



**Village of Oak Park Board of Trustees
January 20, 2009**

Cathy Sweitzer, Observer

The meeting began at 7:45 p.m., presided over by President Pro Tem John Hedges in the absence of President David Pope who was attending the Inauguration and meetings in Washington D.C., along with Trustee Ray Johnson. Village Clerk Sandra Sokol was also absent. Karen Muriello assumed her duties. The Village Manager and Attorney attended.

Village Manager Thomas W. Barwin acknowledged the historic significance of the day, noting that these were “hopeful, transformational times,” and promising that the village would “roll up its sleeves” and work hard to fulfill this promise.

Several citizens urged the Village to act on the positive response (60% yes) to the Living Wage referendum in the November election. Fifty-four of Oak Park’s 58 precincts voted in its favor. The Reverend Jean Darling of Chicago pleaded for raising the minimum wage to \$10/hour by 2010. Villager Rhon Baiman, economist for the Illinois Department of Employment Security, noted that over 200 municipalities nationwide have adopted the measure, calling it a “disgrace” that Oak Park had not. Villager Ron Chew pointed out that an increase to \$10/hour would amount to a yearly income of less than \$20,000.

A number of building managers and owners spoke against the proposed increase in inspection fees for rental units. They characterized the 400% increase from \$5 to \$20 as “too much, too quick,” many suggesting a staggered increase over time. A trustee pointed out that correcting for inflation, \$20 today is about the value of \$5 in 1970 when the fee was set. Owner/managers questioned where the increased revenues would go. Manager Barwin said most would go to cover costs and the rest to building related projects. Steve Whitt, Director of Building and Property Standards, noted that his department had grown from one inspector to five and a clerk. Trustee Greg Marsey asked for confirmation that the increase would make this a “pay as you go” operation, avoiding the issuance of a bond. Mr. Whitt said this was so. Trustee Marsey proposed that a detailed description of costs be made available to property owners and managers. The Village Manager and Attorney agreed. The Board tabled the motion until this information had been reviewed.

The proposed fee increase from \$50 to \$1000 per truck for commercial waste haulers (less for alternative fuel vehicles) sparked similar debate. Two roll-off dumpster haulers objected, noting that neighboring communities charge between \$50 and \$300 per truck. The Village maintained that the increase is commensurate with those of other municipalities and would cover repair to streets and alleys caused by large waste haulers. Attorney Ray Heise noted that one heavy waste hauler equaled 200 passenger cars in impact on road surface. The Board passed the increase with an amendment specifying that it applied only to commercial refuse trucks, not smaller, roll-off dumpsters and their trucks.

The Director of Public Works reported that due to an increase in salt usage this month, the January stockpile of salt has been almost depleted. The Trustees agreed to move quickly to enable the purchase should the need for more salt arise. The Board also authorized payment of an additional \$38,000 and \$57,000, to two plowing and salting firms that clear Village parking lots.

The request for zoning variances to allow the proposed Dunkin' Donuts/Baskin-Robbins at 217 Madison Street to operate its drive-thru between 4 a.m. and 11 p.m. provoked a heated response from several local residents. Homeowners on South Harvey voiced concern about increased traffic and danger to children, noise and light pollution, and decreased property value. The franchisee's attorney noted that his client had already agreed to additional landscaping and higher fencing, but that extended hours were critical to profitability. After hearing requests from the neighbors and the Board, however, the franchisee agreed to keep drive-thru speakers on low volume until 6 a.m.; to request permission for smaller, less illuminated signage from Dunkin' Donuts Corporate Office; and to limit drive-thru hours to 4:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. The Board approved the variance, although departing neighbors voiced their disappointment.

Village Manager Barwin raised the possibility that more money may be needed to address ongoing problems with PeopleSoft Software. He reported that although some problems had been solved internally, other, potentially serious problems, like the inability to process payroll, might still arise. He foresaw the possibility of needing \$10,000 in consultant fees. President Pro Tem Hedges and Trustee Jon Hale noted that the Village Manager already has permission to authorize expenditures up to \$25,000. Trustee Marsey objected, pointing out the likelihood of an investigation of previous expenditures and the open-ended nature of the proposed contract with Spier Consulting. Trustee Colette Lueck suggested restricting expenditures on PeopleSoft to highly critical situations, like a pay roll problem, during the investigation. Two concerned citizens spoke despite the late hour. One questioned not only the overages on PeopleSoft, but also why it took the Board so long to acknowledge them. The other suggested that Manager Barwin should be suspended with pay until an investigation is complete. The same citizen urged the Board to assume its responsibility to oversee the investigation. Trustee Markey assured him that the Board was ready to do so, but would need the services of RE Walsh to investigate swiftly and thoroughly. The Board approved \$5000 for this purpose.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 12:30 a.m. on the morning of January 21, 2009.

(online minutes: www.oak-park.us/about_our_village/board_minutes_2008.htm)