



APPROVED

**Central Street Evanston
Board Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, September 18, 2024
Zoom Meeting**

Attendees

Peter O'Malley
Aim Larrabee
Dylan Johnson
Bane Srdjevic
Eric Green
Mari Barnes
Stacia DeSalvo
Paula Danoff
Jim Konrad
Paul Zalmezak

Staff:

Angela Shaffer

Guest Speakers:

Ripple Public Relations: Ilyse Strongin and Tali Hylen

Agenda

I. Call Meeting to order: Peter O'Malley

Peter announced a quorum. The meeting was called to order at 9:03am.

- a. [Approve July 17, 2024 Minutes](#): Peter asked for a motion to approve the July 17, 2024 minutes. Mari motioned to approve the meeting minutes. Stacia seconded the motion. The Board unanimously agreed to approve the minutes.

II. Ripple Public Relations: Angela Shaffer

Angela introduced the owners Ilyse Strongin and Tali Hylen. Angela has 10 years of experience collaborating with Ripple on events and activations. Ilyse gave a brief introduction of their company and what they aim to accomplish for Central Street.

- Ilyse and Tali have worked together for 20+ years. Ilyse grew up in Skewanston. Ripple has worked with business districts all around, from Michigan to Wisconsin, Fox Lake to Gurnee. They've worked with Highwood for 17 years. They built the

Celebrate Highwood brand. Ripple plans and hosts events such as Pumpkin Fest, Nashwood. Ripple is currently working with the City of Highland Park, Downtown HP Alliance, and Ravinia Business District. They work on large and small scale events from thousands of visitors to small events that engage all the businesses, like cocoa and cookie crawls, girls night out, wine walks, weekly food truck events, etc. Their plans for Central Street are to 1) enhance current events, 2) bring in more people from outside the community, 3) tell stories about the people behind the businesses, 4) conceptualize even more events, and bring a couple of Central Street branded events that are unique to Central Street.

Q: Peter congratulated Ripple on their work in Highwood and asked what their short-term goals are for September through December?

A: Ripple plans to build a rapport with businesses. Let the businesses know Ripple is there for them. Work on outreach to expand the reach to Central Street. Enhance and suggest any personal touches for current events. Begin to conceptualize 1-2 events for 2025 to build up to. They will send out a press release to introduce their media contacts to Central Street and let the media know they are working with Central Street and to consider Central Street for special features. Ilyse and Angela will start in-shop visits.

Q: Mari is pleased Ripple wants to add additional events, whether it's an annual event or something like a food truck Thursday event. Mari said she really likes the weekly Highland Park newsletter that goes out—The Weekender. She hopes that Ripple can work with Central Street on something like that.

A: Ripple shared that the weekly communication is definitely part of their plan.

III. **Event/Business Updates:** Angela gave a [slideshow presentation](#) with an overview of business updates and events.

- Angela shared the new Central Street business address of 2906 Central Street, Suite 205.
- Angela presented an update of new businesses coming soon and those spaces with strong tenant interest.
- Angela presented an overview of the upcoming Central Street Trick-or-Treat event and shared the upcoming holiday schedule: Holiday Stroll November 16, Small Business Saturday November 30, Late-er Night Thursday December 12.

IV. **Annual Meeting Discussion (Peter O'Malley)**

The Board discussed ways to help increase attendance at this year's Annual Meeting:

- Have Ripple Public Relations give a presentation to create a draw for businesses.
- Have the Board reach out to business neighbors to make sure they are aware of the meeting and what it's about.
- Have the invitation be more informal, like a meet and greet on Central concept or an annual celebration. Brand the meeting differently.
- Send a Save the Date invitation first, followed by the Board Slate later.
- Peter also suggested we think about ways to cut Annual Meeting costs with cheese and crackers and a couple of drinks.

V. **City Updates: Paul Zalmezak**

Paul reiterated that Central Street continues to be the number one business district as far as economic activity, interest, and vacancy rate.

Peter asked Paul about the interest in the former Coast Sushi space. Paul said there is a restaurant operator looking at the space who has a great neighborhood concept and understands the Central Street area very well. Peter agreed it would be a great addition to the neighborhood.

Peter asked Paul about the liquor tax situation and if it will be going to the City Council for a vote. Paul will look into it. He believes it's in a Committee holding pattern at the moment.

Mari asked Paul if we're getting free parking for the holidays again this year. Paul said he believes that will be happening again this year. He said the City did not conduct a study as to whether it helped increase business, but he believes it's a nice good will effort. Mari and Peter agreed that the free parking initiative was very well received.

Paul said the SSA tax levy payment can be expected in November.

VI. **Treasurer's Report: Dylan Johnson/Angela Shaffer**

a. Dylan reported total cash in the bank = **\$133,818**

SSA 7 = **\$112,612**

SSA 8 = **\$21,206**

b. Financial Update: Dylan reported that Angela and the bookkeeper are currently still working on the 2023 audit.

c. Angela presented the 2025 Budget and provided budget explanations:

- She built a budget that looks into the future. Central Street is growing, and we're adding more programming as a result.
- She explained that our reserve funds left over from Covid have been used wisely, but they are starting to dwindle and will eventually dry up so we need to think about what that looks like when they no longer exist.
- She reiterated that the Board agreed to keep approximately three months of reserves at the end of each year, which is approximately \$48K due to the \$16K monthly burn rate.
- Angela presented options for cutting back on the holiday lighting.
 - Option A: Cut the lights on Green Bay Road
 - Option B: Only light every other pole on Green Bay Road
- Angela recommended keeping Ripple on board through 2025 and then the Board can reevaluate in 2026.
- Angela recommended keeping Hello Lamp Post through 2025 and possibly get a grant to keep it implemented in 2026.

Peter motioned that we light every other lamp post on Green Bay Road for 2024 and 2025 and have less reserves as a result, but look into finding more revenue streams in

2025. Dylan seconded the motion. **The Board unanimously agreed to approve the 2025 budget.** Angela will send out the final 2025 approved budget to the Board.

VII. Northwestern Updates/Matters

- Eric reported that he's going to a Northwestern meeting to discuss restaurant matters on Central Street. The Central Street Consortium is still looking into ways to get Central Street restaurants involved in feeding the stadium workers during construction.
- Mari reported her overwhelm with the new Wildcard initiative and that there is a significant expectation put on businesses who want to participate. She has no problem offering a discount, but the ask from NU was to update the POS system to add in a discount code and report back to NU with quarterly sales. Mari sent a letter to Peter Braithwaite regarding her overwhelm and let him know based on the new expectation Notice will no longer be participating in the program. Jim said he'll talk with Peter about this.

Public Session ended at 9:59 AM.

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VIII. Meeting Moved to Closed Session

Mari motioned to go into closed session to discuss Board personnel matters. Aim seconded the motion.

Closed Session Ended at 10:11 AM