





Memorandum

TO: Kevin J. Jackson, Village Manager 

FROM: Dan Yopchick, Chief Communications Officer 

FOR: Village President and Board of Trustees

DATE: November 16, 2023

SUBJECT: Timeline of events related to asylum-seeking migrants in Oak Park

Overview

As of today, the Village of Oak Park is supporting 162 asylum-seeking migrants residing in the community, including 57 children under the age of 18. There are 89 individuals living at The Carleton Hotel of Oak Park and 55 individuals living at the West Cook YMCA. In addition, there are 18 individuals being sheltered currently at Grace Episcopal Church. Two of those individuals joined this site after the Village transported migrants there on Nov. 10.

Village staff is also aware of two volunteer-led shelters that have been established in the community. These sites, Calvary Memorial Church and Euclid Methodist Church, are housing approximately a combined 37 individuals. Those asylum seekers are not factored into the number cited above (162) as those congregations are operating independently from the Village of Oak Park's support system.

Timeline

The following timeline outlines the events leading up to and the actions taken by the Village of Oak Park in order to assist asylum-seeking migrants who have arrived and begun to reside in the community.

- **Sept. 11, 2023** – Two members of the Chicago Police Department's 15th District Station Response Team, and Oak Park residents, provided non-agenda public comment to the Board during a meeting regarding the work that organization was doing to support approximately 60 migrants who were living and sleeping in around the station.
- **Sept. 18, 2023** – The Village Board approved a resolution authorizing the submission of an application for \$7.5 million in the form of a Supporting Municipalities for Asylum Seeker Services (SMASS) grant. The grant application called for funds to be passed

Timeline of events related to asylum-seeking migrants in Oak Park

November 16, 2023

Page 2

through to seven (7) identified community-based partners that had infrastructure already in place to assist.

- **Sept. 29, 2023** – Village staff was notified that Oak Park was awarded a \$150,000 SMASS grant to be used for planning for future opportunities.
- **Oct. 23, 2023** – The Board of Trustees received a memo from staff providing an update on asylum seekers. At the time, staff was diligently monitoring the situation and was not aware of any migrants being housed on Village property or by its community partners.
- **Oct. 26, 2023** – The Village of Oak Park Health Department assisted in providing a series of vaccines that are required in order for children to remain in schools. There were migrant families who were served in this setting, though none were living in the community under the direct care of the Village itself at this time.
- **Oct. 30, 2023** – Community activists and migrants marched approximately 0.5 mile from the 15th District to Village Hall for a rally in the courtyard prior to the Village Board meeting that evening. During the meeting, there was public comment on the topic before the Board discussed a motion to establish a Village Emergency Task Force and Fund for Asylum Seekers. That evening the Board acted to allocate \$150,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding toward supporting asylum seekers. Combined with the \$150,000 in SMASS grant funding, that brought the Village's available total to \$300,000 at this time. No task force was established.
- **Oct. 31, 2023** - Shortly before 10:30 p.m., and without prior knowledge, the Oak Park Police Department received a phone call from a volunteer seeking to assist asylum-seeking migrant families that were based at the Chicago Police Department's 15th District station and were seeking indoor shelter. The volunteer relayed that they were part of a 15th District Response Team that provided tents to migrant families. Due to the frigid overnight temperatures, there was fear that these families were facing extreme risk due to the cold. Approximately 26 families were seeking indoor shelter due to the weather.

The Oak Park Police Department explained that the lobby of the Oak Park police station likely would only be able to accommodate a very limited number of people and their personal belongings due to size constraints within the facility.

Community activists began transporting migrants from the 15th District to the Oak Park police station over the next several hours. Village of Oak Park officials and staff members immediately began working to identify viable solutions for shelter in Oak Park Tuesday night into Wednesday morning. Families were initially assisted and taken to safe indoor locations with the majority being taken in temporarily overnight at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. No one remained at Village Hall or the police station as of approximately 1:45 a.m. on Nov. 1, while approximately 102 people were accommodated that night as part of the effort.

