



Village of Oak Park

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

Meeting Minutes

President and Board of Trustees

Friday, March 13, 2020

10:00 AM

Village Hall

I. Call to Order

Village President Abu-Taleb called the meeting to order at 10:02 A.M.

II. Roll Call

Present: 6 - Village President Abu-Taleb, Village Trustee Andrews, Village Trustee Buchanan, Village Trustee Moroney, Village Trustee Taglia, and Village Trustee Walker-Peddakotla

Absent: 1 - Village Trustee Boutet

III. Agenda Approval

It was moved by Village Trustee Walker-Peddakotla, seconded by Village Trustee Andrews, to approve the Agenda. A voice vote was taken and the motion was approved.

Village President Abu-Taleb took a moment for all to think about those who have been impacted by coronavirus. He stated that these are unprecedented times for our Country and the world. It is a health crisis as well as an economic crisis, which can both have devastating effects on families, businesses and communities. Every day that goes by without taking measures against spreading the virus is a day lost in winning the war on this invisible enemy. Whatever the Village does on a local level is meant to supplement, not replace, information from the Federal Government or the CDC. He acknowledged there will be hard decisions to make; acting now may prevent or delay thousands of infections. The most vulnerable need to be protected. Village President Abu-Taleb would support putting all nursing homes on lockdown for two weeks or as needed, curbing large social gatherings, holding public meetings, including commission and Village Board meetings, on line and collaborating with West Suburban and Rush Hospitals to establish testing centers for Village residents. He acknowledged the work of Oak Park's first responders. In addition to health impacts, the Village anticipates economic and social costs. Being a municipality, the Village has limited authority and resources, so everything they do must be prioritized. At this time, their number one goal is to protect people from coronavirus.

IV. Non-Agenda Public Comment

John Harris, representing the Oak Park Homelessness Coalition: Mr. Harris acknowledged the closing of Oak Park schools, libraries and park facilities. He wants to ensure communication is coordinated between governmental agencies and partners. The

coalition will be communicating to landlords, tenants and residents that if someone is in danger of becoming homeless, there are resources available.

V. Village Manager Reports

Village Manager Pavlicek stated that there are two actions the Village Board is being asked to consider. The first is a declaration of an emergency affecting public health and the other is codification of the Village's existing succession practice. She stated that Director of Public Health Mike Charley gave an internal update on coronavirus on February 4, 2020, during an Emergency Preparedness Meeting. He also gave an update at the Village Board Meeting on March 2, 2020. After discussions held at a March 3, 2020 Emergency Preparedness Meeting, some changes within Village Hall have been instituted.

Village Manager Pavlicek explained how the organization structure is being decentralized related to following CDC guidelines. Certain activities are being suspended such as water shut offs, meetings and the adjudication process. A meeting was held with non-sworn staff where a number of employee processes were instituted that follow CDC guidelines on self-quarantining and allowing employees that have school aged children to take care of their family responsibilities. Employees will be made whole regarding any absences related to COVID-19. Although the Village cannot suspend public safety services such as police, fire, public health and public works, there will be restrictions for public access put in place at the firehouse and Village Hall. There have been no alterations to early voting, which concludes on Monday, other than what was implemented by the county and the CDC. Neither Village Hall nor any other Village facility is a polling location on Election Day. It was discussed with the department directors how they will be changing some of the requests to the Board regarding expenditures and projects that are not related to the public health situation. She stated that the revenues not generated by property taxes are not guaranteed. There is a potential for a gap in the budget and she wants the Board to be aware that they may not be bringing certain issues to them as previously discussed. The focus currently is on public health and economic issues.

