



For Immediate Release: 10.09.06

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Parking Enforcement Officer Terminated

Village to Conduct Comprehensive Review of Parking Administrative Procedures

A tip received by the Oak Park Police Department that a parking enforcement officer had improperly voided a ticket has led to the termination of one Village employee and accelerated plans for a comprehensive review of how parking regulations are administered.

Village officials declined to name the individual who had been terminated, citing the need to follow a specific process detailed in the collective bargaining contract that covers parking enforcement personnel.

"The allegation against the employee is a serious one," said Village Manager Tom Barwin. "Per the applicable contract, an administrative hearing was scheduled to allow the employee to answer the allegation. The employee was given ample opportunity to appear, but failed to do so. This behavior gave me no choice other than to terminate employment."

Barwin, who has been Village Manager since mid-August, said he had quickly learned about parking issues in Oak Park and a review of how the Parking Division operates was high on his list of priorities. The need to terminate an enforcement officer has moved it to the top, he said.

A panel will be appointed this week to begin a thorough review of Parking Division operations. The review will include all aspects of operations, including managerial oversight of employees, distribution of authority and accounting checks and balances. Former Oak Park Police Chief Joe Mendrick will chair the panel.

Barwin said he also will request that the Village Board ask the Transportation Commission to conduct a community meeting to air parking issues.

"As Village administrative staff, our roles are limited to the administration of policies set by the Village Board. "But how we administer the programs can have a huge impact on public perception and even compliance," he explained. "Perhaps by allowing residents to share their views and experiences, we can come up with ways to improve how we do business. At the same time, the Village Board may decide that some policy changes are in order."

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Parking program review
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In the meantime, Barwin said he is urging any resident who has any information of improper conduct in the administration of the Village's parking regulations to contact Commander Clement Harbour of the Oak Park Police Department at 358.5568.

"From my many years of experience in municipal government I have learned that most public employees share a sense of obligation to the community they serve," he said. "But in government, as in any industry, there always are certain individuals who may not follow the rules.

"Allegations of wrongdoing by a public employee must be dealt with fairly, but swiftly. That's how I manage. It is unfortunate and difficult for us all if an individual employee chooses to go down the wrong path. But it should not reflect negatively on the entire organization. It just means that we, as managers, must redouble our efforts to ensure the public is served effectively, efficiently and honestly."

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