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Village Establishes I-290 “IKE” Citizen Advisory Committee

A citizen advisory committee whose members include experts in transportation, law, historic preservation and the environment, have been selected to provide input to the Village Board and be a conduit of information to the community regarding the Illinois Department of Transportation’s study to add high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes to Interstate 290, the Eisenhower Expressway.

“With our outside legal and technical firm, a well-prepared staff team, a motivated community, and now a talented group of citizens who are interested in actively assisting the Village on this project, we have all the elements in place to aggressively advance the interests of the Oak Park community,” said Village President Joanne E. Trapani.

“This citizen’s committee will be an important sounding board for the Village Board as we deal with IDOT and other key decision makers at the state and federal levels on this critical project. The Committee also will help keep the Board in touch with how residents feel, and provide an additional mechanism for keeping the public aware of and involved in the Village’s response.”

The Committee will be chaired by Lawrence B. Christmas, the former executive director of the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission and a former Village President. Joining Christmas will be former State Senate President Philip J. Rock who sponsored funding for a 1987 IDOT study that documented the feasibility of capping the Eisenhower Expressway to reconnect entire sections of the Village with parkland or open space over the expressway. The Village has requested an update of this study in conjunction with current planning efforts.

Other committee members include residents who live close to the Eisenhower, along with representatives of both the Harrison Business District and the Oak Park Ave./Eisenhower Business District, which was split in two by the original I-290 highway construction.

“These committee members represent some of Oak Park’s most knowledgeable and active citizens when it comes transportation matters,” Trapani said. “Larry Christmas is a widely recognized advocate for sound transportation planning and wise land use and policy decisions affecting Oak Park and the region. His expertise lends immediate credibility to the Village’s efforts on this project throughout the Chicago area.

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Ike Committee

“Senator Rock has many years of experience dealing with complex transportation issues at the legislative level. No one knows the process in Springfield better than Phil Rock who, during his tenure in the State House, earned a reputation for standing up for the needs and concerns of his Oak Park constituents. Even though Sen. Rock’s elected term of office on behalf of the Village ended years ago, he continues to show a willingness to serve his community in valuable ways.”

Trapani called upon all Oak Park residents to remain interested and active in asserting the Village’s concerns about the project with key transportation policy decision makers stating, “Even if you are not on the committee, we need everyone to be involved in the process – to express opinions certainly, but especially to contact key decision making officials at the regional, state and federal levels to make sure that Oak Park’s interests are fully considered.”

As part of the Village’s official public information outreach, a section of the Village’s website (at vil.oak-park.il.us/news/special_reports) has been dedicated to providing up-to-date information and developments on this project. The website includes a detailed I-290 Fact Sheet that can be downloaded and reprinted for distribution.

According to an IDOT feasibility study completed several years ago, the project as currently conceived would reconfigure the roadway largely within the current right-of-way to create an HOV lane in each direction. IDOT also has indicated it would like to move the Austin Boulevard and Harlem Avenue exits from their current center lane location to the right, outside lane. Among the Village’s specific concerns about IDOT’s HOV plans are how the project could impact economic development, private and publicly owned land, noise and air pollution, natural resources such as parks and recreation areas, and community cohesion and character.

Attached is a full roster of the individuals appointed to the committee, and a brief biographical sketch. The first meeting of the Committee is expected later this month.

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I-290 "IKE" Committee

Chair

Lawrence B. Christmas
700 block of Ontario

Planner. Former Village President.
Former Director of NIPC.

Philip J. Rock
800 Block of N. Oak Park Ave.

Attorney. Former State Senate President
from Oak Park.

Mark Johnson
600 S. Block of Clinton

Civil engineer. County highway official.
Former Chair of Parking & Traffic
Commission.

Sandra Kupelian
1000 S. Block of Wenonah

Attorney. Active with the South Oak
Park Community Council.

Karen Baldwin
900 S. Block of Wenonah

Freelance Editor. Member of
Community Relations Commission.
Former Chair of Citizen Involvement
Committee.

Kevin Kell
800 S. Block of Humphrey

Transportation Engineer. Past & current
member of Village and Park District
Infrastructure Committees, respectively.

Ron Burke
600 S. Block of Wenonah

Non-profit management. Air quality
expert. Author of "diesel hot spot"
Chicago highway report.

Marion Kessy
800 S. Block of Wisconsin Avenue

Consulting Environmental Engineer.

Pete Morava
00 Block of Harrison Street

President of Harrison Street Business
Alliance. Owner of art business near
Austin Blvd. and resident.

David Sokol
300 S. Block of Taylor

Professor and Department Chair at UIC.
Former Historic Preservation
Commission Chair.

Nancy Rodriguez
1000 S. Block of Clinton Ave.

Active member of the Oak
Park/Eisenhower Business District
Association. Owner of food related
business and resident.

Plan Commission member (to be
determined)