



July 27, 2020

Trustee Dodd, Trustee Barrow, Trustee Sullivan and Village Manager Braiman,

Thank you very much for making the Administration Committee meeting packet available well in advance of this week's meeting, and thank you for the community outreach seeking comment and input. We are very encouraged by the openness and inclusivity the committee and Village staff have demonstrated so far and we are optimistic about the commitment to meaningful actions as this work moves forward.

The report reflects the significant work done over the past weeks and months to identify key areas of need within the community for these commissions as well as an exploration of other municipalities to surface ideas and best practices. Thank you again for the time and effort put in to create a thoughtful report as a basis for discussion. Overall, the LWVW is aligned with the overarching purposes and functions highlighted for consideration in the report. Our feedback and suggestions primarily focus on encouraging the commissions to have a clear impact and outcome orientation and prioritizing the work with that lens.

Specifically, regarding the Housing Commission, the upcoming Comprehensive Plan is a key document setting strategy for Village development. We'd like to see stronger language for the role of the Housing Commission in providing expertise, guiding necessary research, and making recommendations. Further, we suggest that the several areas currently identified as research-focused expand to include making recommendations and monitoring plans and progress. Finally, we think it is important to move public education on fair housing and its history in Wilmette higher on the priority list. While less directly related to current actions the Village will take, it is important context and foundation for the stated commitment to ensuring a sustainable affordable housing plan in Wilmette. We must acknowledge how we got here before we can constructively move forward. One additional note is what seems to be an omission of Cleland Place and we'd suggest including monitoring its progress as part of the Commission's purview. As any new project comes to fruition, this Commission should monitor progress on development and applicants, and ensure learnings are captured over time.

While the Housing Commission had a history to draw upon in articulating a mission and focus, the Human Relations Commission is being re-envisioned. We very much appreciate the effort and focus there. As such, it is not surprising that the initial articulation of the Commission's purpose and functions are more vaguely stated. As part of your discussion on this Commission, we hope you work to make the charter more specific. We suggest adopting a more overt articulation of this Commission's role in ensuring, monitoring and guiding our Village's commitment to being an "inclusive community where people of all racial, ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds feel safe and welcomed," as communicated in your 6/4 letter to the community. Following from that type of commitment, this Commission's function would be to take that aspiration and create tangible plans to bring the vision to fruition. We see this Commission guiding the execution of necessary discovery research to understand and identify where Wilmette is effectively delivering on its vision as well as identify specific gaps... and develop recommendations to address those gaps. Importantly, we also envision the Human Relations Commission taking the lead in collaborating with other local governmental bodies to develop a "whole of community" approach to inclusivity that includes residential as well as commercial aspects, and visitors as well as residents, business owners and people who work in and for the Village.

We have previously stated our position on the selection of commission members and we look forward to the August discussion specifically focused on that topic. This report speaks to commission composition and along those lines, we would like to see an explicit objective of increasing diversity across the commissions. This may be more relevant in the next meeting, but efforts to publicize commission positions should clearly have the objective of reaching a wide-range of community members, for example including outreach to faith leaders, to people of color, and to younger members of our community.

Finally, this report seeks to address topics of terms limits, term lengths and the number of members. Our feedback here is simply that there should be clarity in the policies, and that the policies are consistent across commissions.

Thank you again for the important work you are doing to lay the groundwork here and we are very appreciative of your interest in community feedback as you move forward.

Regards,  
Cindy Levine and Wendy Zun  
Co-Presidents  
LWV-Wilmette