

**APPROVED MINUTES - SPECIAL BOARD MEETING
PRESIDENT AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE VILLAGE OF OAK PARK
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2011 AT 7:00 P.M.
IN ROOM 101 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 (7:09);
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

There was no public comment.

V. OVERVIEW OF THE PROPOSED 2012 BUDGET

A. Review of Public Safety Budgets

Village Manager Tom Barwin announced that this meeting will focus on the public safety portion of Village operations. He stated that the Village had received the results of the National Citizen Survey, and noted that police and fire were rated extremely high by respondents. Mr. Barwin turned the meeting over to Chief Financial Officer Craig Lesner.

Trustee Johnson asked Mr. Lesner when they could expect to receive the management letter from the auditors, as this can have implications regarding the budget. Mr. Lesner replied that this would be presented to the Board within the next few weeks.

Trustee Johnson asked Mr. Barwin if the department heads were asked to come up with innovations and efficiencies within this budget and look at areas that were exceeding the budget. Mr. Barwin stated that they were allowed to request anything they thought was essential in operations and improvement in their work areas.

Trustee Johnson also noted that the General Fund, which had been increasing over the past couple of years, has decreased and remains steady. He asked what was

being done to resume the increase. Mr. Lesner stated that the graph he referred to is one of several that address various fund balances. He added that the metric that staff has been focusing on recently is the Unreserved Fund balance, which is going up significantly.

Trustee Lueck asked if the Finance Committee had any observations or comments as a result of their meetings that should be shared with the Board as a whole as part of the budget process. She also asked what the expectations are for any new positions, noting that positions were approved by the Board last year that did not get filled.

Mr. Barwin stated that some of the hiring decisions or the timing of hiring depends on outside factors, such as academy scheduling for Fire and Police. He added that department heads understand that delaying a position that isn't absolutely essential is helpful in avoiding unanticipated cuts. In terms of positions added, the Finance Department, Information Technology Department and Human Resources all need additional assistance. Another area that's been identified in the new budget is the hiring of an Economic Development Coordinator.

Trustee Brewer noted that there were a number of issues discussed at the Finance Committee level that are recorded in the minutes; this may give the Board some background.

Trustee Hedges noted that one thing discussed by the Finance Committee was possible salary increases for high performers; structurally, there's been no increase for four years for non-union and management employees. The Committee also looked at revenue estimates based on last year's performance and last year's budget. Trustee Hedges added that the multi-year budget approach is a valuable way of handling this process, giving the Board some perspective on how decisions made now may affect future decisions.

1. Police Department

Mr. Lesner stated that the public safety categories of Fire and Police together account for 55% of the General Fund budget. The Police Department's total General Fund budget is \$17,827,167. Of that total amount, 94.6%, or \$17,195,444, is related to personnel. He noted that the focus of this department, as well as the Fire Department, is on personnel, as their main objectives are putting people on the street to serve the community.

Police Chief Rick Tanksley stated that his department currently has 111 officers and 30 civilian personnel. The Department has received approximately \$141,000 in grants, with an additional \$80,000 since the last budget session. He anticipates \$145,000 in grants for 2012, and gave details regarding additional amounts that will be reimbursed.

Trustee Johnson asked why overtime this year is so over budget. Mr. Lesner explained that this was due to a technical discrepancy. Chief Tanksley added that aside from that technical error, overtime has been reduced.

Trustee Johnson asked how they might further reduce overtime in 2012. Chief Tanksley replied that supervisors will send just the primary officer for court appearances in most cases, and other officers will attend if they are subpoenaed.

Trustee Lueck asked why the income from parking fines has declined so much this year and why a large increase is projected for next year. Mr. Lesner replied that two vacant Parking Enforcement Officer (PEO) positions have recently been filled. Chief Tanksley noted that two other PEOs were on extended medical leave this year.

Reclassification of other positions was discussed to explain the increase in certain categories and decrease in others.

Trustee Johnson asked why the police pension expense is reduced. Mr. Lesner explained that the funding formula has been altered by the State to allow an extension for full funding.

Trustee Hedges asked if outsourcing the crossing guards this year has been a good decision. Chief Tanksley said they have been more reliable than in the past. The Police Department has also received numerous inquiries from other communities regarding outsourcing this function.

Mr. Barwin added that this partnership has worked well for all and will save the taxpayers of Oak Park approximately \$200,000 per year. President Pope noted that the agreement with Andy Frain required interviews with former Village crossing guards and to retain those individuals to the extent possible. The majority of the crossing guards were hired by the company to work at the same locations.

