

**CITY OF OAKBROOK TERRACE  
MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING  
DOROTHY DRENNAN PARK  
SATURDAY, AUGUST 20, 2022**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Esposito called the August 20, 2022, Special Council Meeting to order at 10:05 A.M.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Roll call indicated the following City Council members were in attendance:

Present: Barbari, Beckwith, Fitzgerald, Greco, and Mayor Esposito

Absent: Rada, Vlach

Also in attendance were City Administrator A. Marrero, Assistant to City Administrator A. Raffel, and Director of Public Services C. Ward.

**III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mayor Esposito led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**IV. PRESENTATION**

1. Presentation by Christopher B. Burke Engineering, Ltd (CBBEL) representative Jedd Anderson regarding the Spring Road Tributary Restoration Project

Mayor Esposito opened up the meeting with a few comments before the presentation by Christopher B. Burke Engineering, Ltd. Mayor Esposito stated he felt it would be best to discuss at the site so that after the presentation, representative Jedd Anderson would take any resident over to the creek and explain the scope of work and address any concerns. Mayor Esposito discussed the issue of transparency of this project, stating that the project has been in the works for the past four (4) years from conception to construction. Mayor Esposito noted that there could have been a better job relating the scope of the project to the residents, and corrective actions have been put in place. Mayor Esposito noted that from now on, the city would do everything it can to keep our residents informed of the future project affecting our environment. Mayor Esposito stated that on Friday, August 12<sup>th</sup>, he halted this project after receiving numerous phone calls and emails from residents regarding the number of trees being removed. The Aldermen and Alderwoman agree with the actions taken until the city can bring the community back together. Mayor Esposito would like to achieve the following goals. Goal number one is to listen to Jedd Anderson's presentation and learn the project's history dating back to 2018, the preliminary work in 2009, and the early cost planning of the project. Secondly, Jedd Anderson will inform everyone of the reasons and importance of this project, addressing flood plan versus erosion. This project is about erosion control and not flood control. Thirdly, Mayor Esposito stated that the city needs to dig deeper into the scope of the project, learn about the project, what our contractor has been doing, and the finished goals. DuPage County has provided the city with funds of \$240,000 through a grant. Fourth, Mayor Esposito

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briefly discussed the consequences of not going forward with this project and how the erosion will affect the streambank. Mayor Esposito discussed how it would only be a matter of time before the erosion creeps closer to the path and the path falls into the stream. This will depend on the amount of flooding that will occur throughout the years. Mayor Esposito referred to the maps in the back of the audience, showing the different zones of the city's flood plains. Fifth, Mayor Esposito stated that we need to understand the results, the benefits it will bring, the post-project maintenance, and the detail of the project maintenance. Lastly, Mayor Esposito said we need to propose a mitigation plan that addresses a few things. The removal of non-native invasive brush, tagging mature trees that will not be removed, working around some of the trees, having a plan to replant trees, and hiring an outside consultant to guide and add to the beautification to the process. Mayor Esposito stated that we must unite as a community on what needs to be removed from the creek line. The City has mature trees that have died and trees that impede the utility lines. Mr. Anderson and his crew will work with homeowners to install new native trees and plant up to 100 new ones. Mayor Esposito asked Jedd Anderson from Christopher B. Burke Engineering, Ltd to review the presentation and open up to public comments. Mayor Esposito also emphasized more transparency, including resident input regarding removing trees. The City's final plan is to provide a replanting plan. Mayor turned the meeting over to Jedd Anderson at 10:16 A.M.

