



Village of Oak Park

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

Meeting Minutes

President and Board of Trustees

Monday, June 22, 2020

6:30 PM

Village Hall

I. Call to Order

Village President Abu-Taleb called the Meeting to order at 6:31 P.M. He clarified that the Meeting is being held remotely due to COVID-19 restrictions and that it is not feasible to have people present at the Board's regular meeting location due to the public health concerns related to that outbreak.

II. Roll Call

Present: 7 - Village President Abu-Taleb, Village Trustee Andrews, Village Trustee Boutet, Village Trustee Buchanan, Village Trustee Moroney, Village Trustee Taglia, and Village Trustee Walker-Peddakotla

Absent: 0

III. Agenda Approval

Village Trustee Buchanan proposed adding an Agenda Item. Village President Abu-Taleb commented that it may be possible to add it as a discussion. Village Trustee Boutet stated that 48 hours notice is require to add an Agenda Item. Village Trustee Walker-Peddakotla stated that she was told by the Village Manager that the Item was a broad enough topic to discuss under Item B.

It was moved by Village Trustee Boutet, seconded by Village Trustee Andrews, to approve the Agenda. The motion was approved. The roll call on the vote was as follows:

AYES: 7 - Village President Abu-Taleb, Village Trustee Andrews, Village Trustee Boutet, Village Trustee Buchanan, Village Trustee Moroney, Village Trustee Taglia, and Village Trustee Walker-Peddakotla

NAYS: 0

ABSENT: 0

IV. Non-Agenda Public Comment

There was no Non-Agenda Public Comment.

V. Regular Agenda

- A. [RES 20-155](#) A Resolution in Support of the Obama Foundation Pledge which was taken by Mayor Anan Abu-Taleb as Part of a National Effort to Address Police Violence and Systemic Racism by Evaluating Local Police Use-of-Force

Policies

Dr. Orson Morrison and Keri Morrison. Dr. and Ms. Morrison appreciate the sentiment of the pledge, however, they feel it should include input and language from individuals and groups disproportionately impacted by police use of force policies, among other items.

Village Trustee Walker-Peddakotla does not support the Resolution as written; it is not enough. It has to acknowledge the harm done by the Village Board and previous Boards by not acknowledging claims of racial profiling by police. There has to have some reparation language in the Resolution. Justice is not just about moving forward; it has to be about repairing harm that has been done. She asked Chief La Don Reynolds how many use of force complaints there have been in the Village in a given year and if that really is the biggest problem when it comes to policing.

Village Trustee Boutet stated that they Village has a duty to review the use of force policy. She does think it is important to let the public know what the Village plans on doing. However, she is comfortable with the Resolution, as there are other opportunities to address other issues. Village Trustee Walker-Peddakotla disagreed and felt that the Resolution does not go far enough.

It was moved by Village Trustee Walker-Peddakotla, seconded by Village Trustee Andrews, that this Resolution be adopted. The motion was approved. The roll call on the vote was as follows:

AYES: 6 - Village President Abu-Taleb, Village Trustee Andrews, Village Trustee Boutet, Village Trustee Buchanan, Village Trustee Moroney, and Village Trustee Taglia

NAYS: 1 - Village Trustee Walker-Peddakotla

ABSENT: 0

B. [MOT 20-035](#) A Motion Directing Staff to Prepare the Necessary Actions to Undertake a Series of Public Forums and Special Meetings of the Village Board beginning in July 2020 in support a Review of Police Use-of-Force Policies Inclusive of a Community Engagement Process which Considers a Diverse Range of Input and Experiences Prior to Reviewing with the Community Those Stories and Seeking Public Feedback in Advance of Reform Oak Park's Police Use-of-Force Policies

Village Manager Pavlicek stated that this Item was put forward in order for staff to understand the scope and breadth of what the Village Board would like included in future discussions. She noted that Village Trustees Buchanan and Walker-Peddakotla have submitted a series of items related to and supportive of this. She feels that use of force by law enforcement is the most serious action that they can take; and recommends that this be the first order of business. For simplification, she suggested starting with a process of sharing information publicly about a number of topics within the Oak Park Police Department. These topics include the legal foundation of the police department in Illinois law, the hiring and training processes, internal rules, regulations and orders, equipment and facilities used by officers, how officers are promoted to leadership positions, discipline, organizational structure, the collective bargaining and funding processes and the citizen commissions that work with the Police Department. The next step will be having an opportunity, both in public and in private, for members of the community to discuss their experiences with the Oak Park Police Department. The third step, after the Board and the public have received this information, will be to hear from the Police Chief regarding his recommendations for updates and changes related to

processes within the department, as well as her own recommendations. A comment period for the public will follow, and another opportunity for the Police Chief to review those policies. The final step will be to bring these recommendations to the Board for discussion. Assistant Village Attorney Rasheda Jackson has been assigned as the administrative lead on the process, as she has experiences on both the municipal side and representing people who were facing criminal charges within the legal system.

