

**APPROVED MINUTES - SPECIAL BOARD MEETING
PRESIDENT AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE VILLAGE OF OAK PARK
HELD ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2011 AT 7:00 P.M.
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS OF OAK PARK VILLAGE HALL**

I. CALL TO ORDER

President Pope called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Trustees Brewer, Hedges, Johnson, Lueck, Salzman and Tucker; President Pope
ABSENT: None

III. AGENDA APPROVAL

It was moved and seconded to approve the agenda for the meeting. A voice vote was taken and the agenda was approved.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Connie Coleman, 212 N. Scoville. Ms. Coleman spoke about teenage smoking and asked that an ordinance be adopted that addresses fines and penalties for this at a local level.

Nancy Norton, 217 S. Elmwood. Ms. Norton commended the police department, expressing appreciation for the respect and courtesy given to all residents.

Melanie Weiss, 215 S. Clinton. Ms. Weiss voiced her concern regarding the unfinished Soho Condo development. She also spoke in favor of installing surveillance cameras in the Village.

V. PUBLIC FORUM ON THE TOPIC OF PUBLIC SAFETY

A. Presentation by Police Chief Rick Tanksley

President Pope turned the meeting over to Police Chief Rick Tanksley. Chief Tanksley introduced Deputy Chief Anthony Ambrose, Community Policing Sergeant David Jacobson, Crime Analyst Susannah Yong, Community Liaison Dennis Leaks, Assistant State's Attorney David Potter of the Community Justice Center, and the resident beat officers.

Chief Tanksley spoke about the Police Department. There are currently 111 sworn members. He gave the demographics of the department, noting that it is a diverse group.

He stated that last year Oak Park experienced their lowest crime rate in 40 years. Currently, it is down 16% in comparison to this time last year. He gave a summary of

crime statistics. Chief Tanksley spoke about what factors play a role in the crime rate. He said that in addition to crime being down, arrest totals have been down over the last couple of years. One reason for this is a decrease in crime but other factors impact the bottom line regarding number of arrests. He turned the discussion over to Commander LaDon Reynolds to elaborate on this topic.

Commander Reynolds began by stating that these statistics consist of arrests of the offender as well as clearance of the case. Clearance of the case includes cases that are closed by arrest and exceptional clearances. He gave the parameters necessary for exceptional clearances and explained what factors go into clearance of a case. Commander Reynolds also indicated that comparatively, the Village fares very well against its counterparts across the nation.

Deputy Chief Ambrose spoke about response time, noting that it was typically higher during the day and explained why. Chief Tanksley added that average response time was three minutes for critical calls.

Chief Tanksley noted members of the press were present and discussed the role that the press may play in helping the Police Department address issues related to the perception of one's safety. He urged residents to attend community meetings and talk to their beat officers and not rely strictly upon the press as their sole source of information regarding public safety in the community. He asked for input from the press regarding how the police can better work with them on a partnership level, noting that the Oak Park Police partner with neighboring communities as well as other entities to help them get their job done.

Chief Tanksley spoke about the cameras placed at the Green Line and Blue Line; noting that additional cameras are installed at the CTA stations that are being monitored by the CTA.

He also said that a system will soon be in place that will allow the Police Department to communicate directly with residents regarding public safety issues. Residents will be notified via email, text message or voice message at their home, work or cell phone in regards to any type of public safety announcement.

Chief Tanksley stated that attendance at community meetings has been dropping and asked for input from residents regarding changing the times to make it more convenient for people to attend.

Resident Beat Officer Robert Primak spoke about residents' concerns, such as crime and traffic issues. He stated that citizens should not hesitate to contact the police, whether it be an emergency or an issue such as a dispute with a neighbor.

Chief Tanksley referred to a chart displaying the breakdown of resident beats. There was a discussion about the resident beat program.

Mr. Potter discussed the State's Attorney's Office located on Chicago and Austin and their partnership with the Police Department regarding community outreach.

Mr. Leaks spoke about his role as Community Liaison.

B. Board & Public Discussion & Dialogue

There was a discussion regarding teenage smoking in addition to other juvenile offenses and the record keeping and reporting of those offenses. Trustee Lueck commented that there are confidentiality laws that protect underage offenders from being publicly identified. She added that statistics are not completely reliable in this area, as they don't reflect how decisions are made when juveniles get arrested and charged or not get charged. Also, the range of options in response to a particular range of behavior can vary by community. Trustee Lueck said that a more detailed discussion on this subject would be worth having, as she is a proponent of prevention and early intervention.

