



Village of Oak Park

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

Meeting Minutes

President and Board of Trustees

Monday, May 22, 2023

7:00 PM

Village Hall

I. Call to Order

Village President Vicki Scaman called the Special Meeting to order at 7:03 P.M.

II. Roll Call

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

Absent: 1 - Village Trustee Enyia

III. Agenda Approval

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

IV. Non-Agenda Public Comment

Village Clerk Christina Waters read the following public comment into the Record:

Anonymous: At the May 15 meeting, Trustees voted for an amendment to add the term "anti-Semitism" without discussion. The proposed amendment should be pulled and discussed openly to determine what happened, why, and how this decision was made. The statement is a sham and should be tabled until further input is given from diverse community members.

President Scaman thanked the public commenter. She said Village Board and staff are in agreement with the equity statement and the missing of the word "anti-Semitism" which was a human error. She apologized for the error.

V. Proclamation

- A. [MOT 23-59](#) A Motion to Approve a Proclamation for Proclaiming May 2023 as Community Mental Health Board 50th Anniversary.

President Scaman read the Proclamation into the Record.

Community Mental Health Board Executive Director Cheryl Potts thanked

the Village Board and community for their support.

It was moved by Trustee Buchanan, seconded by Trustee Robinson, that this Motion be approved. The motion was approved. The roll call on the vote was as follows:

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

NAYS: 0

ABSENT: 1 - Village Trustee Enyia

B. [MOT 23-60](#) A Motion to Approve a Proclamation In Honor of John Lynch May 22, 2023.

Trustee Wesley read the Proclamation into the Record.

Oak Park Economic Development Corporation Executive Director John Lynch thanked the Village Board and staff and his colleagues and family for their support during his tenure.

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSENT: 1 - Village Trustee Enyia

VI. Regular Agenda

C. [ID 23-223](#) Presentation and Discussion on Municipal Options for Blending Renewable Energy within Retail Supply and Aggregation Contracts

Clerk Waters read the following public comment into the record:

John Michelotti: Stated information about the PJM utility grid operator and requested the Village Board to ask Mr. Pruitt how Oak Park will be able to meet its goals to have actual renewable power without using renewable energy credits when our grid is not accepting any new renewable projects.

Deputy Village Manager Ahmad Zayyad introduced the Item.

Illinois Community Choice Aggregation Network (ICCAN) Principal Mark Pruitt presented the Item.

Trustee Buchanan inquired if it has to be municipal buildings. Principal Pruitt said there is no legal way to install panels on a church and buy that electricity. Risks can include counter party risk, technology risk, and if the

cost of power generated from resources is higher than the utility. Municipalities can work together through the joint purchasing provisions to increase the volume to get better negotiating terms. The challenge is getting everyone to agree on the terms.

Principal Pruitt said a municipality can join any other municipal contract outside of Illinois provided the initial contract was led through a competitive bidding process. Look at the counter party risk of the retail suppliers, vet them closely, and mitigate risk by requiring performance bonds within the contract. It's possible to contract directly with the energy supplier or work with a middle man. A contract can be exited but it would be difficult to build that into an initial contract without a penalty. It's best to spread the risk by not having all contracts with the same technology or company.

Trustee Robinson asked if the Village would become a market participant if it takes and sells units of energy. Principal Pruitt said that would not be the case. That is a retail transaction and the Village is the end user of that electricity. The virtual power purchase agreement is a wholesale transaction whereby the Village is a transactor. Trustee Robinson said she thinks aggregating with other municipalities, even in other states, makes sense to share that risk.

Trustee Straw asked if it is common for commercial entities to participate to offset electricity costs. Principal Pruitt said very much so and these contracts are common for municipalities that operate their own utilities as the cost of the technology is lower now and there is a higher level of interest and incentive. Behind the meter projects are cheaper because there are higher incentives and the economic benefit is higher. Trustee Straw said it makes sense from a risk perspective to diversify our options and look at both onsite and off-site projects.

President Scaman explained that C4 is a group of 14 communities that have signed on together to address reducing greenhouse gases. She welcomed Principal Pruitt's involvement.

Trustee Parakkat said he is concerned about the risk of obsolescence with onsite technologies and he favors the off-site model even though it is less favorable financially.