Kitty Conklin. Ms. Conklin described the duties of all taxing bodies in Oak Park. She encouraged the Board to consider including input from the entire community as they proceed to define policing and safety in the Village.

Brian Straw. Mr. Straw discussed the misuse and over-reliance on the Village's police force and requested the Board adopt a comprehensive process for evaluating Oak Park's public safety budget.

Amanda Baxtrom. Ms. Baxtrom recommended that the Board and Police Department use the analysis done by Freedom to Thrive Oak Park and Local Progress to drive changes in police policies and budget reductions.

Adam Paradis. Mr. Paradise stated that despite attempts at police reform, racial profiling remains widespread. Excessive force, over-policing and public disrespect need to be addressed.

Eulalia Puig Abril. Ms. Abril expressed concern regarding suppression and exclusion of the voices of people of color regarding policing in Oak Park.

Kevin Barnhart and Sue Humphreys. Mr. Barnhart and Ms. Humphreys provided suggestions to the Board regarding their pledge to address procedural justice, transparency, accountability and honest recognition regarding violence towards Black and Brown citizens.

Susanne Fairfax. Ms. Fairfax discussed the history of policing and how Oak Park has fallen behind in terms of racial equity.

Cate Readling. Ms. Readling urged the Board to consider the shortcomings of the 21st Century Policing Task Force Final Report-2015 and to take steps beyond a review of the Police Department's Use of Force Policy.

Village President Abu-Taleb stated that Black lives matter, and that is what they will be discussing. While steps have been taken to reform the Police Department, more can be done. An Oak Park that is not welcoming to Black and Brown people is not an Oak Park he can be proud of. Police officers exist to serve and protect all citizens and they must treat everyone with dignity. The Board is committed to examine the Village's Police Department's policies and procedures, as well as keeping an open mind. He asked that as they do this work to resist divisiveness, accusations and attacks. No one can make the needed changes alone and he asked that they all come together to support a fact based solution. He announced that he is committed to having the Police Department audited by an independent third party for the purpose of examining their policies and procedures and to provide the truth based on facts and data.

Village Trustee Walker-Peddakotla asked the Village Manager and Police Chief what metrics were used to determine that use of force is the most important thing that needs to be evaluated in Oak Park policing.

Village Manager Pavlicek stated that the authority and ability of police officers to make the judgment to use force, particularly deadly force, is one of the most serious things they can do. She feels it is a high priority item to address, but the Board can provide alternate direction. In regards to data on use of force complaints, she had been hoping to get the annual report from the Citizens Police Oversight Committee (CPOC) prior to this date, but the COVID pandemic has deferred that effort. CPOC is looking to meet in July, and the report will be given to the Board after that. Village Trustee Walker-Peddakotla noted that the previous years' data could've been used and asked if that information is available. Police Chief La Don Reynolds does not have that information but stated that there are very few excessive force complaints. Total complaints regarding all issues average about 15 per year.

Village Trustee Walker-Peddakotla does not think use of force is the problem with policing in Oak Park. There are things that can be improved on, however, such as requiring the department to publicly report these incidents. The biggest complaint she has is Lexipol is not mentioned in this process. Chief Reynolds explained that Lexipol takes best practices, Federal and State law and provides a generic template of policies and procedures. They then take current local policies and blend them with their policies. That document is reviewed by the Oak Park command staff and other experts to ensure that they are specific to Oak Park. These policies are reviewed every year by the Village and by Lexipol's attorneys. Village Trustee Walker-Peddakotla does not think that Lexipol should be involved in reviewing the Village's policies, as it is designed to protect municipalities and police, not the public.

Village Trustee Boutet stated that one of her responsibilities when she was Village Attorney was collecting data to submit to the insurance company regarding the number of cases the Village had. In the law enforcement realm, there were so few cases that the insurance company thought they were collecting the data wrong. She discussed proactive risk management that prevents officers from doing things that cause harm. The Board has a duty to look at use of force, but she does not want to get distracted by that for too long, as there are other items to discuss. She agrees with Village Trustee Walker-Peddakotla that the policy is not bad, but she would still like to review it. She would also like to review CPOC rather than some of the details on the Village Manager's list, such as the legal foundation of policing. In addition to individuals coming forward with their actual stories, surveys sent out to residents regarding the Black experience versus the White experience would provide additional data. The Board should look at the ways the community can use social services to prevent crime and get to the cause of those problems. Village Trustee Boutet would also like to look at the hiring process and what the impediments are in terms of hiring more police officers of color.

