

**VILLAGE OF SOUTH BLOOMING  
GROVE  
PUBLIC HEARING AND REGULAR MEETING  
MONDAY  
JUNE 14, 2024  
10:30 AM**

➤ **Roll call**

The following persons were present:

- George Kalaj - Mayor
- Abraham Weiss – Deputy Mayor
- Yitzchok Feldman\*
- Asher Guttman- Trustee
- Zalmon Rosner - Trustee
- Isaac Ekstein – Legislative Aide to Mayor
- Al Fusco- Village Engineer
- Kerry Dougherty – Village Clerk
- Joel Stern – Confidential Assistant to the Mayor
- **Absent** - Scott Ugell Esq. – Village Attorney

**PUBLIC HEARING -ORANGE COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
BLOCK GRANT FUNDING (CDBG-FY-2025)**

➤ **Call to order**

Mayor Kalaj opened the public hearing with the Pledge of Allegiance and called to order the Public Hearing at 10:35 am on June 14, 2024, inviting public comment and suggestions regarding projects to be considered for funding under the Orange County Community Development Block Grant Program

➤ **Discussion**

- Al Fusco provided information regarding the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and what types of activities are eligible for funding. In the past culverts and drainage were installed/repared on Lake Shore Drive and the village may continue around the other side of Lake Shore Drive if any monies are awarded.

➤ **Public Comment**

- **Bonnie Rum** – money from where the village? Al Fusco advised it is federal money through the County.
- **Barbara Hanley** – asked if it is possible to use this grant to resurface Lake Shore Drive? Al Fusco advised that this grant does not do resurfacing. She asked if it could be used for the village’s water.
- **Jack Grobstein** – asked what is going on with the Merriewold Dam, they are bringing in dirt. Isaac Ekstein advised that they are building up the dam.
- **Chris Maderia** asked Mr. Fusco if he said there was roughly \$175,000 available? Mr. Fusco advised yes. He heard that it can’t be used for municipal water, but can we use that money for low income and middle-income assistance to get water treatment in their home. It doesn’t matter what you do in

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the future, he doesn't care how many wells you drill here, iron and manganese is going to exceed the MCL, even with the treatment system we have now it exceeds it, he tests his water all the time. A lot of people in this area are low and middle income and can use assistance with getting water treatment into their homes. This water is not just when you drink it but your boilers, dishwashers, water heaters, all of these things have to be replaced sooner than their lifetime because of the water situation. So we should be using this money when we get grants to help the citizens, everything goes to the village the citizens need the help, so he would like to see this grant money to assist low to moderate income members of the community get water treatment in their homes so they have quality water. The whole Hudson Valley is high in iron and magnesium. If monies are available from the county to help low to middle income people, help them get filtration in their homes so that they have clean adequate drinking water that protects their appliances, their heating and HVAC equipment.

- **BJ Mendelson** you are currently in litigation with Orange County the reason why he mentions this is because you said last year that you didn't get the grant he'd like to know if the village still is in litigation would you get the grant this time. **Mr. Fusco** advised that it doesn't have anything to do with the grant. It doesn't impact it. **Mr. Medelson** he would say otherwise.
- **Mr. Hewlitt** As a person who just spend \$900.00 yesterday for his sewer system because of the quality of water, he is very troubled and has said this for years about the poor quality. He has a problem with the transparency of this whole meeting of this public hearing, the lack of information and the timing of it. Last Monday's meeting for whatever reason was cancelled, it was posted on the website that we were going to have a public hearing based on the Fair Housing, he couldn't open the website, so he went to the village office and spoke with the lady that was there and she couldn't open it, so finally Thursday morning information was available to post on the website and even with the \$175,000 and you are moving forward with this, you are not giving the public sufficient time for public comment. Especially now that he reads this, we have until next week, every other meeting we have had its been 8:00 PM, that if the community had that time to comment, we basically have an empty room here, the community is working, His recommendation is to re-schedule this, have this next week so that we can have a greater opportunity to put in writing, he has here what is eligible from 1-10 for this grant. This gentleman here just said something and I am supposed to internalize it. That is not sufficient time and information for transparency to really say what you want to do with this. His final thing is Fair Housing, and the Village of South Blooming Grove is an oxymoron, since the pandemic, before that the solicitation, he doesn't want to say blockbusting but people knocking on your door saying we want to buy your house, the real estate guy Moshe told him he is knocking down every house on Houston Avenue because our community is expanding. "Our Community" he said, you know that's not my community. How is that fair, is this housing for everyone, is it for those workers that busting his hump for 6 days a week for their families, my wife teaches their children, they don't make a lot of money, the woman take care of the parents or the little kids in the neighborhood making \$5 or \$6 hour. Will this housing, "Fair Housing" be available across the board for everybody? He has not seen anyone of color come in or anyone of Hispanic origin come into the neighborhood. If given those opportunities, they may or may not, he hasn't seen it. How is that indicative of what the village is saying South Blooming Grove participates in Fair Housing.