Jedd Anderson stated Director of Public Services Ward would be handing out a printed version of a PowerPoint presentation that he put together for the residents. Mr. Anderson explained that he has worked at (CBBEL) for almost 34 years and is Vice President of the Environmental Resources Department. He has completed over 9,000 environmental resources in Chicagoland, including wetland mitigation and stream restoration projects. Mr. Anderson has designed over 21 miles of stream restoration projects. He is currently working on streambank restoration in Glendale Heights. Mr. Anderson said he recently worked with the Illinois Tollway for a Master Tree Planting Plan regarding trees and his expertise in planting 56,000 trees. Mr. Anderson stated that he has a fair amount of knowledge about trees and understands the residents' concerns. Mr. Anderson asked everyone to open the presentation and explained that this project started as a concept in 2018 as a stream restoration project. The stream erosion is happening, and the first set of plans was basically to give us an idea of the project's scope of work. Once the engineering firm understood the full scope of the project, Mr. Anderson and his team worked on the grant applications with DuPage County and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. It took the team two attempts before they were awarded the grants. Over the next year, Mr. Anderson applied for the permits with DuPage County and the U.S. Army Core of Engineers and received them in January 2022. This project is about the erosion of the creek shorelines and the restoration of some vegetation. He explained that the failed retaining wall in Kreml Park would be fixed in addition to removing hazardous vegetation. The total length of the streambank needing repair is 4700 linear feet, adding up to 9400 feet of streambank restoration. Very early in the planning process, we gave the city a projected job cost placeholder for the budgeting process, which was \$1 million. That figured amount

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was based on a worst-case scenario of restoring and armoring 9,400 feet of streambank. Before we submitted the grants, we did a new cost analysis that came in at \$391,000. Mr. Anderson said no change was made to the stream or brush removal plans. The deduction was the amount of riprap proposed to the actual amount used and the use of big block faux limestone. Mr. Anderson clarified that the final engineering estimate that came in on February 9, 2022, was \$466,680. The awarded contract to Semper Fi was \$383,888.45. Mr. Anderson illustrated the next page, a bid tab where CBBEL lined up all the contractors in a spreadsheet and compared their line items and unit cost. Mr. Anderson explained how the city's engineer estimate compared to Semper Fi's bid on this page. Mr. Anderson reminded residents that in 2009 a similar project was completed on a portion of the project area. Co-workers worked on this project at Eisenhower Road, Leahy Road, Monterey Avenue, and Hodges Road. Mr. Anderson said that the project included the removal of 250 diameter inches of trees removed for this project which is equivalent to 46 6-inch trees. Mr. Anderson stated that in 1939, this land area was a farm field, and the stream channel was a farm ditch running through the agricultural fields for irrigation. In 1956, Mr. Anderson claimed that you could see in the photo the subdivision growing and the same creek running through. The total drainage area is 556 AC/0.87 Sq Mi, starting at Royce Renaissance, west and north of the ComEd Buildings. Mr. Anderson said the total brush and tree removal is 0.55 acres of the tributary area. Mr. Anderson pointed out that the floodplain was on the next page. The county generates DuPage County Flood Insurance Rate Maps. The pink area is called the floodway, where you have water moving in a flood plain. Zone AE is the study of the 100-year flood data that was put into a full equation calculation model. The green area is the projected 500-year floodplain. The next page explains the existing conditions. Mr. Anderson said that when he gathers information for a streambank restoration project, he gets into the brush to observe the stream channel. Mr. Anderson said that when we tour the path, look through the brush to see what is happening. Regular passers-by cannot see the effects of the invasive species and the erosion of the streambank. It is important that you give us fair consideration. Mr. Anderson asked to look into the area and see how some erosion is two (2) to three (3) feet from the path. Mr. Anderson stated that residents could not see the erosion due to the brush covering up. There are some places where this is minor erosion, and other places have serious erosion. The erosion is accelerating and will get worse due to the growth of the trees. Mr. Anderson explained that the more obstructions of the channel, the more the water starts to meander, resulting in streambank erosion. The primary reason for excessive erosion is the presence of buckthorn and other non-native and weedy wood species. These plants cause bare erodible soil to be present and turbulent flow. Buckthorne is allelopathy that releases allelochemicals that affect the growth of other plants, reducing competition from plants nearby. You can see the dense, dark green vegetation buckthorn across the street. Mr. Anderson explained that the articles on the presentation's next page describe how terrible buckthorn is to the ecosystem. Buckthorn is European species and is usually the first leaf out in the spring and the last to drop its leaves in the fall. That is a common trait that helps itself out when other plants do not. Buckthorn will eliminate ground cover and leaf litter, leaving the ground bare within the thicket, which impacts excessive nitrogen in the ground and excites all the earthworms. Mr. Anderson said that when this happens to the

