’s seen. He said all of the Village Boards have done positive things for the community. He said he was talking with Terri about the number of Board meetings he’s attended over the years. And even taking out the years in Skokie, he’s probably been at 700+ Board meetings. And every one of them have been moving this community forward, by people who are very interested in this community, and filling these seats (he gestured to the dais). He said hopefully, in the next few years, you’ll have new seats in a new Village Hall, which would be well-deserved. He said all of the mayors and the boards have done things to build a solid foundation for Morton Grove, but none more than this Mayor and Board. Ralph thanked the Mayor and the Board for the latitude they’ve given him, and the guidance, and above all, the trust. The trust they’ve given to the department heads, the trust they’ve given to the employees, with their “get it done” attitude. He said, “You have a great staff. Great people in the right places at the right time. We’re not the richest community. But we ARE the richest community in heart and soul.”

XIII. OTHER BUSINESS (continued)

- b. Ralph said, "People look at Morton Grove and get a flavor of Mayberry, but also a flavor of moving forward. We are thin-staffed. At every level, everyone wears multiple hats. But, we are also great-staffed."
- c. Ralph addressed his family. "You guys are great. Always supportive. Understanding when I've missed family events." He said, "I really appreciate the opportunities you've given me to fulfill my dreams." These dreams started in the '70's when he decided Municipal Government was where he wanted to be. He said he can remember walking into his office in Niles for the first time. Ralph said he's been blessed by working with some great communities, but none better than Morton Grove. He told the Board, "Don't count me out. I'm going to watch what's going on. And I'll probably have some comments....but they'll all be positive and supportive to this great Village of Morton Grove. Thank you."

XIV. RESIDENTS' COMMENTS

NONE

XV. ADJOURNMENT

Trustee Minx moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Trustee Witko. **Motion passed unanimously via voice vote.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:07 p.m.

PASSED this 9th day of July, 2024.

Trustee Khan	<u>Aye</u>
Trustee Minx	<u>Aye</u>
Trustee Shiba	<u>Aye</u>
Trustee Thill	<u>Aye</u>
Trustee Travis	<u>Aye</u>
Trustee Witko	<u>Aye</u>

APPROVED by me this 9th day of July, 2024.



Daniel P. DiMaria, Village President
Board of Trustees, Morton Grove, Illinois

APPROVED and FILED in my office this 10th day of July, 2024.



Eileen Harford, Village Clerk
Village of Morton Grove, Cook County, Illinois

Minutes by Teresa Cousar