Public Health Director Mike Charley stated that the COVID-19 situation is rapidly evolving. A lot of the decisions made yesterday by the state CDC Village and county can change an hour from now. They are trying to make decisions based on information given by reliable sources. The Village has been preparing to address and prevent the spread of the virus. So far no cases in OP. They have shifted most of their resources in the Health Department, to COVID-19, and are providing guidance and sharing information with key village stakeholders; schools, healthcare providers, long term care facilities, daycare facilities, faith-based organizations special event organizers and the business community. HD also has responsibility for communicable disease surveillance and control and have given guidance to West Suburban and Rush Hospitals. They are also responsible to give authorization for testing. Mr. Charley asked any press members present to please communicate that people should follow the policies put in place by the CDC, State and County; stay home when they are sick, wash their hands for 20 seconds, etc. In regards to events, he is prepared to issue guidance along the line of the State of IL. Events, public or private of over 1,000 individuals will be cancelled for the next 30 days and he is strongly encouraging that any event, including personal or social, of over 250 individuals be cancelled or postponed until May 1. As more information becomes available, those instructions may change. Every employer should have plans to keep employees safe in the workplace. Schools are closed at least through their spring breaks. He strongly recommends that vulnerable populations, such as seniors, stay home. The state has instituted strict guidelines regarding long term care facilities. In addition, the Village has a medical reserve team and emergency response team that are looking for volunteers. Information is on the Village website.

Village Trustee Walker-Peddakotla expressed concern regarding inadequate testing. She asked what someone should do if they do not feel well. Mr. Charley encourages people to call their healthcare provider before going and disclose their symptoms. Village Trustee Walker-Peddakotla shared that she knows of people who are sick but were told by their doctors that they do not meet the criteria to be tested for COVID-19 and asked if there is anything that the Department of Public Health can do to provide testing. Mr. Charley stated that the testing situation is being worked on for improvement, such as partnering with private labs doing testing now. He gave an overview of the department's role in the testing process. He also discussed supplies that they have ordered from the state in preparation for the worst.

Village Trustee Walker-Peddakotla stated that homeless people are also a vulnerable group, as they have nowhere to go and no medical care provider. Village Manager Pavlicek discussed Housing Forward being their link regarding communications to provide safe quarantining and social distancing practices for the homeless.

VI. Regular Agenda

A. [RES 20-120](#) **A Resolution Declaring and Emergency Affecting Public Health Due to the Outbreak of the COVID-19 Disease in the State of Illinois**

Village Manager Pavlicek stated that the police chief position has historically been the director of the emergency services disaster agency. Chief Reynolds is recommending that a public health emergency be declared. The State and County have done this as well. She noted that neighboring communities are covered under the Cook County declaration but because Oak Park and others that have their own Public Health Department to declare their own. She has discussed this with her peers at other taxing bodies so they can fully understand what the state is instructing them to do. She discussed the contractual hiring of an additional public health nurse and the appointment of an additional deputy fire chief in order to more closely connect the Health Department's work with the fire department.

Public Comment

Susanne Fairfax: Ms. Fairfax discussed several concerns from residents such as how the Village can help those who cannot take off work to care for their children due to school closures, meal delivery and utilizing police to assist residents rather than issuing tickets, etc.

Village President Abu-Taleb clarified the purpose of this meeting and the agenda items before the Board. It is to let the community know that the Village takes this seriously and that staff will have the authority to do what is needed to protect residents from the spread of this virus and agrees that all resources not essential be used towards this means.

Village Trustee Walker-Peddakotla asked that all information from the Village, schools, the County, etc. be consolidated onto one website. Village Manager Pavlicek appreciates that people don't want to go to multiple websites but explained that these are separate legal jurisdictions and she is not going to take resources to create a new website at this time.

Fire Chief Tom Ebsen stated that the department is as prepared as they can be for this crisis. Because their services are so vital, they have made sure that their staff has everything they need to protect themselves and the public. They are designating their EMS coordinator as an additional Deputy Chief who will be available to assist the Health

Department with whatever they need. In addition, a paramedic has been assigned as an infectious disease officer. He also discussed temporary measures that have been taken to control what goes on in their building.

Village Trustee Buchanan asked what steps are being taken if an employee comes in contact with someone who is infected and if staff is prepared for that. Village Manager Pavlicek discussed the policies that have recently been put in place and noted that there will be different layers of self-quarantining for non-sworn employees and first responders.

