

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE
OAK PARK VILLAGE BOARD

Approved Minutes
Saturday, February 1, 2014
Oak Park River Forest High School Board Room
201 South Scoville
9:00 am-10:30 am

Attendees:

Ray Johnson – Village
Colette Lueck - Village
Peter Barber – Village
Denise Sacks - D97
Janet Kelenson – Library
Steve Gevinson – D200
Jeff Weissglass – D200
Ade Oneyami – Township
Paul Aeschlman- Parks

Absent:

Jim Gates-D97
Victor Guarino-Parks
Clarmarie Keenan-Township
David Sokol-Library

The meeting was called to order at 9:04 am by Colette Lueck. Ray Johnson announced that he was leaving the Committee due to changes in his work commitments and that Colette Lueck would chair the meeting. The Village President may choose to appoint a new member to replace Mr. Johnson.

Approval of Minutes

It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes of July 6 and November 16, 2013. The minutes were approved.

Opportunities for Intergovernmental Cost Savings-Follow-up from Last Meeting

Civic Engagement

Jeff Weissglass presented information about developing a public engagement process, summarizing materials previously sent to I-Gov members. Mr. Weissglass noted that he had become interested in methods of public engagement seven years ago and mentioned a number of organizations that are exploring strategies for public conversation.

Ms. Lueck asked about the purpose of such engagement. Mr. Weissglass noted that Mr. Gates had suggested at the last meeting that the community should consider what services they are willing to give up to save tax dollars.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE
OAK PARK VILLAGE BOARD

Mr. Weissglass noted that the City of Chicago is experimenting with participatory budgeting. Mr. Gevinson noted that this group is advisory only.

Members noted that a small group of residents tend to be active and to respond to invitations to provide input. Mr. Johnson noted that renters are not well-represented in these groups.

Mr. Aeschlman noted that on 10-15% of participants at any major meeting are “new” to the process. Ms. Lueck noted that the Strategic Planning process used many outreach tools to attract wider participation, including outreach at schools and DIY kits for residents to call meetings to provide input; nevertheless, participation remains largely limited to those who are already engaged.

Mr. Weissglass noted four types of dialogue: exploration (developing ideas), conflict transformation, decision-making and collaborative action. He noted the use of citizen juries for deliberation and Stanford deliberative polling.

Mr. Barber asked how to get better community representation. Mr. Aeschlman noted that each local government attracts a separate group of engaged citizens, usually with a focus on near-term needs. Members discussed the challenges of capturing opinions on current issues.

The challenges and limits of online engagement through newspaper comments and Facebook were discussed and it was noted that these may be co-opted by special interests. Mr. Johnson noted that only 2000 of 24,000 households commented on Envision Oak Park.

Mr. Barber questioned the relevance of the tax bill issue to renters, except indirectly.

Mr. Weissglass noted that the Open Meetings Act limits concepts such as break-out sessions at official public meetings, and suggested “making public participation legal”. Various methods of public participation were discussed.

Mr. Aeschlman noted that Alexandria, Virginia, a community with a profile comparable to Oak Park, has developed a process for community conversations and noted that the Park District used this model for a parks study.

Mr. Barber noted that I-Gov had previously planned to host a community conversation on June 14. It was noted that this is the same day that Ridgeland Commons will host a grand re-opening.

Members discussed the challenges of involving the public in budget discussions, given the complex nature of the topic and the decision-making role of elected officials to set budgets. Mr. Gevinson asked what the purpose of public participation would be. Ms. Lueck noted that the public lacks a connection between the tax bill and services such as “911” but also noted that other levels of government also impact the tax bill. There was discussion of ways to link taxes to services through signage, etc Mr. Barber noted that while I-Gov would like to inform people, he would like to know what people really want, given the conflicting goals of each constituency.

Mr. Weissglass noted that the Comprehensive Plan has captured the ideas of the constituencies of each local government. Ms. Lueck suggested goals are to share, education and learn, and recommended that if all governments participate in the discussion of the Comprehensive Plan, there could be a good turnout. Ms. Sacks suggested that I-Gov be part of the Comp Plan presentation. Ms. Lueck noted a need to get a timeline for when the Plan will be ready to present. Mr. Johnson noted that a tax forum sponsored by the Village attracted 200 people. Mr. Weissglass noted that “taxes are too high” has been a theme for 30 years and asked if this was really true since people continue to choose Oak Park. What is the plan to slow growth? That needs to be answered first.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE
OAK PARK VILLAGE BOARD

Mr. Aeschlman recommended inviting state representatives and county officials to the next meeting to allow discussion of the overall tax bill. Ms. Lueck suggested breakouts with a “world café” format. Mr. Aeschlman suggested reaching out to other municipalities with help from state representatives.

Ms. Sacks proposed asking at the meeting if taxes are too high and addressing how each government is working on this issue.

Summary of next steps:

- Focus discussion on personal views of taxes
- Present board methods of dealing with taxes
- Explain ties to the Comprehensive Plan

Next Meeting

Oak Park Township will host the next meeting in mid-March.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:40 a.m.

SUBMITTED AND RECORDED IN THE OFFICE OF:

Teresa Powell, Village Clerk