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From: David Powers  
Communications Director  
708.358.5781

Contact: Carl Swenson  
Village Manager  
708.358.5770

### **Village Board Sets Priorities for Term Ahead**

Supporting individual business district revitalization strategies, improving public safety education outreach efforts, and achieving a performance-based approach to policy-making are among the key priorities set by the Village Board during a series of planning sessions that produced more than 50 short-term and long-term objectives to be pursued during the current board term.

With the help of a professional facilitator, members of the Village Board have created a comprehensive strategy that clearly defines the board's goals and objectives, designating priorities and corresponding schedules for completion. According to Village President David G. Pope, such a structured approach is intended to help the Board remain focused on key issues, while continuing to support the effective delivery of routine Village services.

"I've been very pleased with the collaborative way in which all of the members of our Board have worked together to develop these priorities. With this effort, we now have a road map to help us focus our own efforts, as well as to guide staff and the citizen commissions in addressing community-wide priorities. These priorities, in turn, should serve as a standard which people here in our community can use to hold us accountable, to evaluate our performance, and to ensure that we continue to work to enhance the quality of life for all the people of Oak Park."

Developing a plan for Madison Street, reaching a resolution with the Park District on governance issues, and establishing comprehensive performance indicators for the delivery of Village services were among the Board's key, short-term goals. The Board also intends to examine the current structure of all Village fees, review personnel policies, and initiate the substantial job of examining and reconciling the entire Village Code, steps Village Manager Carl Swenson said must be undertaken from time to time to bring municipal government operations up to date and in line with modern life.

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"Every community needs to periodically examine its codes and policies to ensure they are achieving their original intent," Swenson said. "Policies often reflect the times in which they were created. But even as times and circumstances change, codes and policies remain on the books until the elected governing body chooses to change them. As a professional municipal manager, I am gratified that the Board clearly understands the importance of these issues and has designated them as a priority."

The complete list of board objectives contains initial implementation steps, Pope said. It has been organized to reflect consensus priorities, and it will enable multiple initiatives to be pursued simultaneously. Objectives and initiatives are organized into short-term and long-term categories, and are then broken out by tier to reflect their relative priority.

Among the high-priority, short-term objectives and ideas are the adoption of a participatory planning process, prioritization of streetscape improvements, broader access to services through the internet, creation of a financial evaluation model for economic development and facilitating discussions with groups that provide youth services. Also in this category, the Board listed improving intergovernmental collaboration, reviewing the ad hoc committee report on affordable housing, examining the Village's role as a developer, creating a legislative agenda, and examining senior services.

Long-term objectives and ideas address projects such as creating a new comprehensive plan, developing a strategy to reduce traffic congestion and adopting environmentally sound sustainable practices such as those incorporated into the proposed new Public Works facility. Other long-term objectives include creating an Austin Boulevard-Lake Street business district plan, increasing the number of streets and alleys resurfaced each season, pursuing an Oak Park animal shelter, and reviewing the structure and roles of the Village's many citizen volunteer boards and commissions.

"We will need to consciously focus our energy and efforts to ensure that we can achieve these outcomes," Pope said. "I have every confidence that as a board, we will be able to do that for the key priority areas that we have identified. Now is when the real work begins. I am sure that our board, our staff, and our citizen commissions are up to the task."

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