



Village of Oak Park

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

Meeting Minutes

President and Board of Trustees

Monday, March 13, 2023

6:30 PM

Village Hall

I. Call to Order

Village President Vicki Scaman called the Special Meeting to order at 6:32 P.M.

II. Roll Call

Trustee Wesley joined the Meeting via video conference per Village Policy for remote participation.

Trustee Enyia joined the Meeting at 6:41 P.M.

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

Absent: 1 - Village Trustee Taglia

III. Consideration of Motion to Adjourn to Executive Session to Discuss Minutes, Pending Litigation and Collective Bargaining

It was moved by Trustee Parakkat, seconded by Trustee Robinson to adjourn into Executive Session. 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 Wesley

NAYS: 0

ABSENT: 2 - Village Trustee Enyia, and Village Trustee Taglia

V. Reconvene to Special Meeting in Council Chambers and Call to Order

The Special Meeting reconvened at 7:21 P.M.

VI. Roll Call

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

Absent: 1 - Village Trustee Taglia

VII. Agenda Approval

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

VIII. Non-Agenda Public Comment

There was no Non-Agenda Public Comment.

IX. Regular Agenda

- A. [ORD 23-19](#) An Ordinance Amending Chapter 8 (“Business Licensing”) of the Oak Park Village Code by Adding a New Article 41 (“Lawn Maintenance/Landscaping”) and Amending Chapter 7 (“Buildings”), Article 0 (“Contractor Registration”), Section 7-0-1 (“Contractor Registration”) and Chapter 17 (“Offenses”), Article 1 (“Identification Of Specific Offenses”), Section 17-1-30 (“Noise”) of the Oak Park Village Code

Village Manager Kevin Jackson introduced the proposed ordinance to ban gas-powered leaf blowers effective January 1, 2025 and a concurrent amendment to strengthen enforcement of the noise ordinance.

Nick Bridge, member of Plan Commission and OPCAN: Thinks the Village is headed in right direction but is dismayed about the two-year delay. Gas blowers are noisy and inefficient and put out as much pollutant as a truck. Banning gas blowers from June through September would ease the pain. Imposing a 65 decibel limit and operation before 8:00 A.M. is also positive. The effectiveness of these measures depends on enforcement, which has been absent. Suggested the Village Board direct the Environment & Energy Commission to look at phasing out lawnmowers as well.

Development Customer Services (DCS) Director Tammie Grossman presented the Item.

Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer Dr. Danielle Walker presented the DEI analysis.

Trustee Buchanan inquired about the timeline. Director Grossman responded that all leaf blowers are currently allowed between 7:00 A.M. until 6:00 P.M. The proposed ordinance would shrink the timeframe to 8:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. and would take effect immediately. The Village will develop a list of regional landscapers and mail letters with a copy of the ordinance and the restrictions.

Trustee Buchanan asked if a business license is required for landscapers who have physical offices. Director Grossman responded that they are required to get a general business license but there is not one that is

specifically for landscaping companies. The Village wants to clarify the definition of the business and require a business license that includes home-based landscaping companies.

Trustee Robinson raised the issue of language access. She noted that Palm Springs did a very concerted bilingual effort to get information out to businesses that included radio ads. Dr. Walker agreed that is why it is so important to determine who is the landscaping population. The Village's outreach efforts will include bilingual outreach, working with the Communications Department to generate material in English and Spanish, and having Spanish speakers and/or translation services.

Trustee Robinson recommended making bilingual material available to homeowners at Village Hall and on the website that they can give to their landscapers. Dr. Walker confirmed that is part of the Village's equitable outreach strategy.

Trustee Buchanan asked why this will take two years. Director Grossman responded that the Village wanted to provide enough time for the DEI analysis and focus groups. If it is determined that the Village needs to provide economic incentive or assistance to landscapers, staff will bring a proposal to the Fall 2023 budget conversations to be implemented in 2024 before the ban takes effect June 2025.