Village Trustee Andrews agreed with Village Trustee Boutet. Policing in the Village needs to be looked at holistically. He agreed with the use of surveys in order to incorporate anonymous voices. In addition, he would prefer a complete study in a reasonable amount of time, rather than rushing to meet a 30-day deadline.

Village Trustee Buchanan stated that they have the opportunity to make some major changes and agrees with addressing more than the use of force. She suggested creating a task force consisting of community members and stakeholders, as well as hiring a consultant that has experience taking a municipality through this transformation process. It is not worth the Board's time to go through all these details proposed by the Village Manager, as the community does not expect them to be experts on policing. She would like the task force to also consider reconfiguring funding for both police and for social services in the community. She would like to move with urgency. In addition, she would like to discuss School Resource Officers and the use of force.

Village President Abu-Taleb felt it was important to hear from the Village Manager and Police Chief on this. There are also four unions in the Police Department and there are limitations that they need to work with as well as being fair to the police officers. An independent consultant will work if they are given factual data, not information that is intentionally put out to mislead or divide.

Village Trustee Walker-Peddakotla stated that Freedom to Thrive Oak Park has already done this work and disagreed with spending money on a consultant. She would like the community to lead this conversation.

Village Trustee Moroney believes everyone in the Village wants to see proper policing. There are people on the Board and in the community who believe reform is not possible and police need to be abolished and defunded. There are others who believe the police are a necessary and integral part of community safety. He values a community with as little crime as possible and the police are an essential part of Oak Park. He is open to the idea of an independent consultant under this premise. In terms of reallocation of money, there needs to be conversations with other taxing bodies. In addition, the Village has no control over mandatory pensions, which drive the cost of policing up. He also disagrees with painting all police in a negative light and that they should be treated as people and valuable partners.

Village Trustee Andrews agreed with Village Trustee Moroney. He added that the Freedom to Thrive report is not credible. The Village does not spend 40% of its budget on policing, it is closer to 16%. He supports an independent third party who values the truth, precision and accuracy that is not designed to mislead the public.

Village Trustee Boutet clarified that defunding the police does not equal abolishing the police. She asked what the independent consultant would do.

Village President Abu-Taleb stated that he would like a comprehensive complete audit to share with the public that is credible and allows the Board to take recommendations and make judgments in order to ensure every Black and Brown person in the community feels they are treated fairly and equally.

Village Manager Pavlicek understands the value of utilizing an external expert. However, she is concerned that the selection process of that entity would take three months. Her rationale for assigning a staff lead was to allow them to begin the process. She asked what the Board's priorities to undertake are. This would allow her to come back with a more holistic idea of what external resources will be needed. Oak Park has unique attributes, which may make it difficult to find the right consultant with the right experience.

Village Trustee Taglia understands that the process will take a while and the time frame should not put them off. He acknowledged that this is a complex area and is not against investing the time to do it right.

Village Trustee Buchanan is proposing that the consultant transform society in Oak Park. She does not think three months is too long to get someone on board.

Village Trustee Walker-Peddakotla clarified that the Freedom to Thrive report states that the police budget is 40% of the General Fund, not the budget. She reiterated that the Board should listen to the voices in the community rather than hiring a consultant. She expressed concern that the report is being dismissed.

Village Trustee Boutet stated that the Freedom to Thrive report has opened the door to these discussions and how to create the necessary services. However, the Board should look at CPOC themselves rather than have a consultant do that.

Village Trustee Taglia asked Chief Reynolds if every officer is trained in de-escalation and what kind of training they receive. Chief Reynolds stated that they are all required to do that training; some of the officers have been trained in a seated classroom and others online. Their Use of Force Policy requires de-escalation as the first step. Village Trustee Taglia asked what areas civilians are used in the Police Department. Chief Reynolds replied that Illinois law states that officers who encounter an individual in a mental health crisis have the authority to have them involuntarily committed for psychiatric evaluation. Oak Park does not do that. Instead, they contact Thrive and a social worker is dispatched to address the individual's concerns, as well as in other situations. Chief Reynolds commented that he has been a police officer in Oak Park for 25 years and a Black man for almost 49 years. He discussed his training and education in these issues, which are very complex, as well as recognition by the State for his service and the departments. He understands the values and guiding principles of the Village. He discussed duties of the SRO's, Parking Enforcement Officers and Community Policing Officers. They are affiliated with the PADS shelter, as well as Thrive, and other organizations. All officers know what resources are available to them.

