



Village of Oak Park

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

Meeting Minutes

President and Board of Trustees

Tuesday, February 13, 2024

6:00 PM

Village Hall

I. Call to Order

Village President Vicki Scaman called the Regular Meeting to order at 6:04 P.M.

II. Roll Call

Trustee Buchanan joined the meeting at 7:44 P.M. via remote participation per Village policy

Trustee Straw joined the meeting at 6:14 P.M.

Trustee Enyia joined the meeting during Executive Session.

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. Consideration of a Motion to Adjourn to Executive Session to discuss Lease of Property

It was moved by Trustee Wesley, seconded by Trustee Robinson, to adjourn into Executive Session. The motion was approved. The roll call on the vote was as follows:

AYES: 4 - Village President Scaman, Village Trustee Parakkat, Village Trustee Robinson, and Village Trustee Wesley

NAYS: 0

ABSENT: 3 - Village Trustee Buchanan, Village Trustee Enyia, and Village Trustee Straw

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

The Regular Meeting reconvened at 7:34 P.M.

VI. Roll Call

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

VII. Agenda Approval

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

VIII. Minutes

- A. [MOT 24-118](#) A Motion to Approve Minutes from the January 30, 2024 Regular Meeting Regular Meeting of the Village Board

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

IX. Non-Agenda Public Comment

Ralph Sapko: Lives on Miller Avenue since 1975. The house at 1139 Miller is full of garbage. Village inspectors have brought the owner to court. The houses at 1140 and 1136 Miller are unoccupied. Urged the Village Board to come see the properties and do something about them.

Monica Lewis: She spoke to Faith Julian who wants a center in honor of her family. Public commenter said she was forced to do the homeless status certification to represent the redlining. Regarding migrants, she thinks the municipality identifications need to be a priority.

X. Village Manager Reports

- B. [ID 24-150](#) Review of the Updated Village Board Meeting Calendar for February, March, and April 2024

Village Manager Kevin Jackson provided the updated Board calendars. The Finance Committee meeting will be rescheduled for February 22. A Personnel Committee meeting will be scheduled for February 15.

XI. Village Board Committees & Trustee Liaison Commission Reports

There were no comments.

XIII. Citizen Commission Appointments, Reappointments and Chair Appointments

- C. [MOT 24-121](#) A Motion to Consent to the Village President's Appointment of:
Board of Fire and Police Commissioners - Edward Pacer, Appoint as Member
Civic Information Systems Commission - Manning Peterson, Appoint as Member
Farmer's Market Commission - Kelsey L. Di Pirro, Appoint as Member
Police Pension Board - Robert Planek, Reappoint as Member
Police Pension Board - Dennis Marani, Reappoint as Member

It was moved by Trustee Robinson, seconded by Trustee Wesley, that these Appointments be approved. A voice vote was taken and the motion was

approved.

XV. Regular Agenda

D. [ID 24-135](#) **Presentation on the Village of Oak Park Classification and Compensation Study for Non-Union Employees**

Assistant Village Manager/HR Director Kira Tchang introduced the Item and GovHR Senior Vice President Rachel Skaggs presented the Item via remote participation.

Trustee Robinson wondered how the hybrid merit model differs from the current model and impacts the budget. Director Tchang said the current model accounts for merit but it is not an adjustment to base. GovHR recommends that employees who fall below be brought up to the minimums, which would impact 25 employees and cost \$133K. The Board authorized \$250K in placeholder funds in FY24 to address the outcome of this study. The GovHR fee was paid in 2023.

Trustee Parakkat noted Oak Park's neighboring communities are not listed as comparables. SVP Skaggs said they focus on financial criteria, population, and proximity and Berwyn may not have met their initial screen. Trustee Parakkat said he would like to see the remaining \$107K in placeholder funds go back into the budget.

Trustee Straw inquired about paid parental leave. SVP Skaggs said that was not included in the analysis though it is becoming more common. Trustee Straw said he would be interested in getting the costs to implement it. He said he thinks the recommendation makes sense and wonders if some employees should move up higher within the recommended range in consideration of equity issues. Director Tchang said staff can provide information if the Board wants to consider that.

Trustee Parakkat asked if the Village looks at pay equity more than once every five years. Director Tchang said pay is established when an employee is hired and there is an annual performance evaluation process with a merit lump sum. The Village periodically reviews positions to determine if another type of market adjustment may need to be made. Trustee Parakkat said he is comfortable with the recommendations.

