

*MINUTES OF MAYOR NELSON AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES FOR THE REGULAR MEETING OF
THE VILLAGE OF FLOSSMOOR, ILLINOIS HELD ON MARCH 18, 2024*

VILLAGE HALL

MARCH 18, 2024

7:30 PM

Mayor Nelson called the meeting to order at 7:31 pm.

Village Clerk LoGalbo took roll.

PRESENT: Mayor Nelson, Trustees Bradley-Scott, Daggett, Driscoll, Lofton, Mitros, Mustafa

ALSO PRESENT: Village Manager Bridget Wachtel; Assistant Village Manager Jonathan Bogue; Fire Chief Bob Kopec; Deputy Chief of Police Keith Taylor; Police Commander Tim Filkins; Assistant Director of Public Works Dan Milovanovic; Community Engagement Manager Stephanie Wright; Assistant to the Village Manager/ Communications Manager Nicole Castagna; Village Attorney Kathi Orr; 224 community members, media, and others.

Mayor Nelson called the meeting to order. Due to the large crowd, she asked that the aiseways and doors remain clear for the safety of those in attendance. Mayor Nelson reminded everyone that the Village Board meeting was being streamed via Zoom for the convenience of those unable to attend the meeting in person. She noted that public comment on agenda and non-agenda items would be welcome at the beginning of the meeting agenda, and that public commenters who signed up to speak would be called from the list they signed in on. She asked that speakers observe the Village's public comment policy of introducing themselves, acting with decorum, addressing their comments to the public body and not a member of staff, and limiting their comments to five minutes per person for a maximum of thirty minutes of public comment time.

Mayor Nelson stated that although the meeting was being held in the public, it was not a public forum. As a public body, the Board does not discuss personnel issues in public and the Board cannot comment on pending litigation on the advice of counsel. She noted that the Village has a history of professional management which is directly related to why residents choose to move to Flossmoor. The Village will respond to Chief Jones' allegations through the appropriate legal channels, and when all of the facts are able to be shared the community will be supportive of the Village's and Board's actions.

Citizens Present Wishing to Address the Board:

Citizens Present Wishing to Address the Board on an Agenda Item & Non-Agenda Item

(It should be noted that in reporting these comments, the Village has not researched the accuracy of any comments.):

Donna Harris was called and stated that she wanted to give her time to Percy Scott.

Flossmoor resident Percy Scott's comments, in summary, were regarding his apology to the Board and community for his conduct at the previous Village Board meeting, his support for Chief Jones, and his love for the Village of Flossmoor. Scott noted Chief Jones' support in the community and by the Flossmoor Police Department (FPD). Scott discussed the hiring of Chief Jones, his employment status, Mayor Nelson's

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letter to the public about Chief Jones, and allegations that Chief Jones' employment status was discussed outside of Village personnel. Scott discussed a letter from Village Manager Bridget Wachtel to other village managers about their police chiefs wearing their uniforms to Village of Flossmoor Board meetings. Scott stated that Mayor Nelson only called three out of six Trustees about a letter going out, that the Board should apologize to Chief Jones, and that the Board should hold Village administrators accountable. Scott noted that Mayor Nelson had made mistakes in the last three years and that the community has continued to support her, and that Chief Jones deserved the same consideration. Scott stated that dismissing Chief Jones without discussing the issues with the Board transparently would tarnish the Village and Mayor Nelson's legacy. Scott implored the Mayor and Board to uphold the values, fairness, and justice that the community holds dear, that terminating Chief Jones would tear the community apart, and that once Chief Jones is terminated without proper cause, then that is when the next election begins.

Mayor Nelson accepted Percy Scott's apology. She noted that all Trustees were totally apprised of Chief Jones's six-month and nine-month performance reviews.

Flossmoor resident Reginald Williams' comments, in summary, were regarding his concern about communication in Flossmoor from the Village to residents and surrounding communities, noting that the messaging was grounded in conflict, including Mayor Nelson's letter about Chief Jones on March 7, 2024. He stated how the letter noted the importance of not discussing personnel matters in public, and how the letter was subjective, opinionated and contained the statement about serious administrative lapses under Chief Jones' watch which compromised his privacy, putting the Village in a negative light, and opens up the Village to legal and employment risks. Williams asserted that Chief Jones and the residents of Flossmoor should receive an apology for the issuance of the letter. Williams discussed Wachtel's letter to other Villages about their police chiefs wearing the uniforms to the Flossmoor Village Board meeting. Williams discussed confusing messaging about Chief Jones' employment status, and encouraged the Village moving forward to offer clear, non-slandorous, collaborative communication.

Flossmoor resident Susan Bass' comments, in summary, were regarding her family's personal experiences in a diverse Flossmoor, how Flossmoor has never had the issues that are going on now, how the community was being torn apart by what was going on, and that the community needed to come together again as one.

