



Discussed: 5/10/2021

Adopted:

# Protocols

Village of Oak Park

Village Board of Trustees

*This document is an internal working document that contains staff guidance as to the purpose of selected protocols in order to maintain institutional records for the Village Manager's Office related to the support for the Village Board of Trustees and staff that works in support of the official meetings of the Village Board. All guidance is noted in italics.*

These protocols are meant to provide general rules of engagement for the President and Village Trustees while conducting the business of the Village of Oak Park. It is understood that there will be extenuating circumstances at times that will mean certain protocols will be waived or adjusted. However, it is also understood that such circumstances should be the exception and not the rule.

These protocols will serve as a framework for conducting efficient and effective Board meetings, for proper use of communication tools such as e-mail and social media, for respectful interactions with staff and each other, and for strengthening the Village Manager form of government in the Village as a whole. Protocols can be revisited at any time, but it is suggested that the Board review them at least annually to make any adjustments deemed appropriate.

## I. Meetings of the Village Board

The Village Board has four types of meetings: Executive Session, Regular Board Meetings, Special Meetings and Board Committees. Minutes will be prepared by the Village Clerks Office and presented to the Board in a timely manner that allows the Board to approve the minutes and their eventual release in a timely and lawful manner.

### Regular Meetings of the Board

#### A. Scheduling (Regular Meetings)

1. Regular Meetings are scheduled at 7:00 p.m. on the First and Third Mondays, unless the meeting would fall on a holiday in which case the meeting would be scheduled on a Tuesday.
2. Meetings of the Village Board shall conclude no later than 10:00 p.m. It is the goal of the Village Board to conclude meetings by 9:30 p.m.
3. During the months of April, August and December, it is preferred that only one (1) meeting is held that month. This is a Regular Meeting on the first Monday of the month only. If additional meetings are required, staff will notify the Board and seek a quorum of the Board for additional meeting dates.
4. For the purpose of discussion during a meeting, it is preferred that the President use the Trustee's first name when recognizing them to speak at a meeting, or among discussion between members of the Village Board or for staff to address the Village Board.

*This has changed from Board to Board and is determined by each new Board based upon the preferences of the members.*

5. Consideration of an agenda item will begin with the President reading the item and then recognizing staff or citizen board/commission chair, who will provide a brief summary.
6. Staff or outside expert presentations will be limited to ten (10) minutes, unless an advance request is made and deemed appropriate for a longer period of time.

*The ten (10) minute guidance was set to provide parameters so that the total length of meetings of the Village Board is structured. On average, a Regular Meeting can have 15 or more items per meeting, and having someone who is scheduled to present organize their presentation materials into a 10-minute limit has been found to be helpful by prior Boards. The Village Board has at the Board table, by majority consensus, extended time for a presentation when it is deemed*

*necessary. Additionally, Board discussion with a presenter is not counted within the ten (10) minutes.*

7. At a Regular Meeting, it is preferable to take one round of questions first to determine if there is sufficient information to take a vote.

*This protocol supports the efforts of the meeting Chair (a/k/a, the Village President) to recognize each Trustee individually by name and ensure each member of the Village Board is afforded time to speak to an item.*

8. The Village Attorney will provide clarification on the rules regarding, and expectations related to, a first and second reading of an item.

#### B. Agenda Preparation (Regular Meetings)

1. Staff will limit the number of agenda items so the Board can realistically address items in the time allotted for the meeting.

*A diagram is available as to how items generally get to a Village Board agenda.*

2. Staff will provide the preliminary agenda by Tuesday prior (*except the day after a holiday*) to the meeting to include the number of agenda items, the order and a detailed item overview.
3. Board feedback on the preliminary agenda is due back to staff by noon on Thursdays. A Board member may also request additional information about an agenda item following receipt of the draft agenda by email.

*This is important for staff to plan work for the day by having a hard deadline. However, this does not preclude additional agenda-related questions that may come up later in the week or over a weekend. This is for larger concerns, obvious errors in posting and moving items from Consent to Regular so that the agenda posted on Thursday at 5:00 p.m. is accurate for the public.*

4. Staff will order the agenda items in a manner that is the most efficient use of time at a meeting, including placing items that may draw public attendance or require professional staff time closer to the top of the agenda if practicable.
5. Staff will pull an item from the preliminary agenda when it turns out not to be ripe for action and provide a written update when necessary.
6. To add a new item not shown, the President individually, or a Trustee with the concurrence of a second may make such request of the Village Manager. This request, along with the second Trustee's agreement can be submitted electronically to the Village Board email. Generally, as a

courtesy, there would be an advance call to the Village Manager to discuss the addition or removal of an agenda item.