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earthworm, it makes them voracious and eats all the leaf litter. The bare earth then becomes highly erodible soil that accelerates ground surface erosion. Buckthorn is discouraged with the Forest Preserves, Park Districts, and the Morton Arboretum. Mr. Anderson explained that the east side of the Morton Arboretum was covered with buckthorn and had to be removed; it is awful for the creek beds. Mr. Anderson reemphasized that he is an environmentalist, and he does this because he loves restoring habitats. His largest job in the native restoration was 700 acres of land. He understands that everyone is upset about the trees and does not like seeing trees being taken down, but he knows that sometimes trees need to come down to complete a project. The next slide talks about the mitigation for tree/shrub removal. As the mayor said, we have a set amount of funds for planting trees. Moving forward, we will remove just the buckthorn and brush less than 6 inches, then leave everything else regardless of species or disease. Mr. Anderson explained that we would reconvene, walk the channel, and tag the trees that needed to be removed. After all the trees are tagged, we will remove them, then reconvene again with the individual property owners to help mitigate the loss of vegetation. Back in 2009, when we completed the project, agencies were not required to follow up to keep maintenance, so the invasive weeds came back. Under the permits and grants, we are now required to perform ten (10) years of maintenance of the restored areas. Semper Fi will lay down herbicide, cutting, clearing, and reseeding areas every spring, fall, and summer. They will replace trees or shrubs that have died that they installed. Mr. Anderson explained that to achieve the final signoff of the grants, those agencies would conduct an onsite investigation to ensure we have achieved the final plans. The next slide is pictures of different projects, particularly one in Glendale Heights that was 100% Buckthorn wood, and you can see how the first year after the project looked. The next picture is a year later, and if you flip to the next page, this picture was taken two weeks ago, and you can see the beautiful flowers that have grown in. Everything will take two to three years to grow, but it will look great and gratifying. Mr. Anderson said they had been inundated with information, questions, and concerns. He noted resident's biggest concern is that cutting down trees will increase flooding but stated that this was a restoration project. Trees soak up water, but not as much as one would think. He stated that deep-rooted native vegetation to be installed is generally more effective than trees. Tree roots are not that deep, typically two (2) to three (3) feet deep, whereas native vegetation roots can grow up to twelve (12) feet deep. These plants will be better at holding the soil in place than trees. Mr. Anderson addressed the concern of residents that every tree was to be cut down, and he stated that was never the plan. He clarified that they were to remove the non-native species and protect the trees. Mr. Anderson said you could refer to the project boards at the back of the meeting. We know that some trees were cut down accidentally, and we acknowledge our mistake and are trying to ensure that it does not happen.

**V. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Resident Mr. Don Ventura expressed his concerns with the removal of trees and his understanding of the buckthorn. His issue is with Semper Fi, and he wanted to know how

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the bid was so much lower and if Semper Fi pays a prevailing wage. Mr. Anderson addressed the prevailing wage question, stating that Semper Fi has to provide certified payroll to the City to be paid for that portion of the job.

Mrs. Lisa Pesce expressed her concerns with the mitigation and plan moving forward. She is aware that Christopher B. Burke Engineering, Ltd completes more bridges and roads and does not feel the plans of this project meet the needs of this city. Mrs. Pesce appreciated the Mayor's quick response to halting the project and listening to the residents. She stated she had the plans, and all the trees removed in question were marked with X's in the program. Trees that were up and away from the stream were removed. Mr. Anderson addressed that the removal of trees that are higher up is due to the installation of hardscape, riprap, or having to fix bank cavities; if a tree is there, the equipment used needs to have the ability to work in that area. Mrs. Pesce questioned the removal of the trees at Kreml Park that are up the bank. Mr. Anderson explained that a new faux limestone concrete wall and boulder retaining wall would be constructed there. He said the failed wall is coming entirely out, crews need to reconstruct a brand-new wall, and noted that those trees could not be worked into the plans. Mrs. Pesce stated she looked at that area and felt those trees were not in the way and could have been saved. Mr. Anderson said he would have to go to Kreml Park and measure back from the creek line. Mr. Anderson said that Semper Fi knew they had taken down some trees that should not have, which is why Mayor acted as quickly as he did. Mrs. Pesce said trees came down that should not have and questioned who would maintain the creeks after the project was done. She was under the impression that Public Services could not keep up with the maintenance due to the authority of DuPage County. Mr. Anderson stated that he knew some of the trees did come down that should not have, but Mayor quickly stepped in and stopped the project so he could understand the full scope of the project. That is when we all met and discussed how we would mitigate the project and move forward so that residents could be pleased with the work. Mrs. Pesce stated that Semper Fi made a mistake and should not have cut those trees down and wants evidence to know the plans have been revised and the residents are being heard.