Trustee Parakkat said he remembered the amount previously discussed for economic incentives was \$1M. Director Grossman responded that she does not anticipate it being even one-tenth of that. Trustee Parakkat suggested providing an analysis to determine if there are other sustainability initiatives to reduce carbon emissions that can give a better bang per buck than these costs for incentives and enforcement. There may be alternative models of enforcement than an FTE. Director Grossman responded that the Village does not want to rely on enforcement, but rather on voluntary cooperation through education and outreach so that additional enforcement costs are not necessary.

Trustee Buchanan noted that this issue came from residents with a petition of over 1,000 signatures. Gas blowers are noisy, emit many greenhouse gases, and are a worker health and safety issue. This is a great pilot case for what the Village is going to do for climate change mitigations. She quoted the International Labor Organization's definition of a just transition

as "greening the economy in a way that is as fair and inclusive as possible to everyone." She recommended including the workers in addition to the owners in the focus groups. She said the costs should be passed onto the homeowners who are choosing to get their lawns serviced. She said she would like to see this happen sooner.

President Scaman said she knows some business owners start their businesses with used equipment and the focus groups will be important in determining that.

Trustee Wesley said a big concern for him is changing the demographic of business owners in our community. Regarding enforcement, he said he does not want police responding to complaints about leaf blowers and he will vote no if that is on the table. He said the Village does not have the manpower for that and he does not want the relatively white community calling the police on the relatively brown landscapers.

President Scaman clarified that the enforcement piece would be someone from DCS. Director Grossman added that if a resident calls in, the police will get the information, and DCS will contact the resident. DCS would not ask police to write a ticket. DCS can also promote a phone number for residents to call.

Trustee Wesley said the homeowners should pay for citations because they are contracting the landscapers and they should be familiar with the Village ordinance. Director Grossman responded that the ordinance is written to be able to ticket the contractor and/or the homeowner.

Trustee Wesley said he is on board with the focus groups and second language communications. He suggested doing outreach to neighboring communities for those affected that may not live in Oak Park. Dr. Walker agreed the Village wants to be inclusive of everyone who will be impacted. The engagement process will start with the landscape contractors and then think about who else needs to be included in the conversation.

Trustee Wesley inquired about Section 8-41-4 which says "prior to June 1, 2025, the operation of gasoline-powered leaf blowers is prohibited between June 1 to September 30." He wondered if it is signed today it would mean all gas blowers will be prohibited right away. Director Grossman confirmed that is correct.

Trustee Enyia said residents should remember what these gas blowers emit into our air and what safety hazards they pose for workers. He said he wants to ensure the communications piece is there and working with translation agencies and providing flyers and QR codes. This is one of many issues the Village Board is addressing.

President Scaman said there is a cultural competency and sense of pride among some business owners for fixing up old equipment and keeping costs down as opposed to raising costs and passing those onto the homeowner. She had this conversation with the C4 urban efficiencies group who is concerned that Oak Park can mess this up for other communities if we do not take the time to be thoughtful and listen to these business owners, who may choose to go elsewhere. As a result, the business owners who can convert to electric blowers will gain more customers and can raise their rates and make Oak Park more of a community of privilege instead of the diverse, equitable, inclusive community we aim to be. She said it may be possible to shorten the timeline after conducting the focus groups. She encouraged utilizing C4 for the education piece and the engagement piece with neighboring communities.

Trustee Robinson asked if the effective date on the ordinance remains the same. Manager Jackson confirmed the effectiveness date of the ban will remain the same and the education and outreach activities would start now. Based on what is discovered in the outreach process and doing a cost-benefit analysis to determine if incentives are required, staff will bring that back to the Village Board to consider amending the ordinance.

Trustee Wesley asked again for clarification of the ordinance. Director Grossman clarified that voting tonight will ban gas blowers from June through September effective immediately, and will ban them year-round starting June 1, 2025.

Trustee Parakkat asked if there would be any enforcement now if the ordinance is passed. Director Grossman responded that the Village has inspectors out in the community and will be using internal staff for enforcement.