Principal Pruitt said he is conducting roof assessments and determining how much power the ComEd system can accommodate. ComEd's projection is to reach 12% renewables by 2030. The Village can install its own batteries which would mitigate the problem of overloading the substation. 20 years is the minimum life expectancy for most solar projects, which gradually lose their productive capacity over time. Wind farm

hardware wears out and needs to be replaced with larger turbines. In response to the public comment, Principal Pruitt said PJM has made it clear they are not accepting new applications. There are thousands in the queue.

Deputy Manager Zayyad said next steps will be for staff to analyze historical data and take an inventory of site opportunities and come back to the Village Board later this year with options.

D. [ID 23-251](#)

Presentation and Discussion on Current Business Trends, Recent New Developments, and Past Planning Efforts Regarding Roosevelt Road and North Avenue

Judith Alexander, Chair of North Avenue District, Inc: Has been working since 2013 to revitalize North Avenue. Accepted the CMAP revitalization plan and the transportation, mobility, and safety study. Urged the Village Board to expedite completing the streetscape, including curb extensions, trees, and bollards. Urged vigorous and rapid code enforcement and erecting gateway signs at both Harlem and Austin Avenues.

Assistant Development Customer Services (DCS) Director Cameron Davis presented business trends and recent new developments on the Roosevelt Road and North Avenue corridors.

Village Planner Craig Failor presented past planning efforts on the two corridors.

Trustee Wesley asked how long it took to complete the Ellers study. Planner Failor responded that it was done within a six-month period. Trustee Wesley asked if Oak Park not having TIFFs contributed to the different outcomes on Roosevelt Road. Planner Failor acknowledged that Oak Park's higher taxes and not having the TIFF incentive were disadvantages.

Trustee Wesley wondered why the Village Board at the time declined the business improvement district (BID), SSA and TIFFs. DCS Director Tammie Grossman said the political climate at the time required all taxing bodies to agree relating to a TIFF and Oak Park did not have the best track record in spending TIFF funds and the political will was not there for a TIFF. The district was not organized enough to do an SSA which is why the staff recommended the BID. The business district strongly opposed. The Village Board at the time ultimately decided not to go forward with the BID.

Assistant Director Davis said Roosevelt Road is under-performing and he would like the Village Board to consider reestablishing the planning in business districts in years past.

Trustee Parakkat requested data on the current and desired composition of retail businesses and an understanding of why businesses left those corridors.

In response to the public comment, Trustee Straw asked if the Village Board can expedite the timelines. Village Engineer Bill McKenna said the state budget has \$21.4M for the North Avenue streetscape project led by the city of Chicago. The Village is working with CDOT and Representative Lilly to get the funds released to start designing the project with an anticipated construction season in 2026. The Village has met with the city to define the limits of Harlem to Central. There is not an IGA in place yet but all are in agreement and the intent is that the Village will have a seat at the table and have full say for design elements and public engagement.

Trustee Straw asked if it is possible to consider minority and women-owned businesses for new business licenses. Assistant Director Davis said the Village does not currently collect that data. Trustee Straw inquired about efforts to fill vacant commercial spaces. Assistant Director Davis gave an example on the 6200 block of Roosevelt Road of a former tire and battery location. The Village assists commercial brokers and started a walk-through program with potential businesses which it does nearly weekly.

Trustee Robinson noted that information about the past three TIFFs is on the Village website. She requested more information on the BID and SSA options. President Scaman noted that Downtown Oak Park is now an SSA.

Trustee Wesley asked what will be done differently this time to revitalize these districts. Manager Jackson responded that the Village has a contract with OPEDC which is responsible for recruitment of businesses. Assistant Director Davis said the Village will support people that want to invest in the districts and partner with existing business associations. Oak Park has had more than 100 new business start-ups each year for the past three years, with the biggest months in April through July.

Chair Alexander clarified that North Avenue District, Inc. is a group of stakeholders, not residents. Half the board are business owners, half are from Chicago, half from Oak Park, and half are people of color. Half of businesses along North Avenue are minority-owned. Wonderworks Children's Museum would love to expand. One idea is to close off Elmwood and exercise imminent domain over the long vacant IHOP.

- E. [RES 23-182](#) A Resolution Approving a Fiscal Year 2022 Community Project Funding Grant Agreement No. B-22-CP-IL-0333 between the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Village of Oak Park for the North Avenue Gateway Safety Improvement Project in an**

Amount Not to Exceed \$200,000 and Authorizing its Execution

Engineer McKenna presented the Item.