Chief Tanksley asked Bill Dwyer of Pioneer Press how the Police Department can work with them on addressing the perception of public safety. Mr. Dwyer stated that giving them as much information as they responsibly can will allow readers to better see the full picture.

Mr. Dwyer asked what the impact is of Oak Park's proximity to high-crime areas such as the west side regarding crime and perception of crime in the Village. Chief Tanksley replied that the impact is significant and creates considerable challenges. He added that they work closely with the Chicago Police Department to address these issues. This will likely be a continuing problem and requires law enforcement, schools and social service agencies to work together.

Mr. Dwyer discussed drug dealing by young people and asked if this is becoming a more serious problem. Chief Tanksley commented that this is not a recent phenomenon. Resident Beat Officer Elizabeth Dixon, who is also a juvenile officer, stated that parental involvement is very helpful when addressing this issue, as well as having the support of the schools and the community at large. Commander Reynolds spoke about the Youth Interventionist Program that is run through the Township.

Chief Tanksley asked members of the press to speak with a representative from the Police Department in order to get accurate information before publishing an item.

Trustee Brewer asked for an explanation of the value of a substation. Chief Tanksley said that having these around the community will enable an officer to complete a report, for example, without having to leave the area to return to headquarters. In addition, citizens may stop by; it allows them to know that the police are part of the community. Sergeant Jacobson announced the locations of the substations.

Trustee Salzman asked Chief Tanksley what his thoughts are on a formalized ban on texting and driving. He also expressed concern regarding the increase in vacant buildings in the Village, noting that it is public perception that these structures attract opportunities for crime.

President Pope interjected and asked Village Manager Tom Barwin if the texting and cell phone usage while driving issue was something that the Legal Department was working on. Mr. Barwin stated that the Board has not yet given staff formal

direction. Trustee Lueck suggested that this be broadened to be defined as distracted driving. This would include cell phone usage, texting and eating. Trustee Tucker commented that there is already a State law banning texting while driving. Chief Tanksley remarked that this is a serious problem, especially among young drivers. President Pope stated that the opinion of the majority of the Board was to move forward with this.

Chief Tanksley stated it is one of the responsibilities of the Beat Officers to check on the vacant buildings. Mr. Barwin added that there is a vacant building ordinance that requires inspection and fees after a certain period of time that a structure remains vacant. He added that demolition permits have recently been issued for two buildings.

Trustee Hedges asked about bicycle theft in the Village. Ms. Yong stated that the thefts have gone down this summer due to the bike initiative.

Trustee Hedges initiated a discussion on handguns. Chief Tanksley commented that Illinois was one of the few states that does not allow carrying a concealed weapon. The department is prepared to address this, however, if it does become law.

Trustee Johnson commented that the Village may want to look at aligning their ordinances with River Forest, noting that it can create challenges for the Police Department as well as the school administration in creating an equitable school campus.

He also stated that the Board and Police Department should escalate their partnership with Chicago to advocate addressing issues within the Austin neighborhood.

Trustee Johnson discussed bullying and stated that a more in-depth conversation was needed.

Communications Director David Powers spoke about the new public safety notification system discussed earlier. Residents may go online to register to receive public safety notices via telephone call, email or text message. The link will be on the Village website's main page. Within the next few days, a phone number will be available for those individuals who do not have email or may only have a land line, to register by phone to get telephone calls.

Mr. Barwin commended Chief Tanksley and Deputy Chief Ambrose, as well as the other members of the department.

President Pope spoke about the declining crime rate and gave statistics that compared Oak Park with the rest of suburban Cook County as well as other same sized cities. He added that crime prevention was a shared responsibility and encouraged residents to work with the police to help minimize crime in the Village.

VI. ADJOURN

It was moved and seconded to adjourn. A voice vote was taken and the motion was approved. The meeting adjourned at 9:25 P.M. on Monday, October 10, 2011.

SUBMITTED AND RECORDED IN THE OFFICE OF:

By: MaryAnn Schoenneman
Interim Deputy Village Clerk

Teresa Powell, Village Clerk