



Village of Oak Park

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

Meeting Minutes

President and Board of Trustees

Tuesday, November 28, 2023

6:00 PM

Village Hall

I. Call to Order

Village President Vicki Scaman called the Regular Meeting to order at 6:03 P.M.

II. Roll Call

Trustee Enyia joined the meeting at 6:30 P.M. via remote participation per Village policy.

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

IV. Minutes

- A. [MOT 23-111](#) Motion to Approve Minutes from the October 30, 2023 Regular Meeting of the Village Board

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

V. Non-Agenda Public Comment

There was no non-agenda public comment.

VII. Regular Agenda

- B [ID 23-560](#) Review of the Fiscal Year 2024 Proposed Budget

Village Manager Kevin Jackson introduced the Item and Interim CFO Donna Gayden presented the FY2024 proposed budget.

Trustee Parakkat noted the \$1.75M in interest income and asked what happens if the interest environment slides down. CFO Gayden said the Village will do long-term planning next year. Some projects will be deferred

to future years. She said this is a very good, tight budget.

Trustee Parakkat noted external support has doubled since 2020 and said unless we do something about expenses, it is going to cause heartache and put us in a precarious position. He asked what replaces ARPA next year. CFO Gayden said the Village will look at revenue projections when it does its financial planning. She explained that external support expenses in 2020 were much higher due to COVID-19. It is starting to go down.

Trustee Parakkat said there are opportunities for optimization where we can start to curb expenses so we are not in as terrible a situation next year. CFO Gayden said she doesn't think the timing for that is now because in order to optimize, each department has to determine how it can do each project tighter which is done over a longer period of time. Manager Jackson noted that analyzing revenues is part of the planning process and looking for efficiencies happens with each budget cycle.

Trustee Parakkat said it is difficult for him to get behind this budget in anticipation of future optimizations that may exist. Manager Jackson noted the Village kept the levy flat which does not occur often and the Village was the only jurisdiction that did that. President Scaman said we agreed the financial policy discussions would happen in the new year working with the goal of a 3% levy. Trustee Parakkat said fiscal policy and long-term financial planning are different discussions. CFO Gayden said the Village lost out on \$1M by not levying. She said she never recommends a municipality to go flat because expenses continue to go up and the levy may have to be even higher in the future to make up for that loss.

Trustee Wesley said he recalled CFO Drazner saying he thought the Village would be safe with a flat levy. Manager Jackson said he advised the Board last summer that the base was going to change. We are now levying 3% on a different base than if we had levied last year.

Trustee Parakkat said the reason to keep the levy flat was because of the one-year break in pension contributions. It went down last year and has come back to normal levels. He said he questions the assumption that expenses have to go up 3% or 5% year over year. If we have to tax our people, then we cannot make the argument that we have to have an affordable community. President Scaman said CFO Drazner said it was doable, not that it was advisable, and now we are living with those consequences. We have a very tight budget and a decision to make about cutting services or paying for the level of services residents expect from us.

Trustee Robinson wondered if it would be prudent to make some cuts now knowing we will have to amend the budget once costs start coming in. CFO

Gayden said she advises reallocating within the same budget so the bottom line stays the same. If new funding is required, it can be done within that department or from another department in the general fund.

Trustee Robinson expressed concern about pulling recurring operational expenses from reserve and said she would like to see that number decreased. Manager Jackson asked if she would like to make a recommendation on where to get it from. Trustee Robinson suggested the Regional Housing Center allocation earmarked in the budget. CFO Gayden said that was reduced.

Trustee Robinson suggested the salary study. Manager Jackson said the study is complete and the \$150K is in response to the outcome of the study if salaries need to be increased. Trustee Robinson said she prefers to wait for the study results and then determine the amount and where it will come from. CFO Gayden said the results are expected in 30-45 days. Trustee Robinson expressed concern for creating a model that is not long-term. CFO Gayden said the model was created when the levy was kept flat. The Village will not have that problem next year.

Trustee Parakkat asked what happens if the interest income in 2025 is only \$300K. CFO Gayden said then the Village will have to look at what it wants to decrease in the operating and/or one-time cost budgets. Trustee Parakkat said he expects staff to recommend where to make cuts, not the Board. Manager Jackson said staff can make recommendations though he has not heard from Trustees that they want to cut any baseline services or priorities. It would be more meaningful for the Board to direct staff to look at certain services they are not sure they want to continue providing.

Trustee Robinson noted the Board proposed additional revenue, such as charging for EV stations. Manager Jackson said staff will respond to those and noted he was the one who recommended long-term financial planning. President Scaman noted it is in the Board goals to review all fees and fines.

Trustee Robinson said she thinks it is doable to bring the operational expenses down. She asked if anything unspent goes back into reserves, which CFO Gayden confirmed it does and noted the revenues are extremely down which is why we are having to go into reserves.

Trustee Straw asked if it is likely the Village will continue seeing savings from unfilled Police positions. Manager Jackson noted there are 31 vacancies now in Police. CFO Gayden said there is a savings of \$2.1M in the Finance budget for those positions that may not be filled. Trustee Straw asked if there are any anticipated savings elsewhere in the budget. CFO

Gayden said the Village has competent department heads who will try to bring in their projects under budget.

President Scaman wondered if there is enough opportunity for revenue sources. CFO Gayden recommended the Village reforecast and meet quarterly to know if revenue is coming in as expected or if expenses need to be reduced. Trustee Robinson said she would love for the Village to do that and thinks the Finance Committee should meet throughout the year. Manager Jackson agreed and noted that quarterly budget amendments are customary in municipal budgeting.