Flossmoor resident Ernestine Beck-Fulgham's comments, in summary, were regarding the Village's sharing of information about the situation with Chief Jones, information shared with her from other sources, and how Flossmoor residents deserve the truth. She stated that the Village of Flossmoor should be very specific about explaining the why. Beck-Fulgham discussed how she has tried to stay involved with the community, and that it was the first time she has ever questioned things in the Village in all of the years she has lived in Flossmoor. She asserted that the Village should have had a public hearing to explain what was going on, and noted the significance of Chief Jones being hired as the first Black Chief of Police. She also noted the future impact of the ongoing issues with the Board's political careers and how they should have a public hearing with the limited sharing of information before they go into the executive session.

Flossmoor resident Pam Jackson's comments, in summary, were regarding her human resources and compliance work experience and her evaluation of what has transpired over the last month with

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communications, social media madness, and community presence. Jackson discussed her observations regarding the situation with Chief Jones and stated the questions she had about the Village's human resources practices. Jackson noted her decision to look at the current situation with Chief Jones from a broader perspective and hoped that the Board would conduct a post-mortem examination to assess how things could have been done better.

Mayor Nelson asked Pam Jackson if she would share her stated list to Mayor Nelson.

Pam Jackson confirmed that she would share the information with Mayor Nelson.

Flossmoor resident Andrea Perry's comments, in summary, were regarding her observations from the previous Village Board meeting and how she was appalled about how the Board handled questions and issues that were broached. Perry discussed her observations with regard to the Board listening to residents' concerns, the Board's handling of the situation with Chief Jones, and the descriptions of residents' attendance at the Village Board meetings. Perry stated that she lives under apartheid-like conditions in Flossmoor and it is unacceptable. She asserted that she would also like Flossmoor to be 'one,' and that residents are also different, should not dismiss each other, and that she felt dismissed. Perry stated that she would continue to challenge the total disregard and dismissal by the Village.

Flossmoor resident and former Flossmoor Trustee Gyatta Kimmon's comments, in summary, were regarding the concern of citizens present at the Village Board meeting and how he has given the Board space since he served on the Board but that the Village needs more leadership. He noted that there have been issues at Flossmoor Fest for the last couple of years without the same kind of response as there was currently. He encouraged the Board to hear the concerns expressed by community members and encouraged the Board to engage with community members.

Mayor Nelson noted that the public comment portion of the agenda was at the thirty-minute mark, but she would allow for the time period to be extended by fifteen minutes since there were others who wanted to speak as well. Mayor Nelson asked whether there was any objection from the Board. No objection was noted.

Flossmoor resident and Flossmoor Fire & Police Board Commissioner Ron Alston's comments, in summary, were regarding his support for Chief Jones, his perceptions of Chief Jones being brought to Flossmoor as a pawn that can be sacrificed, and as an olive branch to the Black community following the fatal shooting of Madeline Miller. Alston discussed how it was impossible for the community to get along and have one voice in the current conditions. Alston noted that he heard Chief Jones was asked to fire the Deputy Chief and that Chief Jones refused to do that, which has probably led to the situation at hand. Alston asserted that what was happening was despicable, cannot continue, and he cannot accept it.

Flossmoor resident Jenny Curtis' comments, in summary, were regarding her concern for the Village under the current administration, her attendance at past Village Board and Community Relations Commission meetings, her request for an ordinance change, her engagement after the fatal shooting of Madeline Miller, and her observations regarding the current happenings related to Chief Jones. Curtis noted her motivation

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for attendance at the current Village Board meeting, her experience with the Village's administration, and the Village's lack of transparency. She spoke about her perspective and observations related to events that occurred during Village Board meetings and a community forum after Madeline Miller's death. Curtis discussed her interaction with the host of the community forum, her opinions about the retirement of former Police Chief Kamleiter and the recruitment and hiring of Chief Jones. She discussed the uncertainty of Chief Jones' employment status and posed questions about possible reasons for his termination. Curtis stated her hopes for the 2025 election season and called for justice for Madeline Miller.

Flossmoor resident La'Shawn Littrice's comments, in summary, were regarding her standing with the family of Madeline Miller and her mission to come before the Village Board because she loves the community. She discussed how there is a major disservice happening in the community on a regular basis. Littrice discussed her interactions with the Board in regard to the death of Madeline Miller, and her observed improprieties with cultural bias that needed to be addressed in the community. She talked about the need for justice for Madeline Miller's death, the repeated situation with Chief Jones, and the lack of transparency with the Village Board. Littrice discussed the high taxes in the community, the experiences of Black residents in the community, and her opinion on the circumstances after Madeline Miller's death.

