

**Oak Park Facility Review Committee**  
**December 20, 2023 - Meeting Minutes**  
**Village Hall- Room 101, 6:30PM**

1) Call to Order- Co-chair Lueck called the meeting to order at 6:32pm beginning with roll call.

Roll Call- A quorum was present.

Present: Co-Chair-Colette Lueck, Co-Chair Daniel Roush, Gary Arnold, Lou Garapolo, Jon Hale, Thomas Ptacek, Dana Wright, Tom Bassett- Dilley, Greg Kolar, Jim, Madigan, Pastor Kathy Nolte, Ade Onayemi, Rebecca Paulsen

Absent: Marc Blesoff, Judy Greffin, Stephen Morales

Staff: Robert Sproule, Erin Duffy, Susie Trexler, Craig Failor, FGM Architectural Consultant Ray Lee

Co-chair Lueck provided a brief introduction and background to the Committee and encouraged the additional committee members in attendance to do the same. Committee members in attendance introduced themselves and provided a brief background, both personal and professional, including other Village commission involvement.

2) Agenda Approval

Committee approved the Agenda unanimously 13-0.

3) New Business

1. Village Hall and Police Department Project History

Public Works Director Robert Sproule provided a synopsis of the Police Department (PD) and Village Hall (VH) Facility Review Project to date. This included an overview of the initial PD Space Needs Assessment in 2019 completed by FGM and discussed the delays the project incurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In July 2023, after Village staff discussed options to advance the project, FGM Architects provided a space needs assessment of the facility, as a whole, to the Village Board. At the same meeting, the Village Board voted to move forward with schematic design on option 4. Director Sproule explained that option 4 was to rebuild the current Village Hall Campus with a new Village Civic Center that would meet the current and future needs of the Village. Later that month, the Board moved to pursue historic preservation prior to schematic design. After considerable discussion and staff preparation, the Board adopted two resolutions in October 2023 approving a professional Services Agreement with Johnson Lasky Kindelin Architects for Historic Preservation Architectural Services and creating the Facility Review Committee to oversee the Facility Renovation Evaluation Review Project.

Co-chair Lueck commented that issues with the facility were very clear in the materials the Committee was provided ahead of the first meeting, but that those materials lack background or understanding of how the facility will be utilized in 30 or 40 years. Co-chair Roush pointed out the additional information contained in the Space Needs Program, that was recently made public, and provided to the Committee. Co-chair Lueck continued that operational changes are apparent (modern day policing, etc.) but studies do not address remote work, number of staff, or the function of the building. Furthermore, many residents may not know the happenings of this building because they don't come here, but that this building still represents a home base for staff

Ray Lee, an architectural consultant from FGM, described the thought process behind the Space Needs Program. FGM was able to identify growth opportunities within each department by meeting with staff and department directors and discussing their current and future space needs.

## 2. Village Hall and Police Department Project Goals

Director Sproule outlined the project goals identified by Village staff and the Board of Trustees. These include meeting current building code for life safety and accessibility, meeting the Village's sustainability goals as outlined in the Climate Ready Oak Park plan, meeting current standards for modern workplaces and promoting employee wellness. An additional project goal, as outlined in the Space Needs Assessment and Space Needs Program, is the need to expand Village Hall an additional 10,000 square feet and the Police Department an additional 35,000 square feet. Committee member, Thomas Ptacek, representing the Civic Information Systems (CIS) Commission, commented on his concerns that the needs assessment assumes that staff usage and parking needs remain the same 25 years from now despite the use of technology and improvements to the Village's web-based services. Director Sproule also outlined the project goal to improve security to meet modern day standards including the separation of public areas from staff areas, integration of monitoring capabilities at a security checkpoint in the main lobby, and relocation of customer service areas off the main lobby. Village staff and the Board of Trustees are also interested in expanding this project goal to include modern day security standards in council chambers.

Following the completion of the presentation provided by Director Sproule, discussion surrounding the project goals took place. Please see below for a summary.

Co-chair Lueck pointed out that, during this evaluation process, tension is likely to exist between the concept of Open Government and the need for privacy and protection for both users of the facility and staff.

Director Sproule mentioned that the usage (both operationally and staff size) of the facility has not changed significantly in the last 50 years. When trying to plan for the next 30 to 50 years, Village staff and consultants have had to consider current and past usage of the facility. In regards to remote work, he reminded the committee members that the public sector, in comparison to the private sector, has not experienced the same changes at the same pace.

Committee member, Tom Bassett-Dilley, commented on the project goal regarding the building envelope, lighting, mechanical systems and fenestration meeting current energy codes with this project. He believes only meeting that goal would make the facility and those systems quickly obsolete. Ideally the Village would meet or exceed these goals with this project and believes that net zero for the facility is completely achievable in comparison to other projects that he has worked on. Furthermore, he reminded the committee that the project goals they are discussing will entirely inform the approach to design of a retrofit.