7. On Thursdays, the agenda is finalized and made public. The agenda is generally posted prior to 5:00 p.m. at Village Hall and on the Village website on Thursdays. At the same time the website materials are posted, they are also available to the Board via the Granicus application on iPad. The agenda is also emailed to the press no later than Thursday.

*This is a reminder that any agenda items that require "re-posting" of the agenda on Friday's are problematic and disrupts workload and impacts transparency.*

8. Question for any agenda item can be posed by any member of the Village Board throughout the week, but preferably no later than 9 a.m. Fridays. This can be submitted via email to the Board email, using the bcc option. The VMO will coordinate and provide responses back to the entire Board generally via email. Unless specifically requested (see B6), staff will assume the questions are answered and the item will remain on the Consent Agenda. If the questions are asked on the same days as the meeting, a hard copy of the answers will be provided for every member of the Board at their seat in the Council Chambers.
9. Items on the Regular Agenda will be discussed. Staff associated with these items will be present at the meeting.
10. Proclamations may be read in their entirety.
11. The Board Meeting Calendar should be a discussion item as a part of the Regular Meeting Agenda to determine topics/subjects for upcoming Special Meetings approximately six weeks in advance. The Village Manager will maintain a current list of topics requested to be scheduled by at least two members of the Board (as noted earlier in the Protocols).

*This is an opportunity to be more specific and discuss the calendar at the Board table in detail on the first Monday of each month. This would provide for structured Board discussion about the addition of policy discussions at future meetings with dialogue related to staff work and any other related matters. The addition of a policy discussion at a public meeting would allow for more structure, identify alignment with Board goals and avoid potential ex-parte email communications.*

### C. Consent & Regular Agenda (Regular Meetings)

1. Between Tuesday and Thursday at noon, any member of the Board can request that items on the Consent Agenda be moved to the Regular. This request can be submitted electronically to the Village Board email. This is done generally because a Trustee is going to vote against the item and therefore a separate roll call vote is needed or the Trustee desires to have a conversation about the item specifically during the meeting.
2. While any Board member may pull an item off of Consent at any time prior to the approval of the agenda at the beginning of a meeting, the Board agrees to an informal deadline for pulling an item off of Consent is by noon on Thursdays.
3. Department Directors will attend the Board meeting only if their department has an agenda item on the Regular Agenda as of 5 p.m. on the meeting day. Therefore, if an item is moved from the Consent Agenda to the Regular Agenda at the start of the meeting (under Agenda Approval) it is unlikely that necessary staff will be available to address questions.
4. It will be the default practice to waive reading of consent agenda items by the approval of a motion to approve the consent agenda. Pursuant to Robert's Rules of Order, items on the Consent Agenda are non-debatable and therefore, are assumed to have no discussion.

### D. Board Deliberation (Regular Meetings)

1. Consideration of an agenda item will begin with the President reading the item and then recognizing staff or citizen board/commission chair, who will provide a brief summary.
2. Following the summary, Board members will have the opportunity to ask questions, and have agreed to try to limit questions to no more than five minutes each.

*The purpose is to provide for everyone at a meeting to be engaged and feel comfortable expressing opinions/asking questions. Additionally, under Section 2-2-5 of the Village Code, the rules of order and parliamentary practice comprised in the current edition of "Robert's Rules of Order" shall govern the conduct of Village Board meetings unless they shall have been superseded, in whole or in part, by the action of the Board. Therefore, the Village President should recognize anyone prior to speaking, this applies to the Village Manager, staff, Board/Commission members, and applicants before the Village Board (e.g., liquor license applicants). This keeps the flow of the meeting in order, limits interruption when there is a "pause" in the cadence of the speaker, and is especially helpful during virtual meetings. While individual trustees may call upon staff to comment, it is preferable that the Village Manager identifies the staff person responsible for commenting as there can be errors in the organization assignment of a staff member to specific work items.*

3. Following questions, Board members will offer their comments on the item, and will try to limit comments to no more than three minutes each.
4. For questions and comments, the President will call on Trustees to speak in a round-robin format, with the President included at the end of each round-robin if the President wishes to ask questions or comment.
5. Following comments, any Board member who wishes to speak again shall be recognized by the President, and will try to limit those comments to one minute; likewise, the President is included at the end of the comment period, where the President may add their own substantive comments, summarize the Board consensus or majority direction, or help an evenly divided Board arrive at a decision.
6. During a roll-call vote, no additional comments shall be made.
7. The President, as presiding officer, will keep track of speaking times and may be assisted by the Clerk.

