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From: David Powers
Communications Director
708.358.5781

Contact: David Pope
Village President
708.358.5796

Village Board Names New Manager

In a special meeting Thursday night the Village Board approved the execution of an employment agreement with Thomas W. Barwin to become the new Village Manager for Oak Park.

Barwin currently is the City Manager of Ferndale, Michigan, a community of about 25,000 residents adjacent to Detroit. He has been Ferndale's manager since early 1998.

"Tom Barwin's experience and personality are a perfect match for Oak Park," said Village President David Pope. "We are a community with a tremendous and storied past, and an even more compelling future. I couldn't be more pleased with our Board's decision here tonight. I am confident that Tom will make a very valuable contribution to the life of our community and that he will be heartily welcomed and appreciated during his term of service in Oak Park."

When officially notified of his selection, Barwin said, "I am really looking forward to living in and working with and for the elected officials, people and employees of Oak Park. Although I am leaving one of Metro-Detroit's most interesting, upbeat and progressive communities, I am thrilled to be joining one of America's truly great and forward looking communities. I am sincerely honored to have been selected and can't wait to get started."

Barwin's selection as Oak Park's Village Manager came after a national search that attracted a diverse group of applicants from across the country and brought the top six candidates here in May for interviews with the Village Board. The similarities of Oak Park and Ferndale, including their active citizen involvement and proximity to a major city, were an asset for Barwin in the selection process, according to Pope.

"Tom rose to the top of the list early in the process," Pope said. "His list of attributes as a municipal manager is long and impressive. He understands the need to balance growth with historic preservation; he has a strong background in financial and operational management and labor relations; and he recognizes the many benefits of nurturing positive relationships with the schools and other taxing bodies. He also exhibited the type of enthusiastic, open-mindedness that is essential for the manager of a community like ours."

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Village Manager Selected
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The importance of the role of Village Manager required the Board to move carefully and diligently toward the selection of the best candidate, according to Pope, who said, "I am confident tonight that the many hours dedicated to the search process and the hard work of my fellow Board members have given the citizens of Oak Park a chief administrator who can efficiently deliver the high level of public services the community deserves and expects."

Prior to assuming his current role in Ferndale, Barwin served in executive positions in the Michigan communities of Troy, Hazel Park, St. Charles, St. Clair Shores and Warren, as well as with the Michigan Department of Commerce. He is a graduate of Central Michigan University, Michigan State University and Harvard University's Program for Senior Executives in State and Local Government. He also served on the Brookings Institution's Midwest leadership group which helped craft a new public policy agenda for older suburbs titled *Valuing America's First Suburbs*.

Ferndale officials credited Barwin with helping guide the community's transformation from a declining inner ring suburb to a vibrant community with above average increases in property values, a bustling downtown and increasing recreational, cultural and entertainment activities for residents and visitors alike.

His will assume the role of Oak Park's Village Manager in early August. He replaces former Village Manager Carl Swenson who, after 10 years in Oak Park, took a senior management post with the City of Peoria, Arizona.

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