



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

*Jean Lotus, Observer*

**Summary**

At this meeting, the Village Board made it easier to run a Bed and Breakfast establishment in Oak Park and took steps to make it more expensive to park for students at Fenwick High School and employees of the businesses around Madison. A dispute between feuding neighbors late in the meeting angered President David Pope after one villager dropped the "F-Bomb" in his public comments.

The meeting started at 7:33 pm

All trustees were present. Village Manager Tom Barwyn and Village Attorney Ray Heise were also present.

Village President David Pope read a proclamation to celebrate the 19<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

**In public comment:**

Forest Park resident Karen Richards said that this was the sixth anniversary of her son's death and that she believed that the Oak Park and Forest Park police had conspired to cover up the evidence in their investigation. President David Pope said he was sorry for her loss and noted that she had appeared before them several times and that she had been advised to take her complaint to authorities including the Illinois states attorney.

**Parkway Tree Replacement Program**

Responding to the Board's request for best practices to maintain the urban forest in Oak Park, Katherine Metz of the Forestry Commission made the following recommendations:

- 1) Decrease the size of replacement trees in the parkways to 1 ½" from 2 ½"
- 2) Allow residents to treat Emerald Ash Borer on their own parkway trees.
- 3) Maintain the distance between parkway trees at 35', allowing variation at the discretion of the arborist
- 4) Spend the full budget of \$100,000 for 2009 replacing new trees as planned.

A series of private citizens also spoke regarding the villages tree replacement program:

Katheryn Jonas of the 400 block of East (who's also a village arborist) spoke as a citizen saying that especially in commercial districts Oak Park has replaced trees with planters and signage. She supported aggressive replacement trees in commercial districts. Two other citizens expressed their concerns that the parkway tree replacement program be continued aggressively. One speaker noted that the city of Chicago plants parkway trees at 25' intervals.

Village president David Pope responded that budget issues were not driving the board's recommendations from the Forestry Commission. He acknowledged that the village had planted no parkway trees in the spring. But he said that the board wanted the commission's input on four elements before going forward. These were:

- 1) Size of the street tree canopy
- 2) Diversity of species' planted
- 3) Overall visual effects of spring and fall color
- 4) Longevity of the trees.

### **Village Manager's Report**

Tom Barwyn, village manager, gave reports on ongoing village construction projects.

- Sewer replacement on the north side of Roosevelt Rd. would be completed by Labor Day.
- The alley replacement programs were complete for the year
- The demolition of the Westgate site continued and a parking lot was expected to be complete by September. He said that leaking water and an unexpected fuel leak had caused delays.
- The Oak Park Ave. viaduct facelift was projected to be completed by September 09.
- Repairs on East Ave. were being bid as a stimulus-dollar project through the state of Illinois.

The Village filled positions on the following citizen volunteer commissions:

**Community Development Citizens Advisory Committee:** Walter Afable, Gail Bien, Alison Fraunhar, Beverly Graham

**Farmers' Market Commission:** Gail Grobowski

**Forestry Commission:** Katherine Metz

**Public Art Advisory Commission:** Rick Piwowarczyk

**Zoning Board of Appeals:** Maya Katznelson

### **Bed and Breakfasts**

The board looked for the first time at a proposed ordinance to lighten regulations on Bed and Breakfast establishments in Oak Park. Among the proposed changes were:

- Increasing maximum number of rooms allowable. Currently only three rooms are permitted. Letting more than five rooms would require ADA compliance.
- Ensuring off-street parking for all rooms available.
- Forbidding advertising signs
- "Continental breakfast" only, unless the B&B's kitchen was licensed for commercial food service in compliance with Illinois state food handlers' code.
- Changing the designation of B&B from "home occupation" to "special use." This would allow an owner to run a B&B in his/her own house and also at a second site, such as the building next door.

