



August 2, 2022

Task Force Colleague,

Our Task Force has been entrusted with a significant mission, to make a recommendation for land use of over 1000 acres in the heart of Lake County. These acres are owned by the residents of the state of Illinois, approximately 12.7 million people. The recommendations made by our task force have the potential to impact millions across the state, including Lake County and the towns we call home. I appreciate the passion, care, and attention that each member has brought to this task force. According to the draft July 25 meeting minutes, “State Representative Daniel Didech commented that there were a great many stakeholders and strong opinions on this Task Force and this issue, but that for us to be successful, we all have to compromise a little. He believes that we all want the same thing: an environmentally-friendly, beneficial corridor.” I am confident that we can make a recommendation that represents the consensus of the diversity of our task force.

I was asked about whether Grayslake continued to be in alignment with the letter that Lake County elected officials sent to Governor Pritzker on September 27, 2019. The short answer is yes. The letter refers to a “greenway trail”, an “environmental sanctuary” and “other Village uses”. Further it describes “improving state and local economies”, “linking our communities” and “transferring portions into a greenway”.

At our January meeting, I recommended that we establish broad parameters for each municipality. In July, I welcomed the opportunity to share the Village of Grayslake’s preliminary thoughts, based upon Grayslake’s own long held general planning approaches, which include:

- Minimally maintaining 50% open space
- Protecting natural features, such as wetlands, woodlands, existing trees, etc.
- Looking for opportunities to improve traffic flow and mitigate traffic congestion
- Encouraging a variety of quality economic development
- Working with private property owners and avoiding use of eminent domain
- A history of intergovernmental cooperation

### **50% Open Space:**

Grayslake has long held to a principle of maintaining 50% open space in our planning area. Maintaining open space is the vision of a “greenway trail”, an “environmental sanctuary”, and “transferring portions into a greenway” as described in the Lake County letter and is very consistent with this planning principle. As a Task Force we could recommend this and decide what portions of the ground should be used for them.

*Trustees: Ronald L. Jarvis ~ Kevin D. Waldenstrom ~ Elizabeth Davies ~ Lalena Zoe Magretta ~ Laura Dias ~ Pradip Sahu*  
*Mayor: Rhiett Taylor*  
*Village Clerk: Cynthia E. Lee*

### **Protecting Natural Features:**

The protection of natural features is also important. Over the years the Village has taken steps to preserve hundreds of acres of important wetlands, woodlands, and other key open spaces. We have established a truly community-wide greenway trail system with over twenty miles of trails. Just this year the Village purchased several parcels totaling over 40 acres to preserve wetlands and enhance storm water management. We are now in the process of conducting surveys of the land to fully understand each parcel's character so that we can appropriately preserve, enhance, and if possible, provide additional amenities to the community. In the long run all of this will make Grayslake a more resilient community. Creating greenway trails and an "environmental sanctuary" is consistent with this.

### **Local Traffic Flow & Economic Development:**

As stated during the meeting, I have served in local government since 2001, becoming mayor in 2009. While there have been changes over the 21-year period, residents have consistently expressed concerns that taxes are too high and that there is too much traffic congestion. This has not changed. The second slide of my recent presentation addressed this by stating that the value of IDOT maintaining some land to keep options open for local traffic mitigations. (Note: I appreciated Senator Bush's clarification that our recommendation is not required to specify an agency.)

I also discussed a desire to have parcels available for economic development to diversify the property tax base which, among other benefits, provides revenues to our schools. Every day the State of Illinois and Lake County compete with our neighbors to the north to gain the benefits of business growth for our residents. This also was included in my presentation.

In any recommendation some flexibility seems appropriate. None of us know what the future will bring. In my time in office, I have seen the Blue-Ribbon Council and now this task force, ten years from now we may see something different. Both open space uses, careful local transportation linkages, and businesses can coexist in a well-planned area. A recommendation on usage that maintains some flexibility on various use options would have potential benefits. Further this is consistent with the letter, which specifically states, "other Village uses" and "improving state and local economies". –

### **Private Property:**

Much of the corridor in Grayslake is privately owned. These owners should feel heard and that their needs are considered. As stated, I propose that any recommendation that includes land acquisition also discourage the use of eminent domain.

### **Intergovernmental Agreement:**

Consensus among the municipalities is powerful and important. By achieving consensus, we are symbolically "linking our communities." During my first term as mayor, I was a member of the IL Route 53/120 Blue Ribbon Advisory Council (alternate to Mayor Mark Knigge, representing

the Lake County Municipal League). The consensus forged by that body was a significant accomplishment. More than ten years later this one-thousand-acre parcel is being discussed again, but in a different way. Consensus today is just as important as it was then. As a member I want to drive for alignment and agreement among the municipalities represented. We all need to maintain a disposition of openness and a willingness to compromise. I think if we can do this, we will serve our respective constituents, organizations, and, the residents of Illinois well.

In summary Grayslake remains committed to the points included in the letter to Governor Pritzker and to working toward achieving a consensus of the municipalities on the Task Force.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rhett Taylor". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rhett Taylor