Trustee Buchanan inquired if the 50th percentile salary survey data is from comparable communities, which SVP Skaggs confirmed and said that range is in the middle of those communities. Trustee Buchanan inquired how the Village has a salary range for a position with only one person. SVP Skaggs said every position has a range that is created by taking an average of the maximum.

Trustee Wesley inquired if GovHR performs an analysis about college degree requirements in addition to asking the employees, which SVP Skaggs confirmed. She said the degree requirement is not looked at in comparison with other communities. Judgments are based on what the position really requires. Director Tchang said the Village reviews job descriptions and is making its best effort to remove college degrees as a barrier and accept experience in lieu of education in many positions.

Trustee Wesley noted employees with salaries above the max range would have a salary freeze until the range catches up with their salaries. Director Tchang said there may have been one employee who fell into that category which is not unique to this pay schedule. The Village addresses that by providing a COLA lump sum payment. When an employee is hired, the Village analyzes their years of experience and their salary preference is reviewed for internal equity. SVP Skaggs said the 50th percentile is a good baseline. Trustee Wesley said it is hard for him to know if the 50th is the right percentile because he thinks this is a demanding community. Manager Jackson noted the Village makes its own recommendations in addition to working with GovHR.

Trustee Enyia said he supports the recommendations and agrees with the 50th percentile.

Trustee Straw referenced the paper ceiling and eliminating education requirements where possible. He said he would be open to having staff come back with higher percentiles. Manager Jackson said staff can bring back an analysis for 50th and 60th percentiles and make a recommendation.

Trustee Wesley wondered if an assessment should be done for all positions requiring college degrees. Director Tchang said that analysis is done when a position becomes vacant. SVP Skaggs said Oak Park compares favorably with other communities on compensation and benefits.

Trustee Parakkat said he prefers to make the decision now rather than waiting for more analysis. Manager Jackson noted that staff did not yet have a recommendation this evening.

Trustee Robinson said she would like to see the Village adopt GovHR's recommendation and she is fine with the 50th percentile. She said she supports the \$107K in placeholder funds going back into the budget. Manager Jackson clarified that the \$250K was a one-time expenditure that was not added to our base.

President Scaman said she is comfortable with the 50th percentile.

- E. [RES 24-136](#) **A Resolution Approving a Lease Agreement between the Catholic Bishop of Chicago and the Village of Oak Park to Provide Shelter Space for Asylum Seekers Residing in the Village and Authorizing its Execution Subject to the Village Entering into an Operating Agreement for the Shelter Space**

President Scaman requested to postpone this item until the Feb. 15 meeting.

The Board took a recess from 8:52 P.M. to 9:00 P.M.

It was moved by Trustee Wesley, seconded by Trustee Straw, that this Resolution be tabled. 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 Straw, and Village Trustee Wesley

NAYS: 0

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

- F. [RES 24-140](#) **A Resolution Approving a Funding Grant Agreement between Oak Park River Forest Community of Congregations and the Village of Oak Park to Fund a Short-Term Resettlement Program for Asylum Seekers Residing in the Village's Temporary Shelter Program and Authorizing its Execution**

Linda Francis: Member of Grace Episcopal Church asylum task force and board member of Kinfolk Colab that partners with Euclid Methodist Church. Concerned about the treatment of black and brown men in this process. Encourages Village management to build working relationships with other entities and understand their limitations.

Director Tchang presented the Item.

Trustee Straw acknowledged he received a \$250 campaign contribution from Brynne Hovde who is not receiving any compensation for her volunteer efforts. He consulted with Village counsel and confirmed there is no conflict of interest. Trustee Enyia acknowledged she also worked on his campaign.

Trustee Robinson said those disclosures would have been helpful earlier and we should select partners by design, not by default. She requested to pause the decision for a week to engage in an open bid process. She proposed asking the Village Manager come back with an initiative to talk about bringing the resettlement efforts in-house, which would be protected under our sanctuary city ordinance. It would move us away from concerns around funding a response solely focused on migrant families when there are other groups that have the same needs. She said she would like to see utilizing this grant money to start with the grant criteria and then utilize non-grant dollars to broaden that effort and make a plan.

Manager Jackson said this current government is not structurally set up to do that. A department would have to be designed and staff would have to be hired, which could take a few months.

President Scaman said she is happy with the agenda item as it is and would not want to delay the services.