Trustee Straw asked if the gateway sign at Harlem would be from a different source of funds than the sign at Austin. Engineer McKenna said CDOT is not opposed to using the funds for the Harlem because it is consistent with the streetscape project. Trustee Straw recommended reaching out to stakeholders to ensure the design proposals make the signs feel inviting and not exclusionary. Engineer McKenna confirmed there will be public engagement meetings and targeted outreach to stakeholders.

Trustee Parakkat asked if the Village Board will have the option to choose the design of the gateway signs. Engineer McKenna said the Village will work with IDOT and CDOT and present design concepts and price points to the Village Board. The Board will select a concept and the Village will reengage a consultant to produce the design. The Village Board will have multiple points of engagement. The Village is looking at state funds and other funding sources such as a grant through Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP). Trustee Parakkat said he has no issues with moving forward.

Trustee Buchanan inquired about the push back to the gateway signs. Chair Alexander said they received a lot of negative feedback on Facebook from residents who say they live east of there. President Scaman noted that the Village has approved a racial equity assessment and supports minority and women-owned businesses and is mindful of this way of operating in everything it does.

Trustee Parakkat asked if the scope of the Vision Zero Plan includes North Avenue and Roosevelt Road. Engineer McKenna said Vision Zero will primarily focus on internal streets. The Village has a complementary program through CMAP to look at the perimeter arterial streets. Trustee Parakkat inquired if realigning Oak Park Avenue through North Avenue is included in the plan. Engineer McKenna responded that it is included in the study's longer term improvements.

President Scaman noted this Item received support from Senator Dick Durbin.

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSENT: 1 - Village Trustee Enyia

F. [MOT 23-55](#) A Motion to Approve an Updated Organizational Chart for the Village Manager's Office and Development Customer Services Department, Including the Creation of a Neighborhood Services Department

Manager Jackson introduced the Item.

Chris Donovan: Said the changes in leadership with the retirements of John Lynch and Tammie Grossman is a time to change the format. Supports OPEDC dissolving but wonders where those functions will go. Asked for more information on the Ellers study. Says emphasizing small businesses is the way to go, especially along Roosevelt Road and North Avenue.

Assistant Village Manager/HR Director Kira Tchang presented the alternative recommendation (Option 2) and outlined the modifications to the original recommendation (Option 1).

Trustee Wesley said he likes Option 1 and hopes OPEDC will be involved in the transition plan. Assistant Manager Tchang noted there are financial implications to Option 1 and staff will seek guidance from the Village Board on where the funding will come from. The delta is roughly \$530K. Manager Jackson agreed the funds will have to be found within the general fund in order to maintain the same amount for OPEDC. Assistant Manager Tchang said staff recommends Option 1 which addresses a broader range of needs within the organization.

Trustee Buchanan asked what feedback Option 2 addresses. Assistant Manager Tchang said that staff heard an interest from the Village Board in having further discussion about OPEDC and an option for them to continue to receive funding from the Village. Staff also heard the desire to determine immediate needs and create fewer positions. Staff would look to OPEDC to partner on an economic vitality study and continue leading in economic development. They would not necessarily disband in the next fiscal year but give the Village and OPEDC more time to go through the planning phase which would then determine the next steps. The re-org would occur in phases.

Trustee Buchanan noted that the Village is giving OPEDC more than before after John Lynch's salary is taken away. Assistant Manager Tchang said the Village wanted OPEDC to be able to continue to pay their staff and meet their financial obligations this year.

Trustee Robinson asked for clarification on OPEDC's contract end date. Manager Jackson said it is concurrent with the term of the Village

President. Assistant Manager Tchang said the \$400K is for the annual term of the contract. Manager Jackson said there are no proposed changes to the scope of services at this time. The expectation from the Village is that OPEDC would provide leadership on creating a new vision for economic development, rather than waiting for the Village to conduct a study. The Village Board would likely have to amend the contract to create some expectations.

Assistant Manager Tchang said the Deputy Manager will take on similar work as the Assistant Village Manager/Neighborhood Services Director. If it is not a standalone department, the executive coordinator and administrator would not need to be hired. The new housing programs coordinator position is recommended for both options. The Village is proposing that the welcome center coordinator be a reconstituted position that is budgeted within the Village Manager's Office.

