



**Village of Oak Park Board of Trustees
March 16, 2009**

Cathy Sweitzer, Observer

The meeting began at 8:00 p.m. President David Pope and all members of the Board, except Jon Hale, who arrived slightly later, were present. The Village Clerk, Manager and Attorney also attended.

President Pope opened the meeting with several resolutions, including two of note. The first was a resolution supporting Attorney General Lisa Madigan's investigation of recent changes made by AT&T regarding public education and governmental TV programming. To date, AT&T has been providing public access on Channel 6, but recently it has changed access to some communities to Channel 99, making it harder for them to find and receive the broadcasts. The second was a resolution that named Oak Park, Bellwood, Berwyn, Forest Park and Maywood as joint applicants for State of Illinois Neighborhood Stabilization Program funds.

In the public comment portion of the meeting, Bonnie Shadrack of 1046 S. Harvey spoke on behalf of 66 neighbors who are asking for the removal of an AT&T utility cabinet on Harvard and Harvey. The group believes the placement of this box on the parkway causes a visibility hazard and endangers the safety of the many children who live and attend the school nearby. The neighbors had been promised that the cabinet would be moved to Barrie Park when it was first installed during the Barrie Park clean up. Not only has this not occurred, but plans for a second cabinet on the parkway began last year. Residents have asked AT&T and the Village to halt construction. They are currently asking for existing and future cabinets to be moved to the park.

Bob Wolfowitz of 704 S. East urged universal access to 911, a cause for which he has been campaigning since 1986. It would assure that families and individuals whose phones have been disconnected would still be able to maintain a dial tone to reach emergency responders. He has succeeded in the state of Vermont, but not yet succeeded in Illinois. He has also asked the fire department to consider requiring a smoke detector repeater that would flash and signal rooms where children, elderly and the infirm might be present.

Caroline Brown of 100 Forest Place offered a written proposal to the Board for the to-be-developed site at Lake and Forest.

The Board reviewed height, density and usage specifications for a new Walgreens at the southwest corner of Oak Park and Madison to replace the Sears Pharmacy at the site. (The pharmacy is relocating within the village.) Village Planner Craig Baylor displayed plans by the Midwest Development Group to reconfigure the building, which will also include a smaller, 1000 square foot, as yet unclaimed retail space. Walgreens will have a drive-through pharmacy and a parking lot. Trustee Colette Lueck asked if this is the best use of the site. Mr. Baylor acknowledged that while it

might not be the ideal use of the property, it is the best proposal featuring adaptation of an existing structure. The Madison Street Coalition and a group of neighbors in the area have been meeting with the developer and seem satisfied with the degree of responsiveness to their concerns. Linda Hill of 521 S. Grove spoke for the neighbors, noting they have been very pleased by the response of the Midwest Development Group to date regarding landscaping, safety and traffic issues. The Planning Commission hopes to schedule a public hearing on the proposed development for April.

The Camiros consulting firm, charged with preparing new sign regulations for the Village presented the results of their meeting with the Community Design Commission and a subsequent public hearing in November. They divided the Village into four parts related to signage: downtown, neighborhood-commercial, corridor (borders), and residential. A few of the regulations proposed include: no new pole signs downtown or in neighborhoods, electronic projecting signs allowed downtown, A-frame signs on sidewalk allowed downtown and in neighborhood-commercial. Businesses will be given a five-year window in which to comply with new signage rules.

President Pope questioned the decision to permit electronic signs downtown. The spokesman for Camiros explained that it was intended to create a "vibrant, theatre-district" atmosphere. Trustee Greg Marsey asked about preserving "ghost" or classic signage, often left painted on buildings over the years. The Design Commission and the owner of the property will decide what is worth preserving. Trustee Ray Johnson asked for clarification regarding political signage, which he thought should cover non-election related messages as well. Trustee Lueck wanted clarification of whether painted murals fell under the classification of signage that "delivers a message." President Pope raised the issue of whether certain neighborhoods currently designated as neighborhood-commercial, like South Marion Street, might soon become part of the greater downtown.

The discussion of proposed signage changes continued when this observer left the meeting at 10 p.m.

Observer's Comment: When this observer had to leave the meeting at 10 p.m., four Regular Agenda Resolutions and 13 Consent Agenda Resolutions remained to be addressed. Once again, the amount of time spent on deliberation of the fine points of the signage regulations seemed overlong. Why not conduct these discussions "in camera" and then report at the regular meeting for public comment and discussion? Such a change might stimulate public participation in meetings and encourage more working citizens to run for office. As is, the late hours of the Board meetings (regular and special) seem incompatible with a working person's schedule.

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