Resident Brian McMahan thanked Mr. Anderson for the presentation. Mr. McMahan said he moved here from a strict HOA and loves his yard. When he received the group text that this was happening, he was shocked and confused, but I appreciate your explanation, which seems comprehensive. Mr. McMahan stated he understands the removal of the buckthorn, and he does not dispute that. He noted on his property the overgrowth of buckthorn. Mr. McMahan said he had just moved in, and now his backyard landscape would change. Mr. McMahan is not sure if that change is good or bad, but he knows what needs to be done. My point of contention is how they will restore the landscape with other trees. He said he understands the allotment, but what does that mean, what is the proposed appearance, and what will Semper Fi do if it is not satisfactory? Mayor Esposito addressed Mr. McMahan's concern, informing him that the contingency funds of \$50,000 were to purchase trees and shrubs. The mayor agrees that the resident's backyard landscape will change, but we will work with each resident to recover what has been lost. Mr. McMahan said he knew his property was in an AE floodplain when he purchased the house. He asked if the project

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would change the classification of his flood plain and does the planting of native plants help deter the skunks and coyotes. Mr. Anderson reiterated that this is not a flood control project and that we cannot capture and relocate wild animals. Mr. Anderson said the project calls for planting pollinator species and promoting butterflies and native birds.

Ms. Katrina Kern stated that her property backs up to the path, and the power lines will be exposed when the trees are taken down, but she understands the reasoning for taking out the buckthorn. She asked if there was a way to bury the power lines with the extra money. Mayor Esposito explained that the City would be entering into a strategic plan shortly and hoped that residents would participate and bring ideas. Mayor Esposito also stated that the burying of power lines is millions of dollars, former mayors have tried to accomplish this project, and it has not come to fruition. At this point, we need to take baby steps, and with new construction, we require the lines to be buried. The exposed lines make it difficult when we have storms, creating power outages with trees falling on powerlines. Ms. Kern asked if the trees that are sixty (60) feet tall should be automatically taken down. Mayor Esposito suggests we remove the buckthorn; that is step one. Second, we look at the trees covering the power lines and trim them first. He explained that ComEd is to conduct a maintenance program with the trimming of the trees, but it does not happen as much as he would like. Mayor Esposito stated he wants to trim the trees first, but, as Mr. Anderson said, if they impede the project, we have to review their location and make the hard call.

Resident Yolanda Treiguts wanted to thank the crews for removing the buckthorn. She explained that her husband tried to remove some of it a few years back and became very ill from the plant. Ms. Treiguts said that he tries to avoid the buckthorn to this day and still gets sick if he encounters it.

Resident Donna Nicolocoulos walks the path often. Ms. Nicolocoulos feels burying the electrical lines is a good idea. Second, remove the pea gravel on the trail and brick it. Third, bring in a landscape architect to design the landscape around the creek. And fourth, emphasizing the tagging of trees helps ease the mind of the residents.

Resident Eddy Pajak stated she does not know what buckthorn is and would like to be informed. Mr. Anderson explained that if you look across the street and see the darkest leaf that is oval and predominate, that is buckthorn.

Resident Jessica Kopka is devastated by what has happened and is worried about the poor animals. Mrs. Kopka would like to know who is responsible for taking down the trees and the consequences they will have. Mayor Esposito explained that Mr. Jedd Anderson is the Project Manager. He stated that we were all on the same page and that the tree removal was a mistake, but we were not here to discipline; we wanted to move forward with corrective action. Mayor Esposito stated it was a red flag when he saw the trees down; he immediately called our Public Services Director, addressed the situation, and stopped the project within two (2) days. Moving forward, project management and weekly reports will be provided to us. Mayor Esposito suggested that once the buckthorn is cleared out, and

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only the buckthorn, we will hold another Town Hall meeting to walk the path together to tag trees. Mayor Esposito stated that the Council did not know what buckthorn was or how invasive it was. That is the direction given to Semper Fi, and they understand that not one tree is to be removed without us saying so.

