

**APPROVED MINUTES - SPECIAL BOARD MEETING  
PRESIDENT AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE VILLAGE OF OAK PARK  
HELD ON MONDAY, APRIL 16<sup>TH</sup>, 2012 AT 6:30 P.M.  
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS OF OAK PARK VILLAGE HALL**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

President Pope called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

**II. ROLL CALL**

PRESENT: Trustees Brewer, Lueck, Salzman and Tucker; President Pope  
ABSENT: Trustees Hedges and Johnson

**IV. QUARTERLY PUBLIC FORUM WITH THE BOARD**

**A. Presentation by Village Staff**

Chief Financial Officer Craig Lesner described various components of the Cook County property tax bill. He noted that property taxes derived from residential and commercial property owners make up approximately 37% of the operating fund for the Village. Various other taxes and fees compose the remainder. Mr. Lesner added that economic development will help further generate not only property taxes but sales taxes and ancillary taxes such as liquor and hotel taxes, putting less of a burden on homeowners.

Business Services Manager Loretta Daly gave an overview of the commercial history in the community. She stated that in their economic development efforts, the Village and the Oak Park Development Corporation strive to create an environment where they not only meet the needs and desires of the community, but draw in others as well. Demographics indicate that there are 51,000 residents as well as a daytime population of approximately 30,000. Tourism statistics reflect approximately 200,000 visitors per year. Census data demonstrates a significant disposable income among Oak Park residents. Ms. Daly added that commercial building vacancies are on the decline.

Statistics on tax revenue and the current business mix as well as comparative data with other communities were presented. Ms. Daly stated that the Economic Development Team will be working on a business plan that looks at both recruitment and retention strategies; this should be completed within the next month or so. Ms. Daly answered questions from the Board.

**B. Public Discussion and Dialogue**

Jim Kelly, 1043 S. Harvey, representing the Roosevelt Road Business Assn. Mr. Kelly felt that Berwyn's model for economic development was more robust than Oak Park's. He referred to the recent streetscaping on Roosevelt Road and noted that development on the Berwyn side has been superior to that of the Oak Park side. The

Roosevelt Road Business Association would be submitting a letter to the Board requesting consideration of a TIF for Roosevelt Road.

Trustee Lueck commented that it's difficult to project the impact of the streetscape, as the Berwyn side has a TIF. She added that some of this development could have occurred on the Oak Park side had it not been for that TIF.

Trustee Brewer referred to various unoccupied locations on Roosevelt Road and asked how often vacant property owners in the Village are contacted. Sara Faust of the Oak Park Development Corporation stated that they are contacted at least quarterly. Also the OPDC does reach out to owners of buildings that are vacant or underutilized to help facilitate leads for new ownership or tenants depending on individual circumstances.

Trustee Salzman stated that the Board needs to determine whether the best use of money designated for economic development is infrastructure improvements or if these resources are better spent by support for potential tenants and businesses. How other communities allocate these resources should be examined as well.

There was a discussion regarding the business plan referred to by Ms. Daly. Trustee Lueck asked if the remaining Garfield TIF money could be utilized in some way. Ms. Daly stated that upgrading the lighting system is being considered. She added that other recommendations for investment of these funds will be forthcoming in the next couple of months.

There was a discussion regarding various forms of business support offered by the Village.

Gary Belenke, 834 S. Harvey. Mr. Belenke stated that consumers are shopping more at big box stores or online, adding that Oak Park offers few consumer goods stores. He asked how successful Oak Park's methods to attract businesses have been and what kind of success is foreseen for small businesses in the future.

President Pope stated that Oak Park does not have any space large enough to accommodate a big box store, although combining several smaller spaces into one may provide room for a mid box store. If there was a possibility of bringing something resembling this into the Village, would it be attractive or should the focus be on smaller local businesses and keeping the dollars in Oak Park.

Mr. Belenke commented that Oak Park is not geographically attractive to national retailers, despite the spending power in the Village and surrounding communities. For this reason, it would be best to concentrate on recruiting smaller businesses.

Trustee Brewer spoke about a toolkit issued from the National League of Cities for local leaders supporting entrepreneurs and small businesses. He stated that implementing some of these strategies should be considered.

Trustee Lueck agreed with Mr. Belenke, stating that she makes every effort to shop locally but there are some things that cannot be bought in the community. She added

that balance in the retail mix is recognizing what is possible but also what generates tax revenue.

President Pope stated that in addition to tax revenues and wealth generation, quality of life impacts of certain economic development should be taken into consideration.

Michael Marshall, 409 S. Kenilworth. Mr. Marshall spoke about the development on Lake and Forest and stated that it would be an ideal location for an anchor store.

Craig Chesney, 634 Clinton. Mr. Chesney asked if a children's museum or fine arts venue was ever considered, adding that these could draw people into the Village.

Trustee Salzman was in favor of investing funds for cultural projects, and recommended the approach of looking at specific opportunities rather than the district as a whole. Ms. Faust added that the OPDC does target locations and has had conversations with various entertainment venues.

Pat Zubak, representing Downtown Oak Park. Ms. Zubak suggested a marketing campaign for the entire community. She added that the Village's best efforts should be used towards targeting independent versus national businesses.

There was a discussion regarding a unified marketing effort among the different entities that promote businesses in the Village.

Carol Southern, 403 S. Harvey, #1A. Ms. Southern was in favor of a department store such as Carson's occupying one of the larger buildings on Madison Street.

Trustee Lueck commented that Oak Park has all of the components that should make them successful in a retail environment but there are very few places in the Village to buy basic every day items. She added that the Village would like to attract that type of space, but retailers, despite Oak Park's good demographics and income levels, are looking for square footage and parking.

President Pope agreed that a retailer such as Carson's is looking for larger square footage and parking than what is typically available in Oak Park. He conceded that shopping patterns have changed since the Village was filled with department stores, but urged the Village to think strategically about existing opportunities.

Trustee Lueck stated that the trend towards mid box retailers is on the upswing, adding that Oak Park can accommodate that type of business.

Interim Village Manager Cara Pavlicek announced that those who could not attend this meeting but had comments or suggestions could mail or email them to the Village Manager's Office or to the Board of Trustees.

Gary Barnes, 627 S. Humphrey. Mr. Barnes stated that if the community is one that people want to live in and be seen in, the businesses will follow. He discussed rising taxes, adding that the economy is not what it was years ago.

**V. Report from the Personnel Committee of the Board:  
Update on the Village Manager Search Process**

Trustee Lueck announced that the Personnel Committee met last week and narrowed the list of prospective firms to conduct the Village Manager search to four. During their May 1 meeting, each firm will have 50 minutes to give their presentation and answer questions. The meeting will be from 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

Trustee Brewer asked what the criteria were for choosing these firms. Trustee Lueck stated that cost, experience, particularly with doing placements in comparable positions, quality and longevity of personnel, quality of recruitment materials and recruitment strategy were all considered.

**VI. Adjourn**

It was moved and seconded to adjourn. A voice vote was taken and the motion was approved. The meeting adjourned at 8:26 P.M. Monday, April 16, 2012

**SUBMITTED AND RECORDED IN THE OFFICE OF:**

By: MaryAnn Schoenneman  
Interim Deputy Village Clerk

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Teresa Powell, Village Clerk