



Village of Oak Park

123 Madison Street
Oak Park, Illinois 60302
www.oak-park.us

Meeting Minutes

President and Board of Trustees

Thursday, November 2, 2023

6:15 PM

Village Hall (Room 201)

I. Call to Order

Village President Vicki Scaman called the Emergency Meeting to order at 6:22 P.M.

II. Roll Call

Present: 6 - Village President Scaman, Village Trustee Buchanan, Village Trustee Enyia, Village Trustee Parakkat, Village Trustee Robinson, and Village Trustee Wesley

Absent: 1 - Village Trustee Straw

III. Agenda Approval

Trustee Wesley moved, Trustee Robinson seconded. No voice vote was taken.

IV. Non-Agenda Public Comment

There was no non-agenda public comment.

V. Village Manager Reports

Village Manager Kevin Jackson provided an introduction and Chief DEI Officer Dr. Danielle Walker provided an overview of the current efforts regarding the migrants.

Trustee Robinson asked if the 200 migrants includes the families with children in Oak Park schools, which Dr. Walker said it does not.

Trustee Parakkat asked how the migrants got to Oak Park. Dr. Walker said late Halloween night the Village started receiving messages that there were many migrants outside at District 15. Community organizers drove the migrants to the Oak Park police station. Through coordinated efforts they were moved to their current location at the church.

Trustee Wesley asked if the Village had any advanced notification, communication, or collaboration. Dr. Walker said the Village received a communication at 11:20 pm on October 31 that there may be an influx of migrants coming to the police station. Manager Jackson confirmed there was no advance collaboration. He received a call prior to that from Police

Chief Shatonya Johnson that a volunteer was seeking space inside the police station to bring families. He engaged staff to be prepared in the event someone arrived. President Scaman said she received a text message from a community member as they were arriving and immediately notified Manager Jackson.

Trustee Parakkat inquired about the Village's protocol. Manager Jackson said the Village responded to the emergent issue the best way it could and started to mobilize others throughout the night. The Village has formalized that approach with the Emergency Operating Center (EOC). Trustee Parakkat asked if there were decisions the Village had to make. Dr. Walker said once she arrived at the police station, it was clear the location was inadequate and would impact police operations. The church was able to better accommodate the 150 migrants that first night. Trustee Parakkat asked if the community organizers took migrants to any other community. Dr. Walker said she is not aware of that.

Trustee Enyia inquired if families are together. Dr. Walker said once they were relocated to the church, the Village began an intake process to understand health needs and whether any family members were missing. The Village believes everyone is currently with their families. President Scaman said she was onsite and worked to keep one family together.

Deputy Fire Chief JT Terry presented an overview of the EOC.

Trustee Parakkat inquired about reallocating resources to new and existing needs. Deputy Chief Terry said the structure builds out logistics while the Village still needs to operate and gives Manager Jackson the ability to move staff where they are needed.

Trustee Robinson inquired about the timeframe because she does not think it can continue for an extended period of time without seriously impacting the Village's standard operations. Manager Jackson said some of the answers could be policy decisions because it is considered an emergency until we can find a point of stabilization. Deputy Chief Terry said the Village traditionally follows what the state and county do. Trustee Robinson asked if this allows the Village to get looped into those higher levels of emergency protocol. Deputy Chief Terry said those conversations are happening and we have information that will help us coordinate individuals across the county.

Trustee Robinson inquired how the Village ensures safety in a situation like this. Chief Johnson said police staff are monitoring and will provide off-duty detail. Trustee Robinson asked how social service referrals are part of the emergency response. Chief Johnson said OPPD has protocols to

coordinate efforts throughout the village and ensure individuals are receiving the services they need. Trustee Robinson asked how long the Village has the capacity to do that. Village Attorney Paul Stephanides said the resolution is drafted for a 30-day period. Renewals would come back before the Village Board.

Trustee Enyia asked if the Village has determined its capacity. Manager Jackson said the Village is having to reallocate staff and is over capacity and reaching out to other agencies for assistance. The Village has to respond regardless of the number of migrants.

Trustee Robinson said the Village has to pass the budget and needs staff to provide detailed agenda items and budget deliberations. She questioned how feasible it is for staff do that during the Village Board's most critical time of the year. Manager Jackson said the Village raised that concern from the outset when it applied for the Mayors Caucus funding. The Manager can only spend what the Board directs him to spend. He said the Village does not foresee a threat to completing the budget. Staff are always fully allocated and working to address Board priorities and continue baseline services. When the Village gets hit with an unanticipated event, those things are impacted.

Trustee Robinson said she would like to move to have staff identify key emergency communications related to the asylum seekers and their families and provide translations in Spanish. She said she would then like to create a budget line for language access supports to meet those needs moving forward. Manager Jackson said the Village can include funding in the budget and discuss in the forthcoming conversations. Staff have been working on a language access policy to bring to the Village Board. Once the Board provides direction on the policy, the program development on language access would occur and there would need to be some budget authority to support those programs and services.

Trustee Parakkat noted last Monday the Village Board agreed to match \$150K with a grant. A day later community organizers brought migrants into the community which feels like an ambush and he is extremely concerned about deploying local taxpayer dollars to solve a crisis we do not have the ability to solve. As a person representing this community, he said he doesn't think he has the mandate to spend the dollars or divert the resources on a problem he has no hope of solving.