2. Fire Department

Mr. Lesner stated that the General Fund budget for the Fire Department is \$9,811,629. Of that total, 97.8%, or \$9,597,862, is related to personnel and benefits, including pension.

Fire Chief Tom Ebsen noted that currently the department consists of 61 sworn personnel, including two firefighter-paramedics that are funded by the SAFER Grant Program from the Federal Government. Those individuals were hired with the hope that it would help eliminate some of the overtime this year, which has gone down 30%. Overtime is based primarily on staffing levels; the reduction of six shift positions two years ago eliminated most of the buffer for sick leave and added to overtime.

Another significant improvement this year has been the implementation of a software program to monitor alarm systems for the Village. To date, net revenue is at approximately \$70,000. Chief Ebsen noted that improved monitoring of false alarms and enforcement of fines has reduced false alarms by 30%. About 90% of false alarms go to the police department; reduction in false alarms make police available for other duties.

Trustee Tucker asked about the increase in training in the 2012 budget. Chief Ebsen said that the policy of the last few years, in the current economy, has been to cut

back on out-of-town travel to conferences and training. However, available training to fire personnel isn't always available in the Chicago area. Personnel have been willing to go and pay their own room and board because they believe training is important.

Trustee Brewer asked Chief Ebsen to explain the difference between the 7(g) overtime and the general overtime. Chief Ebsen stated that the 7(g) workgroup consists of approximately 16 to 20 firefighters hired back on an hourly part-time basis. Currently inspections, training and EMS coordination are being performed by people on a part-time basis.

Chief Ebsen noted that it's become apparent that a part-time versus full-time position is not beneficial in the Fire Prevention Bureau and has requested a full-time position for Manager of the Fire Prevention Bureau. This is where calls come in from citizens and is the most public aspect of the Fire Department. This person will be doing plan reviews, as well as site inspections of fire sprinkler and fire alarm installations. Because this would be a civilian position, it would be half of what a sworn employee would cost to do the same job.

Trustee Brewer asked about equipment replacement and noted that there wasn't a large increase in this budget item. Chief Ebsen explained that new helmets with protective features were deferred from the regular budget, using the Foreign Fire Tax Fund. President Pope noted that these helmets contribute to life-safety and effectiveness of officers. Chief Ebsen described the helmets and commented that the Foreign Fire Tax had also helped facilitate and acquire motorized cots to lift patients into ambulances.

Trustee Salzman asked if all the sworn firefighters were also paramedics and the proportion of calls for fire and paramedics. Chief Ebsen replied that all but four are paramedics. He added that 60% of calls received are for EMS. The other 40% are miscellaneous calls, including 17% for fire alarms. Approximately 3-5% of those calls are full-scale fires. Trustee Salzman asked how frequently the department requires the support of neighboring departments. Chief Ebsen stated that this has occurred approximately six times a year, adding that the number of times that Oak Park has received aid from other towns is matched by the number of times Oak Park has assisted other towns.

Trustee Johnson asked about raising ambulance fees, as revenues do not cover the expenses for this service and there has not been a fee increase over the last three years. Chief Ebsen said they are going out to bid; the revenue is brought in by a billing company that's been used for a number of years whose contract expires this year. The department collects approximately 54% on the billing, average in the industry. The entire process will be examined, including a possible increase in fees. President Pope asked if the billing company charges a flat fee or a percentage. Chief Ebsen said it is a percentage. President Pope noted that it would be advantageous to the Village to increase the rates prior to the RFP, as it may influence the rates and rate structure the Village would receive in terms of the RFP responses. He asked that this be brought to the Board before going out for the RFP.

Trustee Johnson asked about the status of a proposed joint Fire Prevention District, partnering with other communities. Chief Ebsen stated that at a summer meeting

with other area chiefs the consensus was that this decision is very complex with multiple municipalities. He recommended hiring a consultant experienced in consolidating individual departments into a district, in consultation with relevant Village Managers. Mr. Barwin commented he has had some informal conversations on this subject.

The Board discussed the SAFER Grant Program and the proposed position of Manager of the Fire Prevention Bureau.

Mr. Barwin announced dates and times for additional budget meetings.

VI. ADJOURN

It was moved and seconded to adjourn. A voice vote was taken and the motion was approved. The meeting adjourned at 8:57 P.M. Wednesday, October 19, 2011.

SUBMITTED AND RECORDED IN THE OFFICE OF:

By: MaryAnn Schoenneman
Interim Deputy Village Clerk

Teresa Powell, Village Clerk