



Village of Oak Park

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

Meeting Minutes

President and Board of Trustees

Monday, November 13, 2023

6:30 PM

Village Hall

I. Call to Order

Village President Vicki Scaman called the Regular Meeting to order at 6:33 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. Consideration of Motion to Adjourn to Executive Session to Discuss Collective Bargaining

It was moved by Trustee Straw, seconded by Trustee Wesley, to adjourn into Executive Session. The motion was approved. The roll call on the vote was as follows:

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

NAYS: 0

ABSENT: 0

IV. Reconvene to Regular Meeting in Council Chambers and Call to Order

The Regular Meeting reconvened at 7:18 P.M.

V. 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

VI. Agenda Approval

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

VII. Non-Agenda Public Comment

Lisa F.: Wants to know more information about migrant curfews and rules in place. Concerned about safety.

Village President Vicki Scaman read the following comment into the record and asked the public to watch the words they choose in addressing this Board and our community.

John Bergholz: The Village Board created a problem by bringing illegal aliens. Requests an official statement condemning Hamas.

Village Clerk Christina Waters read the following comments into the record:

Aisha Ahmed: Supports formalizing efforts to help our new neighbors.

Allison Sansone: Resident is heartened to see volunteers set up schedules to house, feed, clothe, and empower newcomers.

Amy Danahey: Supports Village's efforts to welcome new migrants and thanks Village leadership and the community.

Deborah Wess: Resident is grateful to Village leadership and staff who stepped up and are continuing this hard work.

Joe Raschke: Expresses gratitude for all of the efforts of our community to help out the migrant people.

Katie Hejna: Supports the Village Board's commendable efforts to shelter and assist migrants coming to our town.

Anonymous: Saw that migrants are staying at the YMCA and Carleton Hotel. When was the public notified about this?

Lisa Desai: Surprised at the lack of knowledge of some of the Trustees regarding what services Chicago is actually providing.

Matthew Hess: Supports the current and ongoing efforts to support migrant families that have come to Oak Park.

Teresa Sullivan: Supports the Village's efforts to welcome new migrants into our community.

Zerrin Bulut: Volunteer and resident thanks the Board for their efforts in support of the newly arrived migrants.

Sarah Avendano: Since our new neighbors have arrived, so many have shown what it means to offer support and expertise.

VIII. Village Manager Reports

Village Manager Kevin Jackson introduced Oak Park Public Library (OPPL) Executive Director Joslyn Bowling Dixon who presented OPPL's FY 2024 proposed tax levy and budget.

Trustee Wesley noted OPPL's operating levy is half the Village's and the Village provides a lot more services. Director Dixon said it amounts to a \$38 increase per taxpayer. It is not the intent to stay at that level. OPPL provides a lot of services and the community has made it known that they value OPPL's services.

Trustee Parakkat inquired if other sources will be found for the remaining 1.6% increase. Director Dixon said OPPL will reactivate the foundation and has a pop-up store coming. They are also looking into electric vehicle charging fees and doing passports. Trustee Parakkat requested a projection for the next 3-5 years. Director Dixon said the 8% will course correct OPPL so they are where they should be. Trustee Parakkat inquired about the free haircuts. Director Dixon said that was a special back-to-school kick-off.

Manager Jackson introduced Assistant Village Manager/HR Director Kira Tchang who provided an update on the asylum seeker response efforts.

President Scaman said the 22 families in the Carleton Hotel is a concern for her because it is costly and temporary.

Trustee Enyia wondered about the level of financial and services impact to the partner organizations.

Trustee Straw said he would favor extending the emergency proclamation into January and allocating enough ARPA funding to ensure housing for the migrants into January. He inquired how many additional migrants have come. Director Tchang said there were 162 migrants at Good Shepherd and United Lutheran, 20 at Calvary Church, and 16 at Grace Episcopal. Additional families showed up at Good Shepherd and there was no space so they were returned to Chicago. They were supported by community members to find shelter locations in Oak Park. Some churches have expressed interest in running volunteer-led shelter locations. Trustee Straw said he hopes to find a more cost-efficient way to provide shelter than the Carleton Hotel.

Trustee Robinson asked if the volunteer-led sites would be independent of Village support. Director Tchang said the Village is providing overnight

security services at Grace Episcopal and is not providing support at Calvary. Trustee Robinson suggested exploring support from other taxing bodies. Director Tchang said there have been a lot of conversations and offers of support. Village staff's efforts last week were focused on relocating the migrants. Now it is time to start transitioning our planning efforts toward the future, which can include our governmental partners, faith community, volunteer organizations, and neighboring communities.

Trustee Robinson requested to have the value of the staff being diverted added to these numbers. Manager Jackson said staff are working to include that. Trustee Robinson said she would like the conversation with the city to include program options in addition to funding. She said at this time she is not in favor of extending the emergency order because the Village does not have the finances nor staff capacity. She said she is not in favor of utilizing any more ARPA funding without a more comprehensive discussion about the options in using that money.