Trustee Robinson said she favors Option 1 because of its focus on the neighborhood services department which will be important for the DEI, sustainability, and Vision Zero initiatives. The Village still gets the benefit of OPEDC's expertise for the shortened time period.

Trustee Straw said he prefers Option 1 for reasons of community engagement. He wondered what changed with OPEDC other than John Lynch's departure. Manager Jackson responded that the change has come with time and the completion of the analysis of what is needed in the organization. Trustee Straw said he leans toward a compromise where the Option 1 is implemented, continue funding OPEDC at lower levels, and bridge the remainder of the year with general funds during the study period to determine if the external resource is still needed, rather than terminating the contract now and then deciding we want them back later. Manager Jackson said the question is what the OPEDC will do during that period of time. The Village Board can continue to fund OPEDC if it chooses to do so, which is what Option 2 was aiming to do.

Trustee Parakkat said he would like to understand the economic development goals and who to hold accountable. He said he favors Option 1 and recommends waiting for the vitality study before creating the neighborhood services department.

Trustee Buchanan asked how the Village plans to hire a new DCS Director will be hired and then shrink their scope later on. Manager Jackson said the parking department is the outlier and makes it more difficult to manage but he thinks it is possible. The status quo can be maintained for economic development as the Village looks for opportunities to shrink the department and move things around in the future. Trustee Buchanan said she favors

Option 1 and would support continuing to fund OPEDC through the end of the year if it was dramatically shrunk to a half or less of their current annual budget prorated for the rest of the year.

President Scaman said she is in favor of Option 1. She requested separating the OPEDC discussion and having them come back to the Village Board to discuss what they would do if the Village decides to continue their funding through the end of the year.

Trustee Robinson noted that Option 1 includes the OPEDC for another 90 days. After that time, the Village can assess whether it wants to continue with OPEDC and perhaps do a 90-day contract extension. Manager Jackson said he believes the assessment will take longer than 90 days. Trustee Robinson said OPEDC does not have to be a partner for the entire duration of the assessment.

Trustee Wesley wondered what the mission would be of the new economic development structure. Manager Jackson said the Village has not yet had that discussion. The current OPEDC contract says they do recruitment, retention, expansion, and development and working with small, minority-owned, and women-owned businesses. The Village does not currently have a vision for those things or an incentive policy. Trustee Wesley said the Village should not assume it will have the services of OPEDC and its volunteers for 90 days if they are being fired.

Trustee Buchanan said something large would have to be cut from the general fund to fund the \$400K. Manager Jackson said it will take time to hire the positions so it will not be the full \$400K. Trustee Buchanan acknowledged that OPEDC operated under different Village leadership in the past and had very strict bylaws. She requested a compromise of Option 1 for the re-org and continuing OPEDC with bare bones funding until the end of the year. President Scaman said they will not be able to use the \$400K by the end of the year.

OPEDC Acting Director Eric Mazelis said the decision should be made on what is best for the Village. He inquired if OPEDC has been defunded in the past. Director Grossman said she does not believe so but the OPDC in the past was more bank-centered and the Village Board was focused on large parcels of land.

Acting Director Mazelis spoke about the benefits of an external agency. Manager Jackson said for the amount of funding they receive from the Village, which is equivalent to an entire Village department, the external agency should be leading with the Village as a partner. The Village supports the continuation if that is what the analysis shows.

It was moved by Trustee Wesley, seconded by Trustee Straw, that this Motion be

approved. The motion was approved. The roll call on the vote was as follows:

AYES: 5 - Village President Scaman, Village Trustee Buchanan, Village Trustee Parakkat, Village Trustee Robinson, and Village Trustee Straw

NAYS: 1 - Village Trustee Wesley

ABSENT: 1 - Village Trustee Enyia

G. [MOT 23-56](#) **A Motion to Approve an Updated Organizational Chart for the Public Works Department**

It was moved by Trustee Straw, seconded by Trustee Robinson, that this Motion be approved. The motion was approved. The roll call on the vote was as follows:

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

NAYS: 0

ABSENT: 1 - Village Trustee Enyia

VII. Adjourn

It was moved by Trustee Straw, seconded by Trustee Robinson to Adjourn. A voice vote was taken and the motion was approved. Meeting adjourned at 10:53 P.M.

**Respectfully Submitted,
Deputy Clerk Hansen**