E. Public Comment (Regular Meetings)

1. In keeping with existing Board policy, an individual may provide public comment for up to three minutes during the non-agenda public comment period or during the consideration for a specific agenda item. If Village Board meetings are by remote participation, the public will be given the choice to have their comments read by the Village Clerk or give their comments by calling in to the virtual meeting without a camera.
2. The overall time limit for Non-Agenda Public Comment at its usual spot near the beginning of the meeting will be 30 minutes with the balance to be taken at the end of the Regular Agenda.
3. The Village Board will not respond to public comments as a part of the meeting or enter into discussion with the commenter as a part of the meeting. The Village will respond and at the conclusion of the public comment period via the President noting that staff will follow-up on the matter.
4. In keeping with existing Board policy, public comment on any item for which a public hearing has taken place (or will take place) may be limited to five individuals commenting on each side of the issue.
5. Public comment may be received from any individual on up to three agenda items at a Regular Meeting.
6. To preserve the civility of public meetings, the Board will not recognize comments made by the public from their seats in the audience. Public comments are only recognized during the Public

Comment period noted on the agenda and all speakers must speak from the podium after being called by the President in response to filing a public comment form with the Clerk.

## Special Meetings of the Board

### A. Scheduling (Special Meetings)

1. Special Meetings, as needed, are scheduled for 7:00 p.m. on the Second and Fourth Mondays, unless there is a need to convene an Executive Session at the start of the meeting. The Special Meeting may then be Called to Order at 6:30 p.m. and immediately adjourned to an Executive Session prior to reconvening in Open Session at 7:30 p.m.
2. Special Meetings of the Village Board shall conclude no later than 9:00 p.m. It is the goal of the Village Board to conclude special meetings by 8:30 p.m.

### B. Agenda Preparation (Special Meetings)

1. Special meetings should be held for more in-depth study of items. Action items should not generally be a part of a Special Meeting agenda unless timing for consideration requires an exception.
2. Staff may add regular agenda items to Special Meetings.

### C. Consent & Regular Agenda (Special Meetings)

1. See "Regular Agenda" section of Protocols

### D. Board Deliberation (Special Meetings)

1. See "Regular Agenda" section of Protocols

### E. Public Comment (Special Meetings)

1. Public Comment will be allowed for agenda items as well as non-agenda public comment. The same limits apply as for a regular meeting.

## Executive Session

### A. Scheduling (Executive Session)

1. Executive Sessions, if needed, are generally reserved for all Regular Meetings from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.
2. Executive sessions will begin on time, and, if held prior to a public session, will end at least five minutes before the start of the public session.
3. For the purpose of Roll Call, the Village Clerk will use the title and the last name of each Trustee or Village President (i.e., Trustee Smith).
4. Each agenda item will provide a clear statement of staff recommendations (similar to Regular Agenda Items), or if staff can't come to a consensus, then a clear statement of Option A vs Option B, etc. It is important for staff to share viable alternatives, even when there is strong staff consensus for a specific recommendation.
5. Executive Session time should be used for discussion and not for acquiring excessive amounts of additional information.
6. After Board direction is provided, the Village President or Village Manager will make a statement recapping the direction given.

*This summary of discussion is important, especially on items where a lengthy discussion has occurred. The meeting Chair (a/k/a, Village President) should either state the summary or recognize the Village Manager to do so.*

7. Executive Session Minutes will detail the reason for the session, the particular subject matter, the direction given, and a summary. These minutes will be reviewed by the Law Department also.

*Per Robert's Rules of Order, it is customary for the meeting Chair (a/k/a, Village President) to state the outcome of the vote – e.g., approved/failed.*

### B. Agenda Preparation (Executive Session)

1. Staff will set a reasonable amount of time to be spent on each agenda item on the preliminary agenda, both to help staff arrive at a reasonable number of agenda items and to give the Board timeframes to follow at the meeting.



2. Staff will provide the preliminary confidential agenda topics by Tuesday prior to the executive session to include the number of agenda items, the order, and the time to be spent on each agenda item.
3. Unless the matter is extremely urgent, no detailed legal or other staff memoranda should be sent out on Mondays prior to, or at, an Executive Session.
4. Staff will alert the public at such time as the length of an executive session discussion would result in a delay in the reconvening of the meeting in public.
5. Staff will hold a review of the current permissible executive session parameters in a public meeting annually.
6. Staff will pull an item from the preliminary agenda when it turns out not to be ripe for action and provide a written update, if necessary, rather than a briefing at the Executive Session.
7. Staff will share information on all pending matters of an Executive Session with all elected officials as soon as one elected official is advised of the matter.

## **II. Committees of the Village Board**

### **A. Purpose**

1. Each Committee will create a scope of work unless a scope is already defined in Section IIB below.
2. Appointments will be made by the President.
3. Committee meetings are scheduled as needed but should allow for a reduction in the number of Special Meetings.
4. Committees will report to the full Board as required by issues that are ripe for action in a given area. Reports can also be provided quarterly.
5. Minutes will be kept of all Committee meetings.