Timeline of events related to asylum-seeking migrants in Oak Park

November 16, 2023

Page 3

- **Nov. 1, 2023** - The Village of Oak Park, under the authority of Village Manager Kevin J. Jackson, activated its Emergency Operations Center (EOC) on Wed., Nov. 1, putting in place established protocols in response to the evolving crisis involving asylum-seeking migrants and families in the community.
- **Nov. 2, 2023** - At its emergency meeting on Nov. 2, 2023, the Village Board considered and unanimously approved a Resolution Declaring an Emergency Disaster Affecting Public Health, Safety and Welfare in Order to Provide Aid and Support to Asylum Seekers Residing in Oak Park. It is set to expire on Dec. 4, 2023.

The emergency declaration will temporarily suspend purchasing requirements such as formal bidding procedures and Board contract approvals when quick action is deemed necessary and when it is impractical to convene a Board meeting. Illinois Governor JB Pritzker executed a "Gubernatorial Disaster Proclamation" on a statewide basis due to the arrival of asylum seekers in the State on October 13, 2023 on a 30-day basis.

- **Nov. 6, 2023** - The Village Board received a memo detailing an update regarding asylum-seeking migrants in Oak Park. The memo outlined plans to relocate migrants from temporary short-term shelters in area churches to available rooms at the West Cook YMCA and The Carleton Hotel of Oak Park. It also detailed operational impacts, expenses, estimated costs and the Village's plan for wraparound services managed by Housing Forward.

The Village Board meeting that night included approximately 75 public comments on the issue, updates given by the Emergency Operations Center and additional dialogue between Trustees and staff.

The Village was also notified that it would be awarded an additional \$250,000 through the SMASS grant. That is in addition to the \$150,000 in SMASS funding that was granted last month. During its regular meeting on Oct. 30, the Village Board also appropriated \$150,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) lost revenue funds from its general funds for the purpose of supporting asylum seekers in Oak Park, totaling \$550,000 in available funding.

- **Beginning Nov. 7, 2023** - Over a four-day period this week between Nov. 7-10, the Village of Oak Park collaborated with multiple community partners to successfully relocate 162 asylum-seeking migrants residing within the community into new temporary shelters, including 58 children under the age of 18.
 - On Tues., Nov. 7, 58 migrants were moved from United Lutheran Church and Good Shepherd Lutheran Church to The Carleton Hotel of Oak Park. On Wed., Nov. 8, an additional six families of 26 individuals, were moved into The Carleton.
 - On Thurs., Nov. 9, the West Cook YMCA began receiving new arrivals with 40 individuals moving into that space. Fourteen more were moved into the YMCA on Fri., Nov. 10. Finally, approximately 16 migrants were being sheltered at

Timeline of events related to asylum-seeking migrants in Oak Park

November 16, 2023

Page 4

Grace Episcopal Church in Oak Park as of Friday afternoon. That number is believed to have grown to 20 in the days since. The temporary shelter at Grace Episcopal Church will be overseen and operated by a team of dedicated volunteers.

- **Nov. 9, 2023** - Village of Oak Park also teamed up with the Cook County Health (CCH) Department to provide needed medical care for the migrants residing in the community. A Care Coordination Team was on site at The Carleton on Thurs., Nov. 10 to triage the group there and directly transport patients in need of immediate care or attention to and from the CCH facility in Chicago's Belmont Cragin neighborhood. This relationship has continued in the days since. That service began at the YMCA today.
- **Nov. 13, 2023** - The Village Board received a memo detailing an update regarding staff's response to asylum-seeking migrants currently in Oak Park, including current status, updated financial analysis, SMASS grant status and other future plans.

During its meeting that evening, the Board discussed three questions to provide staff with additional direction: an extension of the emergency disaster declaration (adopted Nov. 2; expires Dec. 4); any additional funding authority and; policy direction as it relates to additional new arrivals to Oak Park. No vote was taken and staff expects to bring back recommendations to the Board on Nov. 20.

Please contact Dan Yopchick, Chief Communications Officer, at dyopchick@oak-park.us or 708-358-5781 with any questions.

Cc: Lisa Shelley, Deputy Village Manager
Ahmad Zayyad, Deputy Village Manager
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