



# Village of Oak Park

123 Madison Street  
Oak Park, Illinois 60302  
[www.oak-park.us](http://www.oak-park.us)

## Meeting Minutes

### President and Board of Trustees

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Tuesday, July 11, 2023

6:30 PM Nineteenth Century Club, 178 Forest Avenue, Oak Park

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#### I. Call to Order

Village President Vicki Scaman called the Special Meeting to order at 6:37 P.M.

#### II. Roll Call

**Present:** 7 - Village President Scaman, Village Trustee Buchanan, Village Trustee Enyia, Village Trustee Parakkat, Village Trustee Robinson, Village Trustee Straw, and Village Trustee Wesley

**Absent:** 0

#### III. Agenda Approval

It was moved by Trustee Straw, seconded by Trustee Wesley, to approve the Agenda. A voice vote was taken and the motion was approved.

#### IV. Non-Agenda Public Comment

There was no non-agenda public comment.

#### V. Regular Agenda

##### A. [ID 23-332](#) Village Board Goal Setting

Strategic Government Resources (SGR) Senior Vice President Hilary Shine presented the Item and facilitated the goal setting process with Trustees. She stated the goals for this meeting are to draft of the vision statement, revise the core values, and define our Board goals.

##### Values Discussion

VP Shine listed the current values: community-centered in our thinking; fiscally responsible with our public resources; build trust and respectful dialogue and board actions; transparent and accountable to the community (adding the word engagement); and communicate and collaborate with colleagues and community partners. In the last session, there was discussion on being focused on equity and sustainability and innovation for all concepts.

Trustee Wesley wondered if the goals should be verbs, like "create or maximize" community affordability. He said he liked equity and sustainability together, but wondered if innovation applies as a lens to decision making. Trustee Buchanan agreed and wondered if innovation can be expressed in a way that is more encompassing because not everything has to be innovative. What we mean is we are always open to improvement and we are not afraid of using new ways to improve outcomes. Trustee Wesley said he thought continuous improvement might encompass that.

Trustee Straw said our values are what we focus on in our decision making so it feels like we are calling into question whether we are focusing on the other things in decision making or why we are adding that again here. Trustee Parakkat said he was having the same thoughts.

Trustee Robinson said she liked transparent and accountable the way it is and not try to add the word engaged. She liked the verbs because they make it a more active framework. Trustee Parakkat agreed and suggested the word "engaged" be added with communication and collaboration.

VP Shine suggested "communicate, collaborate, and engage with the community and its partners." The Trustees made suggestions and the phrase was revised to "engage and collaborate with the community and partners." VP Shine suggested "focused on equity, innovation, and sustainability." The Trustees were in agreement.

Trustee Buchanan noted that we have not defined "community-centered in our thinking." Trustee Straw suggested it be removed because community is already centered in the other values. Trustee Parakkat said he feels strongly having it there as a framework for decision making. Trustee Wesley and President Scaman agreed though she stressed keeping the language concise.

#### Vision Statement Discussion

Trustee Parakkat suggested that Oak Park is a "destination" rather than simply a place. Trustee Robinson did not like the word "unique." Manager Jackson responded that he thinks the history and culture of Oak Park do make it unique. Trustee Enyia said Oak Parkers are always pushing to be different. Manager Jackson agreed.

President Scaman said Oak Park was built on civic engagement and she feels the vision needs to talk more about people. Trustee Parakkat suggested "The Village of Oak Park is an attractive destination to live and visit, made unique by its people, values, and culture." Clerk Waters said

she would like to see a more powerful word than "unique." Trustee Buchanan said she liked the word "transformational." Trustee Straw said he would like to see it "embracing the totality of its history" rather than just honoring it. Trustee Robinson agreed.

Manager Jackson shared input from a resident that "The Village of Oak Park is not just a community of choice, it's a way of life." President Scaman and Trustee Parakkat said they liked that. Trustee Buchanan said she thinks it sounds pretentious. Trustee Robinson noted it says what we are not instead of what we are. Trustee Straw questioned what "community of choice" means. Manager Jackson responded that it is a unique place where people want to be.

Trustee Wesley said he thinks of Oak Park as being "intentional." Trustee Parakkat suggested "transformational thought and action." Trustee Wesley said he liked that. Trustee Straw said he thinks "beautiful" is the wrong word. He suggested the word "exceptional." President Scaman recommended keeping it concise.

#### Board Goals Discussion

Trustee Parakkat said he feels that equity fits within the diverse, connected neighborhoods but he wondered if sustainability fits there as well. Trustee Buchanan said she would leave racial equity in. She wants to be sure the word "sustainability" is understood as taking action to mitigate further climate change. Trustee Parakkat suggested the goal be "execute our Climate Action Plan."

Trustee Buchanan suggested the word "achieve" for racial equity. Chief DEI Officer Dr. Danielle Walker responded that racial equity is not something that is ever completed so she recommended "leading in racial equity." She noted that having an intentional plan still needs to be built into the community's infrastructure. Trustee Enyia suggested "utilize or implement a racial equity lens." Trustee Straw suggested "build towards" or "strive for." Manager Jackson questioned if Oak Park wants to be a leader to other communities. President Scaman suggested "lead on racial equity." Dr. Walker suggested "advancing racial equity."

Trustee Wesley asked what it means to be a leader in racial equity. Manager Jackson noted that equity and sustainability are new spaces and the Village deems racial equity of the utmost importance and created a department within the Village Manager's Office. He wondered if the word "execute" should be used. VP Shine suggested "implement" instead.