Trustee Robinson asked what needs to happen by June 30. Director Tchang responded that services need to be provided prior to June 30. The Village can receive the \$300K in resettlement dollars which need to be used for the payment for leases between January 16 and June 30. Staff received the notification from the state that it needed to apply for the SMASS grant funding to fund the temporary shelter on a Thursday and it was presented to the Board the following Tuesday. An RFP would have not been effective given the two-business day timeframe. The Village typically posts RFPs for 2-4 weeks. She said the Village did have conversations with Catholic Charities throughout this response and they were not able to provide resettlement services.

Trustee Robinson asked if the Village can work with additional partners besides those listed on the grant application. Director Tchang said the Village can request the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus (MMC) amend our program design. Trustee Robinson said she's concerned about identification and location information and exposing individuals to additional vulnerabilities.

Pilgrim Congregational Church Senior Pastor and Community of Congregations (COC) President Colin Knapp shared the resettling work they have done. He clarified that no one is paid by the resettlement task force and all funds go directly to service with \$0 overhead and 100% volunteer staff. They believe the resettlement efforts are the best value for the money and the stability provided with a 12-month lease is designed to create self-sufficiency. He noted they have relationships with the migrants.

President Scaman asked if a landlord who offered an available apartment would be directed to the COC. Manager Jackson said the Village would design a program to respond to that. President Scaman asked if the current residents at Grace Episcopal Church are included in the response. Pastor Knapp said they have been focused on the YMCA and Carleton Hotel and are hoping to include Grace. Director Tchang said the Village had a conversation with the resettlement task force and the COC around the timing at Grace of when their shelter program may end.

President Scaman asked if the costs Grace has not yet submitted would be eligible for reimbursement. Director Tchang said there is no contract

between Grace and Village. The Village has paid for security, for Housing Forward to provide case management services, and Beyond Hunger to provide groceries. She said she believes additional expenses would be eligible for reimbursement through our Cook County or other funding.

Trustee Parakkat asked if the total cost for resettlement is \$900K, which Pastor Knapp confirmed is their estimate based on the number of migrants times the average cost of a 2-bedroom apartment. Some units are being vetted in Cicero and Belmont-Craigin. Trustee Parakkat asked what happens with transportation and food during the 12-month period. Pastor Knapp said companions are important in helping with those additional costs. The 12-month period gives a long enough runway for people to establish themselves and save money and make decisions about what will come next. Trustee Parakkat expressed concern about what might happen after 12 months when they can no longer afford to live in Oak Park.

Trustee Straw said he would support looking at a broader more equitable program providing housing but he would not support pausing this effort before doing so. He asked how many individuals would be resettled in the nine vetted units. Housing Coordinator Maya Puentes said they range from studios to 3-bedrooms. The waiting time for a work permit is about 150 days (5 months) after applying for asylum. They have a relationship with the Chicago Furniture Bank to provide some of the basic needs and the community has provided additional home goods. He asked what portion of funding would go to overhead versus rental. Director Tchang said the Village would have to design that program and identify staff to support that effort. Trustee Straw said he supports the resolution as presented.

Trustee Enyia shared his personal experience growing up in an immigrant family and expressed the importance of being able to get a work permit.

It was moved by Trustee Wesley, seconded by Trustee Straw, to extend the meeting past 10:00 P.M. A voice vote was taken and the motion was approved.

Trustee Wesley inquired why the Grace residents cannot be included in this program. Coordinator Puentes said they started as a rapid response to the Village's Feb. 29 eviction notice that Grace was not a part of. Manager Jackson said the Village can look into it. Director Tchang said that is between the task force and the asylum seekers to determine who wants to opt in to the program. Trustee Wesley said the inequity of the response makes him uncomfortable. Pastor Knapp said they are willing to help those at Grace. The COC would be responsible to the Village. 12 units are secured, 9 are ready, and 70 are identified to house everyone. The \$900K does not include Grace. Pastor Knapp said the eviction notice was the genesis of the task force. They started rallying support from private donations, speaking to leaders, working with landlords, and meeting with

Village staff. Trustee Wesley said he would like to see this Board make a motion for a more equitable housing program.

Trustee Straw said he agrees we should help all of the people we can and would make a motion to have staff come back to the Board using this effort as a template for how we can be more aggressive on housing issues. He said he supports including Grace in the resettlement efforts and looking at how to make them whole on some of the additional costs they have incurred housing migrants. He said this is the off-ramp the Board asked staff to provide. This is by far the most efficient use of resources we have seen throughout this crisis and not doing it would be irresponsible.

Trustee Buchanan said most of the Trustees have had one-on-one conversations and she appreciates her colleagues' perspectives. She said she is satisfied with the current proposal as a good solution for moving forward in a very difficult situation.