Village Trustee Boutet spoke in support of the Chief and wants him involved in the process. With his credentials, she is unsure whether they need an outside expert.

Village Trustee Moroney asked Chief Reynolds for his opinion regarding hiring an outside consultant. Chief Reynolds stated that he is always interested in listening and learning more. He sees a benefit in talking to a consultant. However, he doesn't think a consultant would provide recommendations that the department couldn't come up with on their own. He spoke in support of his department.

Village President Abu-Taleb thanked Chief Reynolds for his input. He stated that the trust in the community needs to be rebuilt. Having an independent opinion would help them move in such a way that people believe they are willing to re-examine themselves to see if things are being done right. It is important for the Board to move themselves out of the equation. There is a lot of misinformation intentionally put out and he wants to reestablish trust and credibility in the community. He acknowledged that this will take time. He also does not support using an organization that one of the trustees created.

Village Trustee Andrews commented that the Board needs to give direction. He suggested outcome statements such as "That the police experience is the same for everyone" and staff can respond with impediments to get to the outcome. Chief Reynolds commented that everyone is a product of their own socialization. What police can control is equity and treating everyone with respect. These outcomes have to be ones that are attainable. Village Trustee Andrews acknowledged that there are things that Oak Park cannot control and they shouldn't spend time on issues that they cannot fix. Village President Abu-Taleb stated that the issue is reestablishing trust with the community, and they are not the judge and jury in this situation. That is his rationale for an independent consultant.

Village Trustee Walker-Peddakotla stated that there is no way to guarantee a policing experience in Oak Park where everyone feels safe. The police are not the problem, systemic racism is. There will always be people who are terrified to call the police. She advocated for having people in the community who are impacted by the current system of

policing rather than a consultant to provide input.

Village Trustee Andrews does not disagree with having community input. Every effort that they make should be part of the solution and not the problem, although he does not want to spend a lot of time and money on something that will have no impact. He referred to the Taxing Bodies Advisory Task Force and noted that nothing they recommended was ever implemented.

Village Trustee Boutet suggested looking at CPOC immediately, host sessions as discussed by the Village Manager, put out surveys to obtain qualitative data, review the use of force policy against best practices and look at how social services are already used by the police and if that needs to be enhanced through defunding models. She still does not understand what they will be asking a consultant to do. She understands the concept of an independent audit but would like that to be more specific.

Village President Abu-Taleb asked if there was support for hiring an independent party to help reestablish credibility, and/or having outcomes emailed to staff and then shared with the public at a subsequent meeting.. Village President Abu-Taleb advocated for an independent consultant. He asked again if there was support for that.

Village Trustee Moroney stated that staff has a proposal that the Board needs to direct whether they move forward or not. He does think they should make that decision. Village Trustee Boutet stated that there are too many topics listed for discussion before they get to what the community problems are. There was discussion.

There was consensus to have an independent third party to help move things forward, as well as a review of CPOC by the Law Department.

Village Trustee Walker-Peddakotla stated that CPOC is already following the Village Ordinance. What needs to be done is strengthening the ordinance. She also spoke against hiring a third party.

Village Manager Pavlicek stated that the directions provided by the Board as she understands it is hold a community conversation, identify a consultant and do a review of CPOC via the Law Department.

It was moved by Village Trustee Boutet, seconded by Village Trustee Andrews, that this Motion be approved as amended to direct staff to hold a community conversation, identify a third party consultant and perform a review of the Citizens Police Oversight Committee via the Law Department. The motion was approved. The roll call on the vote was as follows:

AYES: 6 - Village President Abu-Taleb, Village Trustee Andrews, Village Trustee Boutet, Village Trustee Buchanan, Village Trustee Moroney, and Village Trustee Taglia

NAYS: 1 - Village Trustee Walker-Peddakotla

ABSENT: 0

VI. Adjourn

It was moved by Village Trustee Taglia, seconded by Village Trustee Andrews, to adjourn. The motion was approved. The roll call on the vote was as follows:

AYES: 6 - Village President Abu-Taleb, Village Trustee Andrews, Village Trustee Boutet, Village Trustee Buchanan, Village Trustee Moroney, and Village Trustee Taglia

NAYS: 1 - Village Trustee Walker-Peddakotla

ABSENT: 0

Meeting adjourned at 9:16 P.M., Monday, June 22, 2020.

Respectfully Submitted,

MaryAnn Schoenneman
Deputy Village Clerk