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➤ **Adjournment**

- Motion to close the public hearing at 10:48 am by Mayor Kalaj, seconded by Trustee Guttman. 4 Ayes, Mayor Kalaj, Deputy Mayor Weiss, Trustee Guttman, Trustee Rosner, 1 Absent - Trustee Feldman\*.

**VILLAGE BOARD MEETING**

➤ **Call to order**

Mayor Kalaj called to order the Village Board Meeting at 10:49 am on June 14, 2024, for the Village of South Blooming Grove located at 811 State Route 208, within the Village of South Blooming Grove, and having a mailing address of Monroe, New York.

➤ **Mayor Comments**

- Congratulations to Trustee Rosner for the addition of two healthy baby girls.
- The traffic light is being worked on and there will be a left turn signal at Mountain Road and Route 208. **Mr. Eksteain** advised that the DOT approved the left turn signal on Wednesday, and it was installed Thursday. The Village is awaiting approval from the DOT to allow the reconstruction of the second lane and to have it longer. The Hotel property is dedicating land but that can take over a year and the Village is now seeking easements to allow the road to be expanded, we are waiting for the Real Estate Department of the DOT to reply. The Village will be responsible until the state is ready in 2006 or 2007.

➤ **Correspondence**

- 822 Route 208 – Special Use Application tabled for a later meeting.

➤ **Public Comment**

- **Stacey Warren** said that two weeks ago there was a celebration at a block party that was very loud, very loud that went on until 1:00 am. People have to get up and go to work. She called the police and they shut it down, but she shouldn't have to call. The police took 20 minutes to get there.
- **Linda Mutchler** – Peddler Hill Road - School buses are literally traveling 50-60 mph on her road. The Route 208, Mountain Road issue was sending all the traffic down her road, her road is narrow enough as it is, there are school buses, a metro transit bus traveling on her road, where is the enforcement for not only speeding but also for the size of these vehicles traveling down her road all night long. There are sometimes school buses traveling until the wee hours of the night 7:30 – 8:00 pm at night. She also walks her dog. It is to the point where they are doing 50mph down Prospect Road. Bus number 105 is definitely a reoccurring issue. **The board** advised that they do not enforce traffic laws. **Ms. Mutchler** asked if there is any type of regulation with regard to buses. She never saw a Washingtonville School Bus traveling at that speed. She doesn't know how they would enforce it on that road. **Mayor Kalaj** advised that if it is not a Village bus she should contact the police and/or the bus company.

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- **Bonnie Rum** with regard to buses, if it is Orange County Transit might have it, you call the company and from what she understands, the police would have to observe it themselves, if you get the name of the company and tell the police and report it to the County Transit. The company has to understand they can be fined as they are responsible.
- **Mr. Grobstein** is very upset with the buses, he had a heart attack, they were going so fast he had to jump on someone's lawn. He is concerned with children, and he has 2 grandchildren, he has called the cops but he has never seen them watching. Maybe speed bumps would save people's lives. In spring Valley 3 children were killed by buses. The buses are going 50-60 mph and sometimes they are even reading a book speeding down Merriewold Lane North. He worries more about the children than anyone else. The cops should do something about it. The village put up speed limit signs but they didn't work, maybe a speed limit sign that tells them how fast they are going.
- **Barbara Hanley** the water for the past 2-3 weeks has been off, has something changed, it has been much worse. There was a celebration a few days ago and if a road is going to be closed it would be nice to know in advance. She recommends a clean up crew or something, after the celebration the debris/garbage just blows all over the place. This was around Lake Shore Drive.
- **BJ Mendelson** ?? Jacobowitz does that name ring a bell? It's not a requirement under law for a resident to provide a name and address. You have the option to say, you are going to provide your address or not. They don't have to tell you where they live or where they are from. ?? Jacobowitz, this gentleman is alleged to have been funding Mr. Ekstein and Mr. Stern as part of the operations here in South Blooming Grove. He hasn't seen this guy's name printed anywhere, mentioned anywhere which is really smart but he's gotta ask at what point are you going to disclose, at what part are you, Mr. Stern, going to recuse yourself from discussion. You want to talk about Fair Housing Program, let's say this is true. At what point will you recuse yourself. Mr. Ekstein you are subject to an Orange County investigation that is currently ongoing, at what point do you recuse yourself and not leave this village open and further the lawsuit from your actions? Because each week you are here and speaking on things that should be non-disclosed. You didn't disclose your relationship with Moshe Halpern. Is that on the paperwork you submitted for 1 Roanoke, no. Did you know that was a violation of municipal law, probably. It is too bad that the attorney isn't available. You continue opening yourself up to further lawsuit and further action. Mr. Stern and Ekstein are currently under investigation by the IRS, there is also an FBI investigation going for one member of the UJC. Mr. Kalaj you are very lucky in that the FBI are not terribly interested in the sale of your home, too bad for us. At what point is enough, enough?
- **Mr. Hewlitt** thanked Mr. Mendleson for bringing these things up, the transparency, otherwise you would be under a dark cloud. We have talked about the school buses, they zoom past the stop sign, school buses are not supposed to go in reverse with children on them. We defer to the police or the bus company, going back to the Fair Housing, cut your grass, don't park on the street. People flaunt it and practically spit at it. They are violating code all the time. Listen to the constituents, maybe some of the funding is for code enforcement. The safety of all children is a serious matter. They are violating codes, let's do something about it. Permits should be posted clearly.