Trustee Robinson said this is the opposite of an off-ramp. We have devoted more board and staff time and money and there is a second item to donate \$150K of taxpayer money. She suggested bringing the effort in-house so we do not have restraints in allocating this money and confusion around the partner. She said she is concerned how this is damaging this Board's dynamic. The way this has played out has not upheld a healthy, productive way to allocate money. She asked the Pastor what he meant by saying some of his clients were formerly migrants. Pastor Knapp said he was referring to landlords who are immigrants themselves and who would not be included in this \$300K.

Trustee Robinson asked if Pastor Knapp will retroactively bill the Village. He said he believes that is allowed under the contract to reimburse themselves for expenses in January. She said she does not think the Village should allow for retroactive billing. Attorney Stephanides said it is based on the invoices received and part is intended to reimburse for past expenses, which is allowed under the grant. Coordinator Puentes said the nine units have not yet been paid for. Director Tchang clarified that the \$150K could be provided to the task force immediately and that will reimburse the task force for their first \$150K in expenses. Any remaining funding would be returned to the Village.

Trustee Robinson noted this is the first time the Board has had the opportunity to ask questions of the COC and task force. She said confusion has created frustration and after four months of being reactionary, she is done being reactionary. She noted the services in the contract are broader than rental assistance. She requested the contract be modified to take out the payments in relation to the lease of properties.

Attorney Stephanides said he can make that change. Coordinator Puentes requested that it include the security deposit, which Attorney Stephanides confirmed it does.

Trustee Parakkat agreed that every Trustee has worked hard on this issue and spent well over 75% of our time the last four months on it. He said the action of bringing migrants here on October 31 prompted a poor decision on our part. Pastor Knapp noted the COC was not responsible for bringing anyone into Oak Park. Trustee Parakkat said without any other options, he has to trust COC and go with it.

President Scaman wondered if the \$300K should be increased to include Grace. Director Tchang said the Village can engage with the MMC and noted the \$300K is only for services provided before June 30.

Manager Jackson said he appointed someone this past summer as a special assistant to the Village Manager to work on the unhoused situation. The Village has also been working on an alternative call response model to proactively address all of these issues. Deputy Village Manager Lisa Shelley said the Village is in communication with Grace about gathering those shelter expenses to submit and cover through some of our grants with Cook County. Looking for housing for the Grace residents may be very different than what is in process at the YMCA and Carleton. There are 24 individuals at Grace and 14 arrived here October 31. The dollars related to the grant was based on a calculation for the YMCA and Carleton. Coordinator Puentes said if they have the funds, they can provide housing for the Grace residents.

It was moved by Trustee Straw, seconded by Trustee Wesley, that this Resolution 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 Straw

NAYS: 0

ABSENT: 0

ABSTAINED: 1 - Village Trustee Wesley

- G. [MOT 24-119](#) A Motion by Trustees Enyia and Straw to Direct Village Staff to Draft an Agreement for Board Consideration with the Oak Park-River Forest Community of Congregations to Provide \$150,000 in Village General Funds to the Community of Congregations to Provide Short-Term Rental Assistance for Asylum Seekers**

Sugey: [In Spanish] Part of the Carleton Hotel group of immigrants. Expressed gratitude for taking us in. Would like help with resources and housing, not necessarily Oak Park or Chicago. Do not want our children to get sick in the shelters.

Jefferson Martinez: [In Spanish] Asked Trustee Robinson what she sees when she looks at these families. They have had a lot of difficulties on their way here. They deserve an opportunity because they have desire to continue to advance.

Trustee Robinson responded that she sees her own family and the efforts over generations that she brings with her to this table for every item. This issue hits a particularly sensitive spot to her. For her, this is not about whether she wants to support their effort to get established in this country. It is balancing that with the responsibilities she is charged with to protect the interests of this community and it is painful when those don't line up. She is honored for them to join our meetings and hear her native family's language spoken here when she has been pushing for language access for so long.

Trustee Enyia said this request is in addition to the MMC's dollars. It is an opportunity to be a more direct path to rental assistance. He said he is not against figuring out if those funds can be used to help others.

Trustee Straw said the SMASS grant funds are restricted to services provided through June 30. The task force is bringing landlords to the table by offering rent money up front. The four-month limitation of services under the SMASS grant is significant. These funds being unencumbered gives them start-up funding to reduce the burden on our shorter-term shelter situation in the near term. He said he does not anticipate this \$150K appropriation as being in addition to but rather a reallocation of funds that have previously been appropriated to the migrant response.