Mayor Nelson stated that while what happened to Madeline Miller was tragic, the Cook County State's Attorney's Office determined that the Village of Flossmoor had no fault in her death and dismissed the case.

The meeting was interrupted by a member of the audience. Mayor Nelson asked the person responsible to please leave the meeting.

Mayor Nelson stated that the public comment portion of the agenda was extended in order to hear from as many voices as possible.

Recognitions and Appointments:

None.

Mayor Nelson referred to the Consent Agenda (which encompassed Agenda Items 1-4):

- 1. Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Meeting Held on March 4, 2024*
- 2. Presentation of Bills for Approval and Payment as Approved by the Finance Committee (March 18, 2024)*
- 3. Consideration of a Contract Award for the Fire Department Bay Doors Replacement Project*
- 4. Consideration of a Resolution of Local Assurance for the Dartmouth Pedestrian Bridge Replacement Project Cook County Invest in Cook Grant Application*

Mayor Nelson called for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Trustee Mitros so moved, seconded by Trustee Daggett.

Mayor Nelson called for a vote on the motion as presented. Motion passed by a roll call vote.

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AYES: Trustees Bradley-Scott, Daggett, Driscoll, Lofton, Mitros, and Mustafa.
ABSENT: None
ABSTAIN: None
NAYS: None

Reports of Committees, Commissions and Boards:

Mayor Nelson thanked the Community Relations Commission for their assistance with the annual St. Patrick's Day Parade.

Other Business:

None.

Mayor Nelson referred to Agenda Item #5 – A Motion to go into Executive Session to Discuss the Employment of Specific Individuals, Property Acquisition and Litigation. Mayor Nelson called for a motion to go into Executive Session to Discuss the Employment of Specific Individuals, Property Acquisition and Litigation. Trustee Mustafa so moved, seconded by Trustee Daggett and passed by a roll call vote.

AYES: Trustees Bradley-Scott, Daggett, Driscoll, Lofton, Mitros, and Mustafa
ABSENT: None
ABSTAIN: None
NAYS: None

The Board entered executive session at 8:22 p.m.

The Board returned to open session at 9:44 p.m.

Action Items:

Mayor Nelson referred to Agenda Item #6 – Consideration of a Resolution of the Village of Flossmoor, Cook County, Illinois, Terminating the Employment Contract Between Police Chief Jerel Jones and the Village. Mayor Nelson called for a motion approving a resolution Terminating the Employment Contract Between Police Chief Jerel Jones and the Village. Trustee Mitros so moved, seconded by Trustee Daggett.

The Board members commented on their reasons for their respective votes.

Trustee Driscoll said after reviewing the Manager's reports he votes yes.

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Trustee Lofton stated that based on the public outcry and the concern that people have for village safety and having a chief that meets their expectations, he votes no.

Trustee Mustafa said she did not hear any conversations and has not read anything to indicate that the performance, criticisms, rises to the occasion of justifying termination. She did not see any egregious, unlawful, illegal, inappropriate, unethical behavior or safety concerns to the community, and she cannot support the resolution.

Trustee Bradley-Scott echoed Trustee Mustafa's comments. In addition, she also mentioned that the items that were presented as part of his personnel information did not document instances in which citizens were put in danger. She does not support the recommendation of termination.

Trustee Daggett's comments in summary were that he strives to be transparent, but due to pending litigation there are items he cannot discuss at this time. He commented that he sought out thoughts and viewpoints from many in the community. He also acknowledges the wide array of responses and understands that to many, this is frustrating. He indicated that he took the opinions of the community and weighed them with the facts and information related to this decision. He welcomes additional conversations with residents who have concerns about this decision. At this point, he does not believe the relationship between Chief Jones and the Village is tenable and that it best serves the community to move in a different direction for the position of Police Chief.

Mayor Nelson's comments in brief were that the decision had not been made lightly and was based upon his performance. In her opinion, it would be best if Jones and the Village part ways.

Mayor Nelson called for a vote on the motion as presented. Motion passed by a roll call vote.

AYES: Trustees Daggett, Driscoll, Mitros, and Mayor Nelson

ABSENT: None

ABSTAIN: None

NAYS: Trustees Bradley-Scott, Lofton, Mustafa

Discussion Items:

Mayor Nelson referred to Agenda Item #7 – Discussion of the FY 2025 Preliminary Budget. This item was postponed until the next Village Board Meeting.

As there were no other items to discuss, Mayor Nelson called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Trustee Mitros so moved, seconded by Trustee Lofton and passed by a voice vote.

AYES: Trustees Bradley-Scott, Daggett, Driscoll, Lofton, Mitros, and Mustafa.

ABSENT: None

ABSTAIN: None

NAYS: None

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The Regular Meeting was adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gina A. LoGalbo
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Village Clerk