Trustee John Hale asked if the parking regulations were being micromanged. He pointed out that bed-and-breakfast owners would provide parking for their customers as needed or they couldn't run their business, "even if it means valet-ing a car over to a friend's garage."

### **Repaving Streets**

The board approved a contract with Cerniglia company for \$2,199,471 for water and sewer main replacements. The village engineer told the board that some streets would be replaced with a new process that built the street on an underlying industrial fabric called Geogrid. The fabric reduces costs and permits the overlying asphalt layer to be reduced by 4", using fewer materials. Trustee Ray Johnson asked if other Midwestern municipalities had field-tested the process. The engineer assured him that other western suburbs had used the process successfully. The board discussed the relative merits of asphalt and pavement, noting that the streets near Barrie Park are pavement and have held up well for seven years.

### **Fenwick Area Parking**

Village Engineer Jim Budrick presented the results of an eight month study by the Parking commission on parking issues near Fenwick high school. The commission accelerated these parking changes so that they could be in place by the time school begins. The biggest change was a recommendation to charge Fenwick students and village employees a higher price for parking in public lots near Madison Ave. Commuters who park in the lot now pay \$165 per quarter, but Fenwick students only pay \$20.

"You can have two cars sitting right next to each other taking up identical parking slots," and paying widely different fees he said.

President David Pope asked that the Fenwick administration be asked about their thoughts on the changes. The parking commission told Pope that a Fenwick representative had been at every public meeting. Trustees expressed worry that Fenwick students would just park illegally on side streets. Collette Leuck said she thought too many students drove to school. But Jan Pate, who said she lives walking distance from Fenwick told the board to be careful not to project a negative attitude toward students in Oak Park.

Other recommendations by the commission included not allowing buses to park in village lots, installing meters and changing signage and permit parking in various spots near Fenwick. The Parking Department staff advised the village against renting out the public lot on Madison and Oak Park to the Oak Park Arms and a Christmas tree company.

Attorney Heise was asked if he could write up an ordinance by the following week so that the board could vote on the changes. Heise expressed frustration that he had no input on the crafting of the recommendations, which would make it easier to craft them into an ordinance. Jim Budrick expressed frustration that the commission worked on the changes for eight months without Heise getting involved.

"We have a problem in Oak Park where the right hand and the left hand aren't communicating," said Pope.

Other village business included:

- Authorizing two paving companies to patch and fill cracks in the streets.
- Allowing the Oak Park Arms to rent permit spaces in the Madison St. Lot
- Allowing the Dombrowski Christmas tree farm to rent part of the Madison St. lot.
- Allowing parking on the same lot until developers were ready to build.
- Leasing an ambulance for the Fire Department
- Allowing St. Giles school to temporarily close the south end of Columbian Ave. at Berkshire, three times daily on School days.
- Hiring a consultant to plan a strategic historic preservation plan (\$29,000)
- Allowing I-Go car sharing to expand in Oak Park.

A neighbor dispute over a barking dog concluded the meeting. Neighbors on the 800 block of Fair Oaks spoke about one neighbor's request to put up an extension on his fence to block his neighbor's view of his back yard and the problematic dog. Language became colorful as the speaker (reading from a police report) dropped the F-Bomb and then used the word "b\*&^%". President David Pope scolded the man for swearing twice during his three-minute comment. "We can't have that broadcast. You have to stop right now." The board urged the neighbors to use the services of the Community Relations Commission. They removed the fence request from the agenda.

Finally, the Trustees made individual comments:

- Clerk Teresa Powell said the Village phone system had been updated to be more user friendly.
- Ray Johnson mentioned that Jan Pate's Buisness and Licensing Round Table had been a stunning success.
- Collette Leuck said that the village was crafting an intergovernmental agreement with neighboring towns to apply for federal funding for foreclosure assistance.
- John Hedges mentioned being inspired by the funeral of noted Oak Parker Bill Cassin.

The meeting adjourned at 10:48 PM