Manager Jackson said the Village anticipates seeking and getting reimbursement from the county for the \$500K plus \$150K we have spent for our emergency response efforts. Director Tchang said the Village estimates \$770K for the cost of providing services for November, December, and January, of which \$400K is reimbursable through the SMASS grant round 1 funding. We have received a check for \$340K and anticipate receiving the \$59K balance soon. We have a commitment from Cook County for \$350K to cover expenses not previously covered in December in addition to ongoing operational expenses for food and shelter through January and February up to the \$300K cap. We are able to apply for additional funds as the response is ongoing. Manager Jackson requested the agreement terms be similar to those in the state grant.

Trustee Wesley said he would like to see us take this program and expand it to more people. He said we have 100 homeless kids in our Oak Park schools and there was no outreach or programming to them. We cannot continue to make a difference between people in our community and he

cannot vote for a program that gives \$150K to 132 people.

Trustee Robinson asked if it is possible to ask the state for more money under the grant. Director Tchang confirmed it is possible to go back to the state or MMC and request more funding. Trustee Robinson asked if we could make a good case for an additional \$150K with the understanding that the partner we identified came back with a higher amount. Director Tchang said the Village has had many conversations with MMC and the grant administrator and they have not demonstrated any flexibility around using funds after June 30. Trustee Robinson said we need to figure out a more well established broader effort and using taxpayer dollars for this makes her uncomfortable.

Trustee Parakkat said he will not vote to use taxpayer dollars for this.

President Scaman said she supports this and would be interested in continuing the conversations around expanding the program. She noted the COC is volunteering their time and the Village has a strong partnership with Housing Forward. She said she doesn't think this is the right program to respond to all needs, though she can see matching the dollar amount.

Trustee Straw asked if landlords are willing to take 6 months instead of 12 months to stretch the SMASS dollars farther. Coordinator Puentes said that doesn't bring enough landlords to the table and it doesn't give enough time to create stability. Pastor Knapp added that the grant restrictions are significant which is why this \$150K is so helpful because it gives us the other eight months.

Trustee Wesley asked if the \$300K does not work without the \$150K. Pastor Knapp said they have to combine the \$300K with the private donations already raised and they will continue to fundraise. Coordinator Puentes added that the longer it takes to fundraise, the lower the SMASS grant gets us. It has to be all at once to be able to cover everyone.

Trustee Parakkat asked if it would work if the \$150K was a loan. President Scaman said she has spoken to other communities who have done that and she would not recommend it. Pastor Knapp said he suspects his board would not support that.

It was moved by Trustee Enyia, seconded by Trustee Straw, that this Motion be approved. The motion was approved. The roll call on the vote was as follows:

AYES: 4 - Village President Scaman, Village Trustee Buchanan, Village Trustee Enyia, and Village Trustee Straw

NAYS: 3 - Village Trustee Parakkat, Village Trustee Robinson, and Village Trustee Wesley

ABSENT: 0

XVI. Call to Board and Clerk

Clerk Waters wished her grandmother a happy 90th birthday. Early voting starts March 4 at 9:00 A.M.

Trustee Enyia acknowledged Irving Elementary for creating a wall to Black Excellence, including Ellis Coleman, Faith Julian, Percy Julian, Geraldine McCullough, Larry Higgs, John Register, Juanta Griffin, Faith Jefferson Jones, Sherlynn Reid, Marjorie Vincent, Aaron Parchem, Dr. Willie Mae Jackson, and Christina Waters.

Trustee Wesley recommended going to see the Julian Legacy Museum at the Library Idea Box from February 4-March 4. He acknowledged the hard work of the staff and the alternative mental health response and the community racial equity assessment.

Trustee Parakkat wished his father a happy 86th birthday and his mother a healthy recovery. He said he has yet to see any action for holding people accountable for what happened October 31 and how we can prevent something like that from happening again. He said he would like to see that discussion happen as soon as possible.

Trustee Straw said today is Mardi Gras. He thanked Rev. Reid from UMC for attending the meeting and said we are moving into the season of Lent and encouraged taking time for personal reflection.

President Scaman said Kuumba Kids are performing Feb. 17 at Lincoln Elementary at 2:00 P.M. and Feb. 24 at Longfellow at 2:00 P.M.

XVII. Adjourn

It was moved by Trustee Straw, seconded by Trustee Enyia, to Adjourn. A voice vote was taken and the motion was approved. Meeting adjourned Tuesday, February 13, 2024, 11:42 P.M.

**Respectfully submitted,
Deputy Clerk Hansen**