Trustee Wesley noted that if this ordinance is passed, the Village would still

be doing a partial ban before doing any outreach reach or communication with the folks that would be impacted by it. Director Grossman clarified that the Village is not intending to do enforcement by issuing tickets this summer. The Village intends to tell people there is a ban during the summer months.

Trustee Wesley asked who will be communicated with. Director Grossman responded that the Village has the names from the survey. When inspectors see someone using a gas blower, they will give them educational material.

Village Attorney Stephanides noted that the current Village Code provision Section 17-1-30 already prohibits gas blowers during that time.

Trustee Wesley asked why this ordinance is banning them again if they are already banned. Director Grossman responded that the Village moved the provision from the noise ordinance to the business licensing ordinance.

It was moved by Trustee Parakkat, seconded by Trustee Enyia, that this Ordinance 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 Enyia, Village Trustee Parakkat, Village Trustee Robinson, and Village Trustee Wesley

NAYS: 0

ABSENT: 1 - Village Trustee Taglia

B. [ID 23-126](#) Public Safety Annual Report

Village Clerk Waters read the following public comment aloud:

Kurt Roskopf: Tonight's presentation shows 266 motor vehicle thefts and 90 catalytic converter thefts last year. These are serious crimes affecting quality of life and presenting a financial burden for Oak Parkers. How many resulted in arrests? Concerned there aren't consequences for this type of crime. The numbers show police are only stopping eight cars daily and writing one ticket. There has been a four-fold drop in citations in the past few years. Why such a sharp decrease? Is current enforcement enough to ensure safe streets?

Manager Jackson introduced the Item which is an overview status of the Oak Park Police Department (OPPD) and an overview of crime trends. He introduced Chief of Police Shatonya Johnson to give her first annual report as chief. Chief Johnson was appointed November 7, 2022 after having served as Interim Chief since April 14, 2022. During that time, there was a

retirement and a promotion of a deputy police chief. There are currently two vacancies at the command level that the Village is ready to fill sometime in April.

Chief Johnson introduced Interim Deputy Chief Jacobson, Administrative Commander Murphy, and Commanders Stewart, Kane, and Dransoff. She presented the overview and highlighted three areas of staffing, crime stats, and key initiatives for 2023.

Trustee Robinson said she looks forward to receiving information about the vehicle-related theft arrests. She wondered if the catalytic converter thefts may be difficult to track and there may be natural barriers to arrests. Chief Johnson said it is a proactive approach to use the bright paint as a deterrent. She said it also requires victims to be cooperative and sign complaints.

Trustee Robinson asked if citations are expected to increase now that COVID-19 concerns have decreased. Chief Johnson confirmed that is correct.

Trustee Robinson referenced the 22 FTE shortage and the fact that the work is still being done. She asked if OPPD is spending more money by paying overtime and about the potential for having the police force being overworked and the increase in the propensity for injuries and workers compensation claims. Chief Johnson responded that it's important to also look at the employee benefits provided so she does not believe OPPD is spending more in overtime than it would if it were fully staffed. Regarding officer burn out, when OPPD can project a shortage, they put out for voluntary overtime and it does not have to be a full 8-hour shift.

Trustee Robinson asked what is the highest priority from the BerryDunn report that OPPD needs Village Board support from. Chief Johnson responded that it would be a new facility. She said OPPD appreciates the support of the Village Board. Trustee Robinson added that she appreciates the level of input and support OPPD has given to Jailyn Logan Bledsoe's family.

Trustee Enyia thanked OPPD for doing more with less, for their proactive work on the wheel lock, and for getting 80+ guns off the street in one year. He said he spoke to a 7-Eleven owner who said he feels so much safer now with the ordinance. He said he appreciates OPPD being proactive with body cams.

Trustee Enyia noted the variance in flock numbers and the alarming rate of African American males that were stopped and the cases where the LEAD

system didn't work. Chief Johnson responded that it wasn't necessarily that the LEAD system didn't work but rather the jurisdiction that put it in failed to take it out. The people who are stopped are random because OPPD doesn't control the alert or see the person who is driving.