Assistant Village Manager/HR Director Kira Tchang provided a historical overview on staffing turnover and explanation of the Contrafund.

Trustee Buchanan said she is supportive of this budget and is not asking for cuts. She said she trusts the budgeting experts which the Trustees are not and wants to make sure the direction provided is from the majority of the Board and not from individual trustees. She said the 45% fund balance seems really high. Manager Jackson agreed it is unusual and attributed it to the year-over-year salary savings, general savings from projects and initiatives, and converting the ARPA funding to lost revenue. He said we may not always be in that position depending on our priorities.

Trustee Buchanan expressed reservations about increasing the Police budget in a time when there are forces in society pushing back against it. She said she fully supports the changes OPPD is making and assumes the alternative calls for service model will decrease the number of officers. She said she disagrees with the implication that if you are not for cuts, you are not for affordability. She said we all want this community to be affordable, which is based on housing prices and property values, not the Village budget. Community affordability has to happen with the school districts. President Scaman noted one of our Board goals is to look for opportunities for collaboration with our other governmental partners, with all valuing the goal of community affordability.

Trustee Wesley said he thinks alternative calls for service go beyond mental health response. We are never going to staff all of the budgeted Police positions in the short term. It is important to use our resources wisely where we are getting the most out of their training and meeting the needs of our community. He said he is not happy about spending \$300K out of reserves. Manager Jackson said staff will bring the alternative calls for service back to the Board in early winter.

Trustee Robinson inquired about the decrease in grants when a grants consultant was hired to increased them. Village Engineer Bill McKenna

said the Village anticipated using grant funds in 2023 to start the Cap the Ike project. We haven't been authorized by IDOT to start that work so grant funds were moved into 2024 for that project.

Trustee Parakkat requested the rationale behind the decrease in fines and fees. CFO Gayden said \$600K is parking fines and \$500K is building permit fees. Trustee Parakkat inquired why parking fines are down. Deputy Chief Dave Jacobson said it is due to staffing vacancies in the parking enforcement and Police departments and increased compliance.

Trustee Parakkat noted the Village budget is 15% of the overall tax levy. He said he did not get on this Board to say other Boards are doing this. He said he feels even \$50 in taxes makes a difference to a lot of people and we should do everything to keep the community as affordable as possible. He said he does not appreciate being co-opted into Trustee Buchanan's ignorance of the budgeting process.

Trustee Wesley asked if Police are writing parking citations and if others can do it that are easier to hire. President Scaman said there is a parking enforcement division and Police can also write them. Deputy Chief Jacobson said some longtime parking enforcement employees retired and resigned and we are slowly getting back up to staff. Trustee Wesley said he would like to prioritize filling any revenue generating positions. Manager Jackson said staff will seek the Board's input on traffic enforcement in Q1 and look at transportation overall as it relates to Vision Zero.

Trustee Parakkat inquired about the new departments having external support budgets. Manager Jackson said this is a new emerging department and the budget was trying to form a basic department until a director is hired. Management Analyst Noemy Diaz said once the director and staff are hired, they can determine what those external support funds will be used for based on the goals set by the Village Manager. President Scaman provided the example of economic vitality software.

Trustee Parakkat inquired about specific line items. CFO Gayden said \$80K is Cityview's annual agreement. Manager Jackson clarified it is split between Development Services and Neighborhood Services and is not a new cost. Trustee Parakkat asked if the increased Passport software is based on usage. Analyst Diaz said it is a contractual increase based on the agreement. OPPD Administrative Commander Kellie Murphy said a user fee is associated with the app so the more users, the higher the fees.

Trustee Parakkat said he would like to see if there is a way to reduce the \$300K in operational costs and balance to the extent possible. Manager Jackson said he asked each department head to identify any redundancies

and efficiencies and they did that and delivered their presentations to the Board. He said this is his recommended budget and he would like to hear from the Board if there are any particular services they would like to direct staff to look at and come back with some recommendations.

Trustee Wesley said he would like more budgeted for the Village's parade float and for community events.

President Scaman asked if the savings due to unfilled positions also applies to positions filled with ARPA funds. Manager Jackson explained that ARPA dollars supporting staffing are one-time costs. If they are not spent, they go back into the ARPA fund balance to be reallocated. President Scaman asked if they could go into the general fund balance. CFO Gayden said she will have to investigate at how they were allocated.

Trustee Parakkat said he had requested the Fire Department overtime to be rebalanced. He noted it has come down by \$200K instead of \$300K. Fire Chief Ron Kobyleski said for the last two years it has been \$1M and it is at \$600K now which he is comfortable with.

Trustee Robinson referenced the \$600K remaining in ARPA and said she would love to know if staff has ideas that mirror the original allocation for park improvements. She said the Oak Park Avenue Streetscape Project is a nice example that serves many people.

President Scaman and Trustees Straw and Wesley said they are supportive of the budget as is. President Scaman said staff are really listening to the Board's concerns. Manager Jackson said this is a budget we can be proud of. He noted there are not many new expenses and there are many one-time expenses that will be completed.

Trustee Parakkat said his concerns are from a view of the future and not a reflection of what staff has done. He said the savings are not as big as expected and his concern is when ARPA funds go away. The one-time studies will have recommendations and additional costs.

VIII. Call to Board and Clerk

President Scaman said there will be no meeting Thursday.

IX. Adjourn

It was moved by Trustee Wesley, seconded by Trustee Straw, to Adjourn. A voice vote was taken and the motion was approved. Meeting adjourned at 8:13 P.M., Tuesday, November 28, 2023.

Respectfully submitted,
Deputy Clerk Hansen