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- **Chris Maderia** we're gonna talk about Fair Housing. At what point does the village say, why don't we see any homes on the MLS. None of these homes that are available are being advertised to the general public. He's never seen an ad for rent, these properties on the MLS. **Trustee Feldman** which properties? **Mr. Maderia** advised all of them. Every property that is available right now, you cannot find any on the MLS. **Mr. Ekstein** that's not true. **Mr. Maderia** every property is not on the MLS. You go to Blooming Grove Realty website, nothing. So at what point when you talk about Fair Housing do you start looking at why aren't these homes available to all citizens? Why are they only being advertised, why are they only being show to just the Jewish Community? Because that's true, that's what it is, they are advertised for the Jewish Community, they are not advertised to the regular community, they are not rented out to the regular community, I see it all the time. So when we talk about Fair Housing, Fair Housing means more than building a house, it means these houses are going to be offered to all citizens and he doesn't that's happening and he thinks that something the village should look into it.

➤ **Business**

- **Resolution No. (36)** – Resolution of the Village Board of the Village of South Blooming Grove authorizing the Mayor to submit a Community Development Block Grant Program Application for the fiscal year 2025. Motion to accept by Trustee Guttman, seconded by Deputy Mayor Weiss. 5 Ayes, Mayor Kalaj, Deputy Mayor Weiss, Trustee Guttman, Trustee Rosner, Trustee Feldman.
- **Resolution No. (37)** Resolution of the Village Board of the Village of South Blooming Grove Governing Body Fair Housing. Motion to accept by Trustee Feldman, seconded by Trustee Guttman. 5 Ayes Mayor Kalaj, Deputy Mayor Weiss, Trustee Guttman, Trustee Rosner, Trustee Feldman.

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➤ **Discussion**

- Al Fusco presented to the board the Cross Connection Code – the village started with intent to be lead agency for a sewer system rehabilitation project that the village is planning to try to get grants and zero to low interest loans for said project. The applications are done, the due date is today. The lead agency's intent was distributed, and comments back were in agreement. The resolution this evening will declare lead agency and further authorizes to move forward with the project with a negative declaration. The second phase is going out for bond to revamp the entire sewer system and is a long-term project. This grant is for clean water, which is sewage. If we are successful with the grant, it will take approximately a year to finalize and it is a reimbursement program. The village would borrow the funds and be reimbursed accordingly. We do qualify for exclusions for this project as well. Fees are being established for water and sewer capital at the rate of \$6,000 each.

➤ **Business – Continued**

- **Resolution No. (38)** - Resolution of the Village Board of the Village of South Blooming Grove declaring lead agency and a negative declaration for the CWSRF Grant. Motion to accept by Trustee

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Guttman, seconded by Trustee Rosner. *5 Ayes Mayor Kalaj, Deputy Mayor Weiss, Trustee Guttman, Trustee Rosner, Trustee Feldman.*

- **Resolution No. (40)** – Resolution of the Village Board of the Village of South Blooming Grove authorizing the issuance of bonds in a principal amount not to exceed \$42,926,000 to finance the construction of a new sewage treatment plant in the village. Motion to accept by Trustee Guttman, seconded by Deputy Mayor Weiss. *5 Ayes Mayor Kalaj, Deputy Mayor Weiss, Trustee Guttman, Trustee Rosner, Trustee Feldman.*
- **Resolution No. (39)** – Resolution of the Village Board of the Village of South Blooming Grove authorizing the Village Engineer to comply with NYSDEC requirements for the Merriewold Dam. Motion to accept by Trustee Rosner, seconded by Trustee Feldman. *5 Ayes Mayor Kalaj, Deputy Mayor Weiss, Trustee Guttman, Trustee Rosner, Trustee Feldman.*
- **Resolution No. (41)** – Resolution of the Village Board of the Village of South Blooming Grove authorizing the treasurer to set up separate accounts for paving and lighting fees. Motion to accept by Deputy Mayor Weiss, seconded by Mayor Kalaj. *5 Ayes Mayor Kalaj, Deputy Mayor Weiss, Trustee Guttman, Trustee Rosner, Trustee Feldman.*