Manager Jackson noted that additional migrants are coming to seek housing and services that are not available. Staff seek direction on the level of service the Board expects staff to provide for the additional migrants. Trustee Robinson said the messaging should be consistent that we are at capacity and we have to facilitate a transition and identify other resources.

President Scaman requested more information on opportunities with the partnerships and a resource guide for additional migrants. She said she would like to see the emergency order on the December 4 agenda.

Trustee Buchanan said she supports extending the emergency order and is open to additional funding from the Village's fund balance. She inquired if a task force is convening and said she would like to see the Village step back as the role of our partners evolve so it is doing more facilitation and less emergency management. President Scaman noted the contracted partner agency Housing Forward is working to find more permanent housing. Trustee Straw said he tabled the motion to organize a task force because there was not a clear consensus for it. Director Tchang said if the Board makes that request, staff will be able to respond.

Manager Jackson confirmed the Village is in a soft shutdown. Trustee Wesley asked what will happen if the emergency order is extended. Manager Jackson said we will remain in emergency mode with staff time being diverted. A task force would require additional staff time. Trustee Wesley inquired if the \$300K per month number will decrease. Manager Jackson said staff are doing everything possible to economize the resources and utilize partnerships. Director Tchang said the numbers are pulled from contracts with providers. The pro bono legal services are a

significant cost savings to the Village.

Trustee Wesley said if the Board extends the order, we are talking March at the earliest, which would be \$1.2M more for 162 people. We would be spending more than we would be levying additionally from last year. We haven't spent that amount previously on homeless people in the village. He said he has a problem with creating inequitable government response. He said if the Board votes to extend this, he will make a motion every week to find groups of people we can help and he will be holding this Board accountable. The Village has to think about its position in this system and shutting down the government in Oak Park for four months. There may need to be a new department that has not yet been discussed or planned. He said he is against continuing the order without a plan.

Manager Jackson said if the Village waits until December 4, the migrants will be out on the street and the Village will need to marshal all of its resources to address that. If it is extended, it will provide a cushion to plan though there will still be a service impact. He said he put a recommendation in the budget to bring more capacity to help facilitate those partnerships and task force.

President Scaman said she would support the Board providing direction now rather than waiting for December 4. She said she would like to see support for all of Oak Park's homeless well into the future. She noted the Village has currently spent \$150K which was matched with a \$150K grant.

Trustee Wesley said he is not currently in favor of extending the emergency order but would be open to it if the funding conditions change.

Trustee Enyia said he would like to see the Village take more of a subcontractor role within a task force. He said he wants to ensure the Village has a plan moving forward.

Trustee Parakkat asked if it is possible to tell the new migrants that we are at capacity and cannot provide services. Manager Jackson said staff are trying to gauge the Board's interest in how it wants to handle new arrivals. Director Tchang said staff will need to do a lot of planning for whatever potential outcome could happen. Trustee Parakkat said he prefers to understand the options and costs before providing direction. Director Tchang said the cost estimates are included in the memo to the Board. Staff do not want to presume the Board's direction because not all Trustees are in agreement. Manager Jackson said there are no other housing alternatives but potentially some church basements and the question of whether they can be fully volunteer-supported. Trustee Parakkat said he is not in favor of standing up a new department or extending the emergency

declaration based on the current information he sees.

Trustee Straw referenced a Chicago pilot program for expediting work authorizations. Director Tchang said the Village will ask about the program when it meets with the city on Wednesday. Trustee Straw said the asylum seekers want to be working and be self-sufficient. He said he thinks there are opportunities to create efficiencies and find a middle level of service. Manager Jackson said he will continue to report out on the facts regarding the costs and staff time. Staff will bring forward the emergency declaration extension at the November 20 meeting.

Trustee Robinson agreed with Trustee Wesley about the built-in tension with serving other vulnerable groups. She wondered if the Village will make up the difference if the partner agencies' funding gets reduced because they serve more than just the migrant community.

Trustee Parakkat requested that the community work together to solve this as opposed to creating rifts based on political ideology.

It was moved by Trustee Straw, seconded by Trustee Buchanan, to extend the meeting past 10:00 P.M.

Trustee Robinson said she will vote no for the extension because we cannot continue to start the budget discussion at 10 pm and have it go 2-3 hours. It is not sustainable and she does not feel safe leaving Village Hall at midnight. She recommended that if additional time is needed, additional meetings be scheduled.

Interim CFO Donna Gayden recommended moving the budget discussion to November 20. President Scaman requested a document be shared with the public of all of the questions that were asked by the Village Board and answered by staff. CFO Gayden confirmed that can be provided. Manager Jackson said the Village will report back on its conversation with the city via memo. The November 20 agenda will be for budget discussion only.

Trustee Straw withdrew the motion to extend the meeting past 10:00 P.M.

X. 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 10:11 P.M., Monday, November 13, 2023.

**Respectfully submitted,
Deputy Clerk Hansen**