Mrs. Lisa Pesce stated she called a landscape architect firm with many awards and excellent references; he is the American Society of Landscape Architects president. Mrs. Pesce said this person chose not to bid on this project because it was inappropriate for a residential setting. She said she would like to share the other applications with whoever is interested and plan the beautification of this project. She also thanked the mayor for halting the project.

Mayor Esposito asked if Council would like to say a few words.

Alderman Beckwith thanked everyone for coming today and feels some positive can come out of the open dialog. We have had the opportunity to meet new residents and educate ourselves on this project. We will not forget how we got here and handled the situation. He said he is looking to move forward and ensure the commitment is long-term.

Alderman Greco thanked everyone for coming out and loved the level of participation. He would like to remind everyone about the Comprehensive Plan the Mayor spoke about. Alderman Greco explained that the Comprehensive Plan is a massive project that is the future of our city, and we would love it if there were this much participation.

Resident Lisa Pesce suggested creating a group of residents or a commission to create community input on this project.

Alderman Greco would like to keep the dialog open with residents through Next Door and Terrace Leaves and encourages residents to bring items to the council's attention so we can work together.

Mayor Esposito said we had come a long way with communication. The City communicates through Constant Contact, automatic text, and emails if you register online. We have our Facebook page and Nixle for emergency alerts. Moving forward, the project will be updated in Terrace Leaves to have the transparency that residents want from the City. Mayor Esposito stated that Council had this item on the agenda five (5) separate times between 2018-2022 to discuss the project, but we understand that we needed more detail and transparency. Mayor Esposito encourages everyone to come to the Council Meetings. When he looks out into the crowd, it is the same five (5) to ten (10) individuals at the meeting. So, he would encourage residents to come to the council meetings, and the Aldermen promote that as well. Minutes are always available and detail the discussions of projects and any contractors who presented and discussed projects. Mayor Esposito said the City would do a better job moving forward with communication, and the residents have

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his word. The timeline of this project is a year to use up the DuPage County grant funds, but Mr. Anderson can better answer that question.

Mr. Jedd Anderson stated that two (2) awarded grants are from DuPage County, and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) gave us a year to complete the project once we started spending the grant money. All the heavy lifting and reseeded will be done this year, and Semper Fi will be on the project for three (3) years. If the agencies see that the work is being completed, they may grant extensions on the funding. Mr. Anderson stated that the risk of losing funds is minimal as long as the work is ongoing.

Resident John Valle thanked the Mayor for taking the time to listen to the residents.

Resident Lisa Pesce said there was an unforgivable mistake, and she wanted to know if we could have new contractors bid to finish the project. Mr. Anderson answered and told her no, that Semper Fi knew they had made a mistake and would be cautious in the future. He stated that the area by the strip mall was the heaviest covered in buckthorn at eighty percent (80%). Mr. Anderson explained that if just the buckthorn had been removed, the view would have changed due to the dense canopy it creates. He emphasized that his goal is always to save trees, but they may have to be taken down on some projects. Mr. Anderson stated that he has known Robert Velazquez for years and has worked with him many times on various projects, and he does a great job. His company is a veteran and minority-owned business. Mr. Anderson explained that Mr. Velazquez had completed projects for many communities; we can all find bad reviews about everything on the internet. He said that he has witnessed Mr. Velazquez's work and that his company is one that Mr. Anderson trust to do the job correctly. Mr. Anderson agreed that a mistake was made, but we should not jump ship and find another contractor when Semper Fi is fully qualified to complete the project.

Semper Fi Owner, Mr. Robert Velazquez, acknowledges the mistake and informs the residents that he and his crew are committed to working with the City of Oakbrook Terrace and the community.

**ADJOURN**

**Mayor motioned to adjourn the meeting at 11:15 A.M.**



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Respectfully submitted,  
Amy Raffel, Recording Secretary

Attested:



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Michael Shadley  
City Clerk