

**Village of Germantown Hills  
Village Board Meeting Minutes  
September 19, 2024, 6:00 p.m.**

**1. Call to Order/Roll Call/Pledge of Allegiance-** Karl Figg Village President called the meeting to order at 6:00p.m. The meeting was held at the fire house at 313 Prairie Avenue.

Village President/Trustees	Roll Call	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11 - 18
Karl Figg – President	Present		Y									
Heather Armistead	Present	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y						
Elizabeth Cunningham		-	-	-	Y	Y						
Nathan Henricks	Present	Y	P	Y	Y	Y						
Tom Eckstein	Present	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y						
Paige Patel	Present	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y						
Todd Rice	Present	Y	N	Y	Y	Y						

Also, in attendance:

Bill Streeter, Village Attorney

Emily Munday, Village Engineer

Chuck Urban, Village Attorney

Zack Hecht, Public Works

Scott DeSplinter, Village Engineer

Everyone stood and said the Pledge of Allegiance.

**2. Minutes Approval**

**a. August 15, 2024, Village Board Meeting**

A motion was made by Nathan Henricks to approve August 15, 2024, Village Board meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Paige Patel. Motion passed #1.

**3. Public Comments on Any Action Item on the Agenda-**Karl Figg stated he was going to open up the public comment portion of the meeting, and stated the following:

The Village started having discussions about Somerset back in 2011 when a resident came to the board with concerns about motorists speeding on Somerset.

The board has been working with the school and sheriff’s office for years on different solutions to the motorist speeding on Somerset problem which have included increased police presence to monitor kids walking and riding their bikes to school along with extra police patrols for the speeding concerns. The village worked with the school on sending out a notice to parents about the speeding of vehicles and pedestrian safety along Somerset Drive. There has also been coordination with IDOT on the timing of the stop lights to help at the crosswalk and getting the kids safely across Rt. 116. The village has also tried installing temporary radar signs and speed humps along Somerset. Despite all of these efforts, motorists’ activities continue to endanger the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists

There have been approximately 20 public village meetings, which include village board meetings, and street and police committee meetings, during which issues on Somerset in regard to safety of the kids and the traffic have been discussed. Notice of each meeting with the agenda items was posted and published in advance of each of the meetings.

The project limits are from the corner of Westminster Avenue to Arbor Vitae Drive. The path does not extend any further into Coventry Farm Subdivision.

The corner of Westminster was identified as the point where the path would begin due to all of the children that funnel to Somerset. Many children come from the subdivisions immediately to the west of Somerset, and Somerset is a primary route used by the children to walk and bike to school.

The construction and finished project will be within the public right of way and within an existing utility easement reserved for the use of the Village of Germantown Hills and for all public and private utility companies. The public right of way is 80' wide for most of this portion of Somerset Drive. This right-of-way area is not owned by the homeowners but is the village's property to use for utility companies and public improvements.

There are no new temporary or permanent easements needed for the project.

The village met with 10 of the 11 residents along this portion of Somerset in December last year to discuss the location of the improvement and answer questions from each property owner.

There is a grant in the amount of \$670,000.

Due to extra time, delays and resources that have been put into the project, along with inflation, the project cost has gone up and local funds will be utilized that have been set aside for such projects.

Thankfully the village is in a position where local funds can be utilized from existing Village assets for the benefit of our community. A property tax increase related to this project will not be required.

The village has a comprehensive plan which was adopted on July 24, 2014, by the village board. The Plan identifies the key issues of importance for the community, with sidewalks being a priority.

One of the goals of the comprehensive plan is to enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods

As part of the Comprehensive Plan process, a community survey was conducted by the Tri-County Planning Commission. The survey results showed:

- The comprehensive plan identified 64.1% of respondents wanted the village to spend more on bike accommodations.

- 77.2% of respondents rated sidewalks for pedestrian and bicycle accommodations as poor or very poor within the community.

- 79.4% said if they could change their neighborhood, they would add sidewalks or bike accommodations.

Karl Figg explained the rules for the public comment period as this will not be a question-and-answer period, but each person may speak up to two times for a total of five minutes.

The following residents were in attendance and made a public comment: Randy Perau, Alex Jackson, Melissa Ricketts, Nicole Wilson, Angie Agatucci, Damien Cruse, Stephanie Cruse, Don Blue, Kitty Cullett, Jim Johanningsmeier, Melanie Meisner, Julie Hodges, Darlene Ford, Terry Wilmarth, Cathy Leach, Barbara Ferris, Dan Mair, Scott Hough, Don Durrand, Randy Nash, Angela White, Angie Carlson, Richard Carlson, Jim O’Laughlin, and Marty Clinch.