Police Chief La Don Reynolds stated his recommendation is for the health and safety of the community. He is confident that the Village will make the right decisions for the citizens of Oak Park. Village Trustee Walker-Peddakotla asked if the Village is considering lifting parking restrictions. Chief Reynolds stated that decisions will be made as needed.

Director of Public Works John Wielebnicki stated that his department has been very involved in conversations regarding preventing as much as possible the spread of the virus to necessary staff. They are limiting their exposure to the public, sanitizing and cleaning Village Hall, providing hand sanitizers throughout the building, etc. He discussed the difficulty they are having getting additional hand sanitizer and has been advocating hand washing. Mr. Wielebnicki commented that the drinking water is still safe, and encouraged all to wash their hands and to drink tap water, as it is safer than bottled water.

Village Trustee Andrews has faith in Village staff to do what is needed. He stressed the need for complete transparency in order to reassure residents.

Village Trustee Moroney commended the swift action and expertise of the Village's leadership team. Residents also have a role in keeping themselves and community members safe. He asked landlords to please work with their tenants.

Village Trustee Taglia stated that the Village is taking the approach "prepare for the worst and hope for the best". He has the highest degree of confidence in Village staff to deal with this crisis and is hopeful, as he knows the Village is in capable hands.

Village Trustee Buchanan also has full confidence in Village staff and stated that it is important not to panic. She wants people to remember that the goal for these measures is to keep the healthcare system from becoming overwhelmed. She also advised people to take a break from Facebook if they can.

Village Trustee Walker-Peddakotla agreed with Village Trustee Andrews regarding transparency. The public wants to see everyone working together in order to feel confident. She added that they should also think about this through an equity lens and to think of those who will be hit the hardest. She also expressed concern regarding young people having nothing to do.

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 Buchanan, Village Trustee Moroney, Village Trustee Taglia, and Village Trustee Walker-Peddakotla

NAYS: 0

ABSENT: 1 - Village Trustee Boutet

B. [ORD 20-030](#) An Ordinance Amending Chapter 2 ("Administration"), Article 3 ("Village President") of the Oak Park Village Code to Add a New Section 2-3-5 ("Order of Succession")

Village Attorney Stephanides explained that this codifies the succession plan if the Village President is unavailable in the event of an emergency. The line of succession is Village Trustee Taglia, Moroney, Andrews, Boutet, Buchanan and Walker-Peddakotla.

It was moved by Village Trustee Walker-Peddakotla, seconded by Village Trustee Andrews, that this Ordinance 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 Buchanan, Village Trustee Moroney, Village Trustee Taglia, and Village Trustee Walker-Peddakotla

NAYS: 0

ABSENT: 1 - Village Trustee Boutet

Village Clerk Scaman stated that early voting hours have been extended per the Governor. They are from 9:00 am to 7:00 pm Saturday and Sunday and 9:00 am to 5:00 pm Monday. Village Hall is not a polling place on Election Day. She asked that residents please confirm their voting location on the Cook County Clerk's website. Precincts that normally vote at the Oak Park Arms will be redirected. She clarified that extending mail in ballots has not been confirmed and directed residents to the Cook County Clerk's website for updated information as it becomes available and encouraged residents to take advantage of early voting.

Village President Abu-Taleb discussed the possibility of on line meetings and noted that these are not normal times. He wants to think about alternate ways to get information between staff and the Board. He confirmed that staff has been in constant contact with other taxing bodies. First responders sacrifice their lives to protect ours; this is a time to show them respect and support. He thanked them on behalf of the Board.

Village Manager Pavlicek commented that staff will be issuing additional instructions after this meeting regarding group gatherings.

VII. Adjourn

It was moved by Village Trustee Moroney, seconded by Village Trustee Andrews, to adjourn. A voice vote was taken and the motion was approved. The meeting adjourned at 11:22 A.M., Friday, March 13, 2020

Respectfully Submitted,

**MaryAnn Schoenneman
Deputy Village Clerk**