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Account Established for Donations to Renters Affected by Public Works Fire

The Village has established an account at First Bank of Oak Park to allow individuals to make cash donations to assistant tenants of the 38-unit apartment building affected by the July 31 fire in the Public Works Department storage facility next door. Bank officials opened the fund with a \$1,000 deposit.

"We have been limited in what could be done immediately for individuals in this situation," said Deputy Village Manager Rogene Hill whose Community Relations Department staff is overseeing the assistance effort. "Although many issues are yet to be resolved, our personal desire is to help individuals in need and to provide a vehicle for others in the community to express their support."

Thirty-six of the 38 units in the apartment building located on the southeast corner of Harvey Avenue and South Boulevard were closed for five days while utility services damaged by the fire were restored. Two of the apartments sustained heat and smoke damage and will require more extensive repairs before they can be reoccupied. The belongings of many of the tenants in the other apartments also were affected by the smoke and may need to be replaced.

Hill explained that sorting through the legal issues associated with cause and liability will take time, adding, "The need of those individuals affected by the fire is immediate. That's why we pursued the bank account as a mechanism for the community to help if they wish."

A coalition of local not-for-profit organizations will assist the Village in managing disbursements from the fund to the apartment building's residents. These organizations include the Community Chest of Oak Park, River Forest and Forest Park, West Suburban PADS and the Family Service and Mental Health Center of Oak Park and River Forest.

Anyone wishing to make a donation can drop off or mail contributions to First Bank of Oak Park, 11 W. Madison St., Oak Park, IL 60302. Checks should be made out to the *Village of Oak Park Fire Donations Fund*. Donations are not tax deductible.

"The offers of support are welcomed," Hill said. "This unfortunate event has disrupted the lives of many individuals. But it is good to know so many people are willing to lend assistance."

For more information on the assistance effort call 358.5400 or email comsvcs@oak-park.us.

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