- 4. **Public Comments on Any Non-Action Items**-Karl Figg noted the same rules apply for the public comment period on any non-action item.

Nicole Wilson, Sue Davis, Alex Jackson and Randy Perau made a public comment.

#### 5. **Current Agenda Items**

- a. **Approval of the Appointment to fill the Village Board Trustee Vacancy**  
Deferred

- b. **Approval to Award the Contract for the Somerset Multi-Use Path to the Apparent Low Bidder**

Heather Armistead stated she is supportive of the path and will be voting to award the contract and go forward with the path. She noted she appreciates the input from all our residents during the past few months – during board meetings, via email, phone calls, and through individual conversations. Although clearly our residents are not unanimous in support, she believes that the majority of residents support the path and that she is representing the majority of the village with her vote. She believes there is a high risk of a child getting injured with the current situation and that we need to solve that problem, as quickly as we are able to. She has listened carefully to the questions and challenges from our residents – this input has caused her to ask more questions and follow up until she understood the constraints, the options and the tradeoffs. She noted there’s not a perfect solution here but is satisfied that we have reached the solution that will do the best for the most number of residents. Heather stated she wishes we could have had a little better public debate on this issue but unfortunately the pending litigation has prevented the board from having the open discussion the board would have liked.

Heather stated she would like to take the opportunity to clarify a few things. The project is costing more than we thought but the grant, which we submitted based on an early estimate, will cover \$670k. The village will pay the additional \$540k with local funds. The additional cost is driven by 3 things:

- 1) There was more complexity in the drainage and the design than we first estimated. We had to submit the grant before the detailed engineering was completed so we didn’t know that then.
- 2) Additional design cost was required to keep all elements fully within the right-way when it became clear that some of the homeowners along Somerset were not going to work with us as we thought, and
- 3) Generally higher construction costs, which is a nationwide challenge.

Heather noted she believes this project is necessary and believes that if it prevents a child from being hurt, it will have been worth it.

In regard to the design of the path. It could be a 6' sidewalk which was an option that was considered but there isn't a substantial cost difference, it's only about 5% less. The impact to the residents along Somerset would be less that is important and worth careful consideration.

Heather noted considering the tradeoffs, this design is the right one. There are ~80 kids that pass along Somerset each morning and more in the evening. A mix of walkers and bike-riders. A wide path to prevent collisions and 5' green space to keep them well away from the road and act as a soft-landing zone for bike falls is not only in alignment with recommended design best practice and safety recommendations, but it makes sense.

Heather noted this board has no plans to extend the path further on Somerset or anywhere else in Coventry Farm. The map that was in the grant proposal was to give us a better chance for the grant. There are no other hidden agendas at play here. This is about our kids safety.

Heather stated she is proud to be a part of this board that was able to bring \$670k of grant money to our village to improve the safety of our community at a reasonable cost to our residents. She thanked all our residents who cared enough to make their views known. She believes this is the right thing to do and will be voting to award the bid and proceed with the project.

Nathan Henricks stated he looked at the distance from his house and he would be more than happy to put a sidewalk/path in his front yard. The board looked at the costs and the difference in the cost of an 8' sidewalk or a 6' sidewalk which is approximately \$45,000. The village has been working on this since 2011, so a lot of time and energy has gone into the project. This is a main thoroughfare for the kids and the village's comprehensive plan shows the community is in favor of more sidewalks, so he is in favor of this.

Tom Eckstein stated he has been on the board for several years now and he did his due diligence to look at all of the discussions specifically he reviewed all of the minutes over the years. This area on Somerset is where all of the kids congregate, and this is about the safety of the kids and getting the kids off the street. He also said that he listened to law enforcement that confirmed it was a safety issue.

Karl Figg noted his concern is about the kids and getting the bikes off the street. If the sidewalk is narrower, you can't capture the bike traffic. also mentioned the little girl that had broken her arm because of having to avoid a car riding her bike. Karl stated last week two boys on bicycles were almost hit by a car along Somerset.

Paige Patel stated that even though she wasn't elected it doesn't mean that she doesn't care about the community and that she hadn't done her research. She did her due diligence in looking through the information and listening to residents of the community. This path will help to improve the community and provide safety for our residents and children going to and from school.

