

River Forest Civic Center Authority: Background

History

On September 17, 1984, Illinois Public Act 83-1451 created a non-taxing, political subdivision, body politic and municipal corporation by the name of the River Forest Metropolitan Exposition, Auditorium and Office Building Authority, commonly known as the River Forest Civic Center Authority. Pursuant to that statute, the elected Trustees and Supervisor of River Forest Township serve as the Board of Managers of the River Forest Civic Center Authority. The Civic Center Authority was created through the concerted efforts of officials from both the Village of River Forest and the River Forest Township so that the Township could become eligible for grants under the Metropolitan Civic Center Support Act to obtain funds for a new community center facility. At that time, the River Forest Township and the River Forest Community Center were both operating in an unused Village garage at 414 Jackson Avenue that was soon to be used to expand the Jewel-Osco store as part of the original Tax Incremental Financing District in River Forest. On January 26, 1987, the Civic Center Authority was formally organized for the transaction of business. Since the Authority was established, Village and township officials pursued the passage of appropriation legislation necessary to fund the grant program. The Metropolitan Civic Center Support Act received appropriation legislation on July 28, 1989.

In 1989, the Civic Center Authority applied for a state grant for financial assistance to construct a new facility for the River Forest Community Center. The Civic Center received a \$1.9 million state grant from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs, which was combined with an additional \$633,000 in cash, property and in-kind contributions provided by the River Forest Community Center to cover the \$2.5 million purchase and construction cost of the proposed facility. The River Forest Civic Center Authority was responsible for the construction and maintenance of the River Forest Civic Center facility and was designed to act as the “landlord” of the building. Under the grant application, the River Forest Community Center was intended to be the primary long-term tenant of the Civic Center facility, responsible for generating sufficient revenue from its programs and other activities to pay for the costs of the utilities, maintenance and insurance for the building and to assist in any improvements or upgrades of the facility during the Community Center’s long-term lease.

Relationship with River Forest Township

From the time it was established, the River Forest Civic Center Authority has been considered a component of the Township for statutory reporting purposes. The elected Township Supervisor and four elected Township Trustees, by statute, serve as the Board of Managers of the Civic Center Authority. Because the Civic Center Authority was specifically created without any authority to levy property taxes, the Civic Center Authority budget is reported as part of the Township budget and all of the costs and expenses of the building are paid directly by the Township or indirectly through the Authority’s lease of the Civic Center facility to the River Forest Community Center. The Township does not levy taxes for any separate Civic Center Authority fund. The Civic Center Authority was established to apply for a grant under

the DCCA Metropolitan Civic Center Support Program to provide an office for the River Forest Township, a venue for other Township services and as a facility for the programs of the River Forest Community Center.

Relationship with the River Forest Community Center

The River Forest Community Center is a nonprofit organization created in 1975 with the mission to provide River Forest residents with recreational and educational programming for children and adults. From the outset, the Community Center worked closely with the River Forest Township while both organizations were housed in the former Village garage at 414 Jackson Avenue. That garage facility was later torn down and included in the Village property needed to expand the Jewel-Osco in 1988. While the Village moved forward with the Lake Street corridor redevelopment, three separate applications for a state DCCA Civic Center Support grant were submitted by the River Forest Civic Center Authority, on behalf of the River Forest Community Center, seeking funds to buy and build a new facility. The last grant application was filed in 1989 and resulted in the award of a \$1.9 million grant, which was matched by \$633,000 in cash, property and in-kind donations by the River Forest Community Center to cover the costs of the purchase and construction of the new facility. That grant and those Community Center contributions allowed the River Forest Civic Center Authority to purchase the property at 8020 Madison Street and renovate the building for the use by the Community Center as the primary tenant and to house the River Forest Township offices.

In 1993, upon completion of the building renovation and the state licensing of the River Forest Community Center as a day care and after-school care facility, the River Forest Civic Center Authority, the River Forest Township and the River Forest Community Center entered into a twenty-year lease which required the Community Center, through its program revenues and other support, to pay for virtually all utilities, maintenance and insurance costs and for the general upkeep of the Civic Center facility. The Township, which subleases a small portion of the facility, pays the remainder. The Community Center lease was renewed by the Township and Civic Center Authority and is effective through June 30, 2023. The current lease provides for the Community Center to continue to pay for utilities, maintenance and insurance, as well as quarterly payments for capital improvements of the facility. As part of the 1989 grant, the lease agreement must be reviewed and approved by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Economic Opportunity.

The River Forest Community Center is the primary tenant of the Civic Center Authority facility where it provides programs and activities. The facilities are available for rental primarily by other River Forest organizations including youth baseball, softball and soccer programs. The River Forest Park District has a priority agreement for use of the gym and other program space for indoor Park District programs. This Park District use agreement and the rental policies of the Community Center are reviewed periodically by the Civic Center Authority Board of Managers.