







Memorandum

TO: Kevin J. Jackson, Village Manager 

FROM: Alvin Nepomuceno, Information Technology Director 
Dan Yopchick, Chief Communications Officer 
David Baker, Civic Information System Chair 

FOR: Village President and Board of Trustees

DATE: February 1, 2024

SUBJECT: Recommendation of Commitment to an Open Data Policy

Overview

At its January 11, 2024 meeting, the Civic Information Systems Commission (CISC) felt it important for the Village Board of Trustees to advocate for an open data policy for the Village of Oak Park. This leadership from the Board is essential to drive how an open data environment, which is crucial in the design of a more open government, should look to residents.

Recently, the CISC reviewed and discussed an open data policy set forth by the City of Ottawa in Ontario, Canada. This policy may be viewed at:

<https://engage.ottawa.ca/openottawa/widgets/33019/documents>.

Examples of best practices adopted by Ottawa include ensuring that data is complete and from a primary source where possible, timely, accessible, and machine-readable. The CISC agrees with and recommends these important principles, especially machine-readability, which allows users to download raw data and form their own reports or design applications.

The Village of Oak Park may reference existing policies set forth by Ottawa and other municipalities to shape its own unique version of an open data policy. The CISC feels that periodic data review and a commitment to publishing timelines is an essential starting point to ensure accuracy and consistency in data presentation.

The CISC believes that while an open data portal could be an effective way of presenting information to the public, the Village of Oak Park would be best served by a Board-approved policy. This policy would mandate what data is presented in the public portal. Once committed to open data, the Board may defer to staff and the CISC for recommended best practices and standards. Ultimately, the proposed policy would serve as a guiding document to ensure continued commitment to rigorously-approved standards and best practices.

CISC Motion

A move to recommend that the Village of Oak Park demonstrates a commitment to an open data policy that reflects open data best practices and standards. The motion was unanimously approved.

Fiscal Impact

Other than staff time, should the Board direct, there is little to no fiscal impact to the Village of Oak Park should it adopt an open data policy. However, any additional research requiring a third-party consultant outside of staff or CISC would require further financial obligations, as would the investment in an open data portal if desired.

Staff Recommendation

Staff concurs with CISC in that publishing data online is beneficial to the Village of Oak Park as it promotes transparency and may minimize the processing time of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. This would allow staff to become more efficient in other Village operations.

Outcome

As a follow-up to the memo sent to the Village Manager in May 2023, the CISC requested that staff explore the feasibility of an open data platform for the Village of Oak Park with a budget appropriation recommended for Fiscal Year 2024. At its January 2024 meeting, the CISC voted unanimously to recommend that the Board commit to an open data policy reflecting current best practices and standards with a priority of publishing machine-readable data.

Alternatives

No commitment to an open data policy. The lack of an open data policy effectively means that there is no Board mandate to present consistent and accurate data to the public.

Previous Commission Action

After proposals were requested and vendor demonstrations were given to staff, the CISC voted to approve staff's recommendation for an open data solution (portal) in March 2020. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic derailed the recommendation tentatively scheduled for Board approval. However, no recommendation was made for an open data policy to complement that solution or portal. The CISC believes that it is an opportune time to reaffirm the Village of Oak Park's commitment to open data by enacting a strong policy to support future initiatives.

For questions, please contact Alvin Nepomuceno, IT Director, at anepomuceno@oak-park.us or 708-358-5452; Dan Yopchick, Chief Communications Officer, at dyopchick@oak-park.us or 708-358-5781; or David Baker, CISC Chair, at dgb@toast.net.

cc: Lisa Shelley, Deputy Village Manager
Ahmad Zayyad, Deputy Village Manager
Erin Baynes, Assistant to the Village Manager
Christina M. Waters, Village Clerk
All Department Directors