Todd Rice stated he has been on the board the longest. He noted there have been a lot of committee and board meetings that have been open to the public. They are all on the

village's website. There have been comments about the pedestrian bridge/tunnel and MTCO Park. Both are school related items. He encouraged the residents to go to the school board meetings to learn more about them.

He noted there have been questions about Rt. 116 and speed limits. Residents can go to the school board meetings or call IDOT.

Todd noted a sidewalk is something that needs to be done. The village has had the sheriff out there and felt we have done a number of things, and the next step is getting the kids off of the road. He noted all the kids walk that way. He stated he still has questions about the design but without the 5' buffer it increases the village's liability, so where is that balance. The village can't construct a regular sidewalk there because you have to have the storm sewer to handle the drainage.

Washington has a path that was put close to the street, but this was done prior to some newer design standards. The Somerset path design standard was discussed. Scott DeSplinter from CMT explained the design standard and also how the design changed for the crosswalk over Arbor Vitae. Bill Streeter confirmed that by not following the design standard you could be taking on additional liability.

A motion was made by Heather Armistead to Approve to Award the Contract for the Somerset Multi-Use Path to the Apparent Low Bidder. The motion was seconded by Paige Patel. Motion passed #2.

### **Approval of the Appointment to fill the Village Board Trustee Vacancy**

Karl Figg stated Stephanie Chaon had sold her house, so she had to resign from the village board once that happened. Karl Figg as Village President is to appoint someone to fill the vacancy. Karl had communication with six individuals on the vacancy.

Karl Figg made the appointment of Elizabeth Cunningham to fill the vacancy. Karl explained that she is a retired teacher, lives in Whispering Oaks, is very passionate about the community and wants to be able to give back to the community.

A motion was made by Nathan Henricks to approve the appointment of Elizabeth Cunningham to fill the village board trustee vacancy left by Stephanie Chaon. The motion was seconded by Tom Eckstein. Motion passed #3.

Elizabeth Cunningham was sworn in by the village clerk.

## **6. Ongoing Agenda Items**

**a. Village Board review of the Journal Entry Report-**The journal entries are the revenues and transfers entered each month. The journal report was reviewed by the board.

## **7. Presentation of Bills**

**a. General/Sewer/Audit/Business District/MFT Bills-** A motion was made by Heather Armistead to approve the General, Sewer and Audit bills. The motion was seconded by Tom Eckstein. Motion passed #4.

## **8. Reports of Standing Committees**

**a. Finance-**The journal report was presented for review.

**b. Streets/Equipment**-Todd Rice stated we may need to look at Townhall Road drainage with the recent construction.

**c. Personnel**-Nathan Henricks stated the staff is doing well.

**d. Police**-Paige Patel had nothing new to report.

**e. Parks**-Heather Armistead stated the grant had been submitted for J.R. White Park Redevelopment. There is a bad tree at the park that will be removed. The Oak Grove Park trail construction will be starting soon.

**f. Sewer**-Nathan Henricks noted he will be looking to schedule a sewer committee meeting soon.

**g. Storm Water**-Tom Eckstein stated he will be scheduling a stormwater committee meeting soon.

**h. Economic Development Council**-. Ann Doubet noted at the Chamber meeting there were updates on the fall garage sales, Trunk or Treat on October 26<sup>th</sup> at Little Oaks Daycare and the Community Prayer Breakfast will be held on November 13<sup>th</sup>. The Boys of Fall event will be on Saturday, at Black Partridge Park. The Chamber toured the new MTCO Park.

**9. Reports of Special Committees**-Nothing new to report.

#### **10. Reports of Officers**

**a. Zoning Officer/Village Clerk/Village Administrator**-Ann Doubet stated the farmer's market is going for two more weeks. The event has gone well, and we added some new vendors this year. The Community Cleanup Day is next week on your normal garbage day. The landscape waste pickup will be scheduled soon.

**b. Public Works**-Zack Hecht stated Townhall Road is open. The sludge removal at plant 2 is going well. The sidewalk construction along Woodland Knolls and Anker Lane is going well. The roadwork has finished up. They had to get a new panel for the 3-phase power at Oak Grove.

**c. Village Attorney**-Bill Streeter had nothing new to report.

**d. Village President**-Karl Figg had nothing new to report.

**11. Communications to the Board**-Karl Figg read a thank you note from Jacob Hunt, the Eagle scout that had constructed flag boxes for the community.

**12. Adjournment-Next regular meeting: October 17, 2024**-A motion was made by Tom Eckstein to adjourn the meeting at 8:57 p.m. The motion was seconded by Heather Armistead. Motion passed #5.

Ann Doubet  
Village Clerk