## B. Structure

1. Finance (3 Trustees) – generally meets multiple times prior to when the Village Manager recommends their budget to the Village Board; reviews draft recommendations of the proposed budget for the following year and provides feedback; reviews the annual audit prior to Village Board review at a regular meeting.
2. Personnel (3 Trustees) – generally meets for the Village Manager’s formal performance review process.
3. Reinventing Government (3 Trustees)- generally meets to review proposed organizational changes, changes in technology, improvements or innovations to customer service, or to review Partner Agencies

## III. Communications

### A. General Communications

1. Board members should avoid contemporaneous communications to avoid violating the Open Meetings Act. When an individual Board member nonetheless sends an email to the Board, Trustees should not reply to all, but may direct a private response to the original sender. These limitations do not apply to communications regarding the organization, logistics, or scheduling.
2. Substantive email questions that are directed to staff may be copied to all members of the Board utilizing a “blind carbon copy” (bcc) function and noting the full board bcc in the salutation.
3. For the Village Board’s background, the Village Manager’s Executive Coordinator has access to all emails sent to the Manager.
4. Interaction with staff should go through the Village Manager with a copy to the Executive Coordinator in the Office of the Village Manager. Small action items can be sent directly to staff or a department director but must be copied to the Manager and the Executive Coordinator. There should be no commentary on performance or personnel issues with any staff member in such communication.
5. The Village President must strive for transparency in dealings with staff at Village Hall and should keep Trustees informed of meetings and significant interactions on a regular basis.
6. Trustees should provide feedback on their Citizen Board/Commission liaison role.

B. Responding to Email Sent to the Village Board

1. The Village Manager 's Office is responsible for responding to all Village Board inquiries sent to the Village Board group email. Therefore, the Village Manager, Deputy Village Managers and the Executive Coordinator are included in the Village Board's group email address. The Village Clerk is also added to this email for situational awareness.

*Staff works to respond to Board emails in groups, typically on Thursday's/Fridays, so that the Board can easily look and find responses during a coordinated time. We recognize many requests are sent to staff outside of Village Hall office hours. In order to provide for work/life balance, staff will address routing inquiries during office hours. Emails meetings and texts/emails during meetings between officials/staff/public.*

2. The Executive Coordinator provides a general reply back to explain that the message is received. If required, a response is also coordinated amongst staff. This response is sent directly to the email sender with a copy to the Board utilizing a "blind carbon copy" (bcc) function to avoid the potential for contemporaneous interactive communication by the Board of Trustees, constituents and staff.
3. Trustees may wish to respond to emails directly but are encouraged to blind copy all the Board members on their reply for the purpose of (1) avoiding contemporaneous communications and (2) to inform the other members of the Board that the email has been responded to by an elected official

C. Response to Voicemail sent to the Village Board

1. The Executive Coordinator provides a general reply back to explain that the message is received. If required, a response is also coordinated amongst staff and staff will contact the caller directly. The Executive Coordinator will send the Board a follow-up email briefly describing the service that was provided to the caller.

D. Individual Board Emails and Voicemails

1. Staff does not get a copy of individual Board emails nor voicemails, and therefore staff will not respond. If there is a need for a staff response, the President/Mayor or Trustees will contact the Executive Coordinator or the Village Manager as needed.

E. Standards for Public Emergencies

1. When there is an emergency, the Village Manager and/or Communications Director will work directly with the Village President or President Pro-Tem (who is selected on seniority and

availability) if it is necessary for an elected official to serve as the spokesperson for the Village Board.

2. The Village Board will not make statements individually. No statements will be made without referring to the Village Manager to ensure all the facts are correct.
3. The Village will utilize the Public Information Officer and/or Communications Department.

F. Standards for Responding to the Media

1. For each issue in which it is necessary for a statement from the Board, the Board will decide in advance who the spokesperson is for the Village Board for that issue.

G. Individual Elected Official Requests for Information.

1. All individual Elected Official requests for information will be shared with the entire Village Board.
2. If the request requires more than one-two hours of staff time to develop a work product, the Village Manager shall review the request and further direction and clarification from the full Village Board.

H. Use of Social Media

1. It is not required of any member of the Village Board to have an account or have a presence on social media.
2. The Village of Oak Park will maintain official social media platforms as determined by the Communications Department subject to annual budget appropriations.
3. If an individual Trustee or President decides to have an individual account, it is the responsibility of that Trustee or President/Mayor to monitor their own activities to be sure they are not in violation of the Open Meetings Act as a public official. For example, it is a violation of the Open Meetings Act if more than two Trustees comment on another Trustee or President's thread.