Co-chair Roush stated that he is eager for a conversation surrounding the larger goals of the project and believes the committee was assembled to talk about the big picture goals of the project. He is interested in the values of the committee members, their views on what the building represents to Oak Parkers, and the values surrounding diversity and welcoming politics that Oak Park is known for. Roush opened the conversation up to comments about code minimums on energy code and accessibility code, interior environmental quality, and heritage preservation.

Co-chair Lueck and committee member Bassett-Dilley had a discussion regarding the goals laid out in the Climate Ready Oak Park (CROP) plan. Bassett-Dilley suggested that it is too vague to identify a project goal as merely sustainability and instead should tie the goal directly to the CROP goal of carbon neutral by 2045. The building will be ready for a refresh in 2045 so it would be beneficial to get it right during this retrofit. Co-chair Lueck added that costs will clearly be a driving factor of this decision.

Director Sproule touched on the next steps in the Committee's evaluation of the project. These include presentations by JLK at subsequent meetings on topics such as the building preservation plan, three conceptual design options, and a final design option and cost analysis. Director Sproule suggested that the goals/values identified by the committee, now, will inform their decisions throughout the evaluation process.

Committee member Ptacek believes spaces needs will be smaller in the future and there will be changes to how staff will work in the building. It is a goal of the CIS Commission to minimize personal interactions between staff and residents. The goals are to make it less necessary to come to Village Hall to get routine things done. The Village has made a significant investment in its website infrastructure with the goal of reducing costs and streamlining things for residents. Committee member, Dana Wright, representing the Citizen Police Oversight Commission (CPOC), believes that public servants need to be accessible and available. While technology is making things easier to do, it will not reduce the need for personal interaction altogether especially for adjudication, public health, and the aging community. Technology may make space needs decrease but people thrive on interaction. Wright further comments that people that work in a space are nicer when their space is conducive to work. She believes there is a lot to consider about the facility and project goals in terms of people and personal interactions.

Committee member, Lou Garapolo, representing the Historic Preservation Commission, redirected the discussion back to the facility and civic center concept. He believes the Village has lost and is lacking locations to celebrate. He is not interested in suggesting the building be designed out of fear and wants to make sure the original concept of the building to be inviting to the community is maintained.

Meetings like those of the Historic Preservation Commission and Facility Review Committee are the intended function of a civic center. Co-chair Roush expanded on Oak Park values and believes that the facility is the built artifact of those values including transparency in open government and the effort to diversify Oak Park in a sustainable and realistic way. He reminded the committee that the staff are the users of the building and the owners are the Village residents represented by the Board of Trustees. This opportunity will allow the Facility Review Committee to convey that one conceptual design over another or one or more of these projects does or does not align with the residents shared values.

Committee member, Ade Onayemi, does not believe that the discussion on safety implies a fortification of the building. He suggested that committee members consider how building design and use has changed since the 70s (provided an example of schools and open campus lunch policies) and that at the very least staff should have a sense of security within the facility. He likes the idea of a civic center and openness but thinks it's a lofty endeavor and believes we need to keep the goals of openness and security at the forefront. Committee member Bassett-Dilley stated that there is a way to balance, with good design, the security that staff needs and the welcoming feeling of a civic center that the Village can have pride in.

Co-chair Lueck mentioned that the building does not feel welcoming in its current condition, with the partitions at the entrance, but also that it has never felt welcoming and that wayfinding is an issue once you walk up to the building. While the entrance off Madison is the most interesting part of the building, it goes unused and the entrance that is used in the "back door" and does not say "place of pride." Co-chair Roush wants more than a functional design. He gave the example of the CRC stating that it has a "wow factor" and is a building that people want to be in. The Village has a lot of good architecture and this building should be no exception. The "back door" will require an invasive fix in order to make the building more welcoming.

Co-chair Lueck shifted the conversation to discuss space as a whole. She believes that the Village needs a more flexible space because we do not know how the building will be used in 30 years. She asked the committee to consider "loose fit" as a value so there is room to adjust for future uses. Co-chair Roush commented that "loose fit" already exists within the space but suggests it is underutilized.

Co-chair Lueck turned the committee's attention towards the Police Department facility. Co-chair Roush stated that it seems obvious that the Police should not be in the basement and should have a building adjacent to Village Hall. Committee member, Jon Hale, representing the Plan Commission, stated that a reimagining of the Police Department as a whole will likely take place over the next decade along with its facility. Believes that the Village does not want the Police to be underground nor do they want their building to be off somewhere on its own. Believes separating the police from Village Hall is not the message that residents want to send.