Trustee Enyia clarified his concern that when a person of color is stopped, it can be very triggering for those individuals even if they haven't done anything wrong. He requested a continuous retraining to understand this system can be flawed and forge a relationship with outside agencies to figure out how to make it more accurate.

Trustee Enyia asked how the trauma training for officers can be mandated before they are on the street. Chief Johnson responded that for the crisis intervention training, OPPD is ahead of the curve at 60% and applied for a grant to be able to have in-house training which would accelerate that. She said OPPD practices procedural justice whereby officers take time to educate the driver about what took place and why. She acknowledged the stress individuals experience when seeing a police car behind them and said OPPD does what they can to minimize that impact. They educate them and allow them to voice their frustration and treat them fairly and be transparent in what they're doing and why.

Trustee Parakkat said the presentation reinforces his belief that our community safety and police department are in the right hands with Chief Johnson and her team. He noted that he did not see the word "enforcement" in the 21st century policing and wondered if that was intentional. Chief Johnson responded that enforcement goes with crime reduction which including community policing. If OPPD is proactive in its approach and is present and visible, it would directly minimize crime. She said it does not include the word enforcement but it is essentially the same thing that OPPD is working to reduce crime.

Trustee Parakkat referenced the significant increase in overall crime from 2021 to 2022 and requested an explanation. Chief Johnson responded that the increase takes place in warm months. She said the catalytic converter thefts and motor vehicle thefts constitutes some of the shift but it goes back to property crimes, with an additional 84 incidents from 2021 to 2022, compared to 11 additional incidents of society crime. For violent offenses, it is a one incident difference, which is consistent with the fact that we are impacted largely with property crime and OPPD is trying to be proactive in that area.

Trustee Parakkat said traffic issues are a recurring theme so he appreciates putting a metric on that and training staff to focus on that.

Trustee Buchanan said that the recruitment and retention is worrisome and sad that officers are leaving the profession, retiring early, or not joining in the first place. She made a comparison to the field of medicine where the remedy to making mistakes is malpractice. She said there isn't that type of remedy with policing so we are left with people who have been harmed by police practices. She said we all support the police department and want the police there when there is an immediate threat to our safety.

Trustee Buchanan said she encourages a continued humility and openness to the fact that there are people harmed and the police have a reputation of closing ranks and protecting which creates additional harm. She said she appreciates this possibility of a change of culture. A healthy profession shouldn't require blind support; it requires criticism and calling out when mistakes are made. Chief Johnson said she is constantly asked from community members about what the police need from them and her response to them is to hold us accountable. It takes a village to keep the community safe.

Trustee Enyia referenced a situation he saw recently that involved two youth and 5 or 6 police cars. Chief Johnson said OPPD received a citizen complaint regarding that incident as well and OPPD investigated it. She explained that when there is a report of an in-progress crime, officers will respond. As soon as they determine there is no threat, they will go back in service. If it is on the cusp of two different beats, multiple officers will arrive. There are also three officers who are in training and also trying to get there first.

Trustee Parakkat asked if a projection can be made on crime based on trends so far this year. Chief Johnson responded that it is early in the year but OPPD has seen a slight decrease in catalytic converter thefts thus far. She does project a decrease as a result of providing the steering wheel locks.

Trustee Wesley said he appreciated Chief Johnson's presentation.

President Scaman said that she is feeling from OPPD that we are in this together and working as one village to better ourselves and ensure we continue to be ahead of the curve and listen to the community. She gave her appreciation to the chief and her department.

Manager Jackson thanked Chief Johnson and OPPD for preparing the presentation and the Village Board for their engagement. He said the Village remains committed to providing quarterly updates on crime statistics to monitor trends.

X. Adjourn

It was moved by Trustee Parakkat, seconded by Trustee Buchanan to Adjourn. A voice vote was taken and the motion was approved. Meeting adjourned at 10:30 P.M., Monday, March 13, 2023.

Respectfully Submitted,
Deputy Clerk Hansen