Trustee Wesley asked how this will impact OPPD's ability to maintain service. Chief Johnson said OPPD will respond with overtime and follow the Village Manager's lead and re-evaluate every 30 days. She said she will monitor officer wellness to ensure officers are not overextended.

Trustee Wesley said the Village Board created a plan that would not be an emergency and now we find ourselves in one which challenges the ability of the Village to respond to everyone.

Trustee Wesley inquired about the spending authority. Attorney Stephanides said the \$150K in grant funds and \$150K allocated at the previous meeting would be for the Manager to spend on an emergency basis and execute contracts without bidding. Language access services could be executed by the Manager as well. Trustee Wesley said he supports the emergency proclamation with the \$300K spending authority.

President Scaman said it's important to support staff in responding to an emergency. The Village is doing everything it can to work with the city and state agencies to prepare ourselves and secure the dollars needed to support the grant we applied for and the activities that are needed.

Trustee Parakkat noted he was one of the volunteers who brought food. He said he has problems diverting taxpayer dollars and Village resources toward a situation like this. He said if it is bounded by the \$300K per the last meeting, he can go along with that but beyond that he is a no.

Trustee Buchanan inquired how long the \$300K will last. Manager Jackson said the Village is actively planning and trying to identify alternatives to the current situation where migrants are housed. There is a cost to those alternatives and at this time the Village cannot be definitive about when it will end. Deputy Village Manager Lisa Shelley said she is working with staff to gather information and determine what that may cost. Manager Jackson said there will be periodic and comprehensive updates through the current period of December 2.

Trustee Robinson said she does not want to tie the Village Manager's hands where the response becomes so inefficient it is not helpful. The Village has partner agencies it has given millions of dollars to and they are also stretched thin. The lack of coordination, notice, and attempt to work with the Village ends up hurting the people that need the services. She said she supports the resolution as written because it opens up greater efficiencies in existing channels. Trustee Wesley seconded Trustee Robinson's motion.

VI. Regular Agenda

- A. [RES 23-326](#) **A Resolution Declaring an Emergency Disaster Affecting the Public Health, Safety and Welfare in Order to Provide Aid and Support to Asylum Seekers Residing in the Village of Oak Park**

Trustee Parakkat requested to amend the motion to include 30 days or \$300K, whichever comes earlier. Attorney Stephanides recommended

leaving it as is because it puts the Village in a position of getting other funds from other governmental agencies. If the \$300K runs out, the emergency declaration will remain in place and expire after 30 days. He suggested amending the resolution to be in effect through the December 4 Board meeting, instead of December 2 as is currently written.

President Scaman said the Village Board can ask Manager Jackson to provide an update before the \$300K is reached and if further action is required, the Board can make it at that time. Manager Jackson confirmed that is expected to occur.

Trustee Parakkat asked if by giving the Village Manager authority, we are ensuring community services are not impeded. President Scaman said anytime there is a state of emergency, there is going to be an impact on services, as there was during COVID-19. Trustee Parakkat said there are other things that can be done and he does not want to be in another situation next week where more funds and resources are being diverted. President Scaman said if the Village is in charge of an emergency plan, then we can be in a position to not be caught off guard again. Trustee Parakkat said he is fine with the December 4 date.

Trustee Robinson inquired about the expiration date. Attorney Stephanides said it doesn't run concurrent with the state. If the state's expires and is not extended, ours can still be in place. Trustee Robinson said she is fine with it as written, with the December 4 date.

Trustee Enyia made a friendly amendment to amend the expiration date to December 4, 2023, which was seconded by Trustee Wesley. Trustee Enyia said we knew this was going to happen when it got cold. Trustee Parakkat noted there are community organizers from neighboring communities but no one went there. President Scaman quoted Good Shepherd Pastor Kathy Nolte. Trustee Parakkat said a lot of people at the CTA station are in a similar situation. It is difficult to solve the problem in front of us in a practical way that meets the needs of the community at large. President Scaman said she hears Trustee Parakkat and we are in a situation no one asked for and managing as best we can.

Sabrina-Joi King Bell: Speaks against Oak Park continuing to be a sanctuary city. Please include a referendum on the next ballot asking citizens if they wish Oak Park to remain a sanctuary city.

Kenshata Harris: Good Shepherd Lutheran has moved migrants into the church to stay. Thought it wasn't a decision for migrants to be moving in Oak Park. Why was there no meeting with the community about this.

Sheila Wesonga: We must formulate a plan to help immediate needs while working on long-term activities to solicit funding, aid mental and physical health, education, job preparedness, etcetera.

Dorothy Hill: Please do not accept any federal funds that would make Oak Park obligated to migrant care. Do not start any actions that Oak Park citizens or services could not maintain over time.

Christina Welter: Recommends the Village Board expand funding for a comprehensive approach to support asylum seekers inclusive of housing, employment, food, child care, and other basic living needs.

It was moved by Trustee Enyia, seconded by Trustee Wesley, that this Resolution be amended. The motion was approved. The roll call on the vote was as follows:

AYES: 6 - Village President Scaman, Village Trustee Buchanan, Village Trustee Enyia, Village Trustee Parakkat, Village Trustee Robinson, and Village Trustee Wesley

NAYS: 0

ABSENT: 1 - Village Trustee Straw

VII. Adjourn

It was moved by Trustee Buchanan, seconded by Trustee Robinson to Adjourn. A voice vote was taken and the motion was approved. Meeting adjourned at 7:36 P.M., Thursday, November 2, 2023.

**Respectfully submitted,
Deputy Clerk Hansen**