Co-chair Lueck envisions a Police Department facility with flexibility that allows for juvenile assistance, mental health evaluations, and help coping with substance abuse issues. Believes the current space impacts modern day policing negatively. Committee member Ptacek mentioned that there is an objective to reduce the number of children taken into police custody and/or the facility, and the desire

for a non-police response that reduces the need for OPPD to take part in wellness checks. Committee member, Jim Madigan, does not want to move too quickly in assuming the police and Village Hall need to be adjoined. He stated that modern day policing offers several key functions that the township and county already provide successfully and separate of Village Hall.

Committee member Wright wants to make sure that security needs remain a priority as part of the Police Department. There are spaces that we cannot promote community or flexibility because they need to be secure for records, evidence, etc. Parking needs also need to be a priority for the Police department as they are currently lacking vital spaces. Evidence processing has terrible conditions and record retention needs grow every day with every new case. Those areas will continue to need secure locations.

Committee member Bassett Dilley directed a question towards FGM architectural consultant, Ray Lee. Ray Lee believes that you can design open spaces that are secure and he is not suggesting that meeting current security standards means that architects are designing fortresses. Modern day Police Departments need spaces for children and families including flex spaces with different levels of security. Current standards design police departments to be functional for the community and the department to provide social services of all sorts. The additional space for the Police Department does not need further analysis as policing is a community service that will not be moving to remote work. Designing a versatile and welcoming Police Department is possible and can be made a priority.

Committee member, Gary Arnold, representing the Disability Access Commission, would like to see the committee approach their evaluation with a “lens of inclusion” as opposed to just merely meeting codes and laws associated with accessibility. He would like to see the committee approach every accessible space inclusively instead of just entrances, stairwells, etc. Encouraged the committee to ensure that all spaces and programming are accessible to all users. Co-chair Roush stated that there are a lot of ways this building can be made to succeed from an accessibility and inclusion standpoint but maybe there is a component of this project that requires new construction to relieve pressure on the less workable part of the facility.

In conclusion to the discussion portion of the meeting, Co-chair Lueck reminded the committee to consider the size of the building in relation to the size of the property it sits on. The courtyard seems like an underutilized space that should be re-evaluated in the future.

#### 4) Public Comment:

##### In person comments:

Frank Lipo, resident and Director of the Historical Society of Oak Park and River Forest, appreciates the opportunity for public comment now and at future committee meetings. Believes that the project solution is not either a new building or preservation of the current building but in fact doing both. He believes that the Village can preserve the current building as the main structure and modernize the systems and accessibility while completing construction of a new building reestablishing the idea of a civic center which was always architect Harry Weese’s intent.

Frank Heitzman, resident, architect, and former member of the Historic Preservation Commission. Frank filled out the National Register of Historic Places nomination form for the Village Hall facility. He provided a written document that he read from as part of his public comment. This document is available on the committee's webpage in its entirety. Frank provided a brief history of the facility design, nomination, and criteria for preserving the facility.

Kendra Parzan, resident and representative from Landmarks Illinois, believes Village Hall is important to its community. Encouraged the committee to keep the original design intents in mind while evaluating preservation options. Kendra offered the full support of Landmarks Illinois to the reuse vision for Village Hall.

Marty Bernstein, a 30-year resident of Oak Park provided a revenue generating suggestion for the Police Department. Marty and his wife would like to see the shooting range rented out. Marty has witnessed many capital projects, including those completed by District 200, completed unsatisfactorily. Marty is requesting that committee keep that in mind while reviewing solutions for the Village Hall facility. He would also like the committee to be mindful of project costs and potential over runs. He is unhappy with the idea of a civic center. He does not believe that is what the community needs. He is very interested in the outcome of this committee.

#### Written comments:

Kevin Brubaker, resident, felt that Village Hall was open and welcoming prior to the addition of the plexiglass. Would like to see modest and creative solutions to the preservation of the building including fixing the leaks, improving accessibility, and utilizing space creatively. Looks forward to following the committee's progress.

Michael Iverson, resident, has been unsatisfied with the transparency of the project thus far. Would like to know the reason previous documents were not included in the July meetings. He believes that the information previously provided by FGMA is highly questionable, both in terms of costs and space needs. He suggests reflecting on the number of positions that have been replaced by remote workers, thereby downsizing space needs.

#### 5) Other/Old Business

1. Future meeting date is scheduled for January 17th, 2024 at 6:30 in Village Hall- Room 101

2. Proposed meeting dates- Third Wednesday of the month

- i. Wednesday February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2024 at 6:30

- ii. Wednesday, March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024 at 6:30 PM

1. Co-chair Roush reminded staff that March 27<sup>th</sup> fell within the local school district's Spring Break. Implying that there might be a significant number of absences due to vacations, etc.

#### 6) Adjournment

Committee unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:38 PM.