Trustee Straw said the term "community safety" felt small and he

suggested instead "community health and safety." Trustee Wesley said adding the word "health" might create confusion between Board goals and Health Department goals. Manager Jackson said he sees the Health Department as part of community safety, along with Police and Fire, otherwise it would just be considered public safety. Police Chief Shatonya Johnson agreed. Trustee Straw wondered if the community will understand the term "community safety" as the Village understands it. Trustee Buchanan said she favored adding the word "health." President Scaman wondered if the word "healthy" should be added to describe the vibrant, diverse, connected neighborhoods.

President Scaman questioned if community affordability should be a goal or a value and wondered if "economic vitality" is redundant. Trustee Parakkat said he thinks it should be a goal and made the distinction that economic development is for businesses and affordability is for residents.

#### Goals Discussion

Trustee Parakkat asked if the Board should be looking for outcomes in addition to a strategic plan to be community-centered. VP Shine agreed that the Board is trying to define what success looks like long-term so the staff can build a plan to achieve it. Outcomes should be measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound. Trustee Parakkat wondered what is the appropriate time to associate a goal with its implications. VP Shine responded the timeframe is 5+ years.

#### Community Affordability

President Scaman said we want to maintain a certain level of socioeconomic diversity in our community and looking at economic barriers to remaining here. Trustee Wesley said it is maintaining an economically diverse set of entry points to our community. Trustee Parakkat said he would also add "exit points" such as when someone retires. Trustee Wesley agreed but would call it something other than exit points. Trustee Buchanan said she thinks it also includes measures by the government to assist those who may not otherwise be able to afford here. Trustee Parakkat said the tax levy is part of affordability. President Scaman said not raising the tax levy above 3% is currently a Board goal and there is a desire to work with our government partners for shared buy-in.

Trustee Parakkat suggested mentioning diversifying our tax base or revenue streams. Manager Jackson suggested that be part of economic or fiscal sustainability. President Scaman said she would be comfortable having it in more than one place. Manager Jackson agreed. Trustee

Parakkat stressed the importance of right-sizing. VP Shine said one of the values is being fiscally responsible with public resources. Manager Jackson agreed and said that happens during the budgeting process.

Trustee Robinson requested to broaden "government assistance programs" which include ordinances that help fund community affordability. Trustee Wesley recommended doing a comprehensive analysis of all services to see if there are any that are no longer used by the community. Trustee Parakkat agreed. Manager Jackson responded that the department directors assess the demand for services and he agreed that should be done on an annual basis.

Manager Jackson inquired about the basis for the 3% tax levy decision in the context of the other government entities. Trustee Wesley responded that previous Village Boards levied quite high. New officials were elected and the 3% cap was chosen from CPI at that time. He said the economic task force's taxation report was supposed to be the basis for all community governments to operate but he does not believe it happened that way.

#### Community Safety

President Scaman listed Police, Fire, Health, Public Works. Trustee Robinson said it is also about residents being able to use and enjoy their investments (property). Trustee Wesley said it is also about reducing pedestrian traffic accidents and certain categories of crime. Trustee Buchanan added the safety of biking and walking and considering our community safety workers and the need for a new police station and healthy workplace for police and staff. Trustee Straw added the ability to move around safely, free from bodily harm and harassment. Trustee Enyia agreed and said health also includes mental health. President Scaman wondered if this is also part of the vibrant, diverse, connected neighborhoods.

Trustee Parakkat said he feels that without safety, there is not a sense of community. Trustee Buchanan and President Scaman disagreed and said that people can grow up in unsafe communities that they feel strongly connected to.

Trustee Wesley said he would like to see things that are measurable. VP Shine said that is what the Village Manager will bring back to the Village Board based on their goals. Trustee Parakkat said the vision is the why, the what is what we are discussing now, and the how will come from the Village Manager. Trustee Straw said community health and safety should also be free from hazards. Trustee Enyia added that ADA accessibility is also a part of that.

### Racial Equity

Trustee Robinson said it is ensuring equitable access to government services regardless of language ability. Trustee Buchanan said equity is not about equality. It is about being extra welcoming to people who do not feel welcome because they are not a member of the majority. Trustee Robinson clarified that she means language ability, not just language. Trustee Wesley suggested "equitable access" instead of "equal access." Trustee Parakkat suggested using the existing diversity statement to define racial equity. President Scaman said we also want to assess our history on racial equity and work to address the gaps and make people whole as much as we can. Trustee Straw suggested the phrase "pursuing justice," which can be through policies and programs, reparations, and other means. President Scaman noted that one of the Board goals is to discuss reparations.

Trustee Wesley suggested more integrative single family home districts. President Scaman added access to home ownership. Trustee Wesley suggested adding "welcoming and inclusive." Trustee Enyia said it is more than just access, it is providing a path. Trustee Buchanan said that can be mortgage assistance. Trustee Robinson said it is about leveraging existing programs to assist with navigating the whole system. President Scaman noted the Village provides grants to assist with home ownership and she would like to see the Village have its own voucher system. Trustee Enyia noted that most of the issues are credit issues.

Trustee Buchanan said she likes seeing the Climate Action Plan here because it is well defined and prioritized. Trustee Robinson wondered if it could be limiting for programs and partnerships that are not part of the Climate Action Plan. Trustee Parakkat said we need to limit ourselves to focus on the highest priorities.

VP Shine asked the Trustees to jot down their thoughts on the remaining two goals of vibrant, diverse, connected neighborhoods and community affordability and bring them to the next session.

## **VI. Adjourn**

**It was moved by Trustee Wesley, seconded by Trustee Buchanan, to adjourn. A voice vote was taken and the motion was approved. Meeting adjourned at 10:03 P.M., Tuesday, July 11, 2023.**

**Respectfully submitted,  
Deputy Clerk Hansen**