➤ **Abstract**

- *Motion to accept the Abstract by Mayor Kalaj, seconded by Trustee Rosner, 5 Ayes, Mayor Kalaj, Deputy Mayor Weiss, Trustee Guttman, Trustee Rosner, Trustee Feldman.*

➤ **Discussion Continued**

- **Joel Stern** just like we did in the past with the Fire Department, there were some shortcomings, whatever they were, we found and created a Fire Department, and the process is moving on, the same with the Ambulance Department. When the need arises, as residents earlier said the buck stops at the mayor's desk and ultimately for the safety of all residents and commuters travelling through the Village of South Blooming Grove, falls on this board whether they have the resources or not we have to be creative and do what needs to be done. Considering what happened in the past couple of weeks on State Route 208 where there was total disregard from some agencies about the safety and well-being of the commuters, for example the Village did a lot of work over there, we funded the traffic signal, we made sure that traffic was running smoothly, there were no accidents for at least 18 months, and from the date that the shoulder was removed and up until today there were already three new accidents on that very dangerous intersection. Considering that the Blooming Grove Police Department doing the best that they can with the limited staff that they have whether it is because of budget short-comings or staff short-comings, they bent over backwards to try to cover everything and keep everybody safe and do what needs to be done but they are very understaffed and sometimes it takes longer to respond for example as was mentioned earlier that she called about a party and its not that they don't want to arrive or that they don't hear, its sometimes they are extremely understaffed, they actually help out a lot and get the job done. It would be important that the Village Board, that I would like to ask the Village Board to pass a resolution to authorize special counsel Monaco, Cooper, Lamme & Carr to research and initiate the process to create a Law Enforcement Agency that should be managed

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under the Village of South Blooming Grove just like we have the Town of Blooming Grove Police Department there should be a Village of South Blooming Grove whether its going to be a constable system or a police department or public safety or a combination of all of that but the process has to be started, they have to be authorized to look into that, do the research and to prepare resolutions, maybe we could go out for funding, for grant applications. The training process, the credentialing, the accreditation process and so forth so we can help out the Town when it comes to the safety and well-being of the residents. He asks the Board for a resolution to authorize special counsel to initiate the process and start looking into it.

- **Resolution No. (42)** – Resolution of the Village Board of the Village of South Blooming Grove authorizing special counsel Monaco, Cooper, Lamme & Carr to research and initiate the process to create a Village Law Enforcement/Public Safety Agency. Motion to accept by Trustee Feldman, seconded by Trustee Guttman. *5 Ayes Mayor Kalaj, Deputy Mayor Weiss, Trustee Guttman, Trustee Rosner, Trustee Feldman.*
- **Joel Stern** stated that the Police Department is bending over backwards to cover all the cars but they have shortcomings in staffing and in budget. After discussing the situation on Route 208, we discussed the traffic light, the turning lane but it is important to mention, he know that the village is still in the litigation with the County, but the majority of the problem over there is because of the people traveling on Route 208 that want to make a left turn onto Mountain Road or people coming from Mountain Road and making a right turn onto Route 208 to come back to South Blooming Grove. If there would be more cooperation and more understanding that wouldn't be an issue. As everybody understands, there would be no issue over there. There would be no traffic issue over there, there wouldn't be a need for a passing lane or for a turn signal, it's a 45 mph road. However, since we are where we are with that situation he wants to point out that God willing and thankfully when the Mangin bypass will be open and that road will end up going through the intersection on Gonzaga Road the majority of the traffic traversing through that intersection isn't going to be there, it is going to be a much safer intersection. We are working with the County, talking to them and hopefully soon there will be a very good resolution to the ongoing issue to everyone's satisfaction which means the County, the Village and to all commuters traveling Route 208 on a daily basis.
- **Mayor** we need to have street parking signs and make sure all bushes are cleared at intersections. He wants that done.

➤ **Adjournment**

- Motion to close the meeting at 11:45 am by Trustee Feldman, seconded by Mayor Kalaj. *5 Ayes, Mayor Kalaj, Deputy Mayor Weiss, Trustee Guttman, Trustee Rosner, Trustee Feldman.*

Minutes respectfully submitted by  
Kerry Dougherty, Village Clerk