

Village of Oak Park Board of Trustees
August 1, 2016

Suzanne Davis, Observer
7:30 Open Session

In attendance: Mayor Abu-Taleb; Trustees Barber, Brewer, Lueck, Salzman, Tucker

Non-Agenda Public Comment:

Mac Robinet commented on the recently-approved 12-month electrical aggregation contract with Constellation Energy, which includes a “renewable energy fee” added to rates, intended to reduce the impact on global warming, and called for an examination of how to put the fees to use. The Village Manager responded that there has been discussion of uses such as solar energy installations.

Village Manager Report:

Moody’s has downgraded Oak Park’s general obligation rating from Aa3 to A1, citing unfunded pension liabilities.

Citizen Appointment:

The Board approved the appointment of Dominic Tocci as Chair of the Housing Programs Advisory Commission.

First Reading of Ordinance:

A Living Wage Ordinance has been drafted, establishing a minimum wage of \$12 per hour for Village employees, as well as certain employees of contractors/grantees with service contracts in excess of \$25,000 per year, beginning in 2017 for Village employees and phased in through 2018 for contractors. The ordinance will be brought back for a second reading.

The contracts that will be most affected are (1) a \$500,000 per year contract for parking security and (2) building maintenance, which has been outsourced for six years. It is believed that these vendors are paying employees less than \$12 per hour. Since the costs of higher wages will be passed on to Village taxpayers, the budget may be affected.

A member of the public commented in support of the ordinance, and suggested that it be expanded to apply to “all the residents” of Oak Park as well. The commenter further noted that a Seattle law raising the minimum wage has withstood a court challenge, and indicated that 51 municipalities across the country are raising, or are considering raising, their minimum wages above state levels.

Regular Agenda:

The Board approved a resolution approving a letter of intent between the Village and the Illinois Department of Transportation pertaining to cost and maintenance responsibilities for the proposed I-290 Reconstruction Project.

A member of the public praised recent discussions resulting in some progress on concerns about ground vibration issues, an extension of the Blue Line to First Avenue, and the negative impact on property values. Satisfactory resolution of concerns pertaining to accident rates and substandard shoulder widths is still needed.

The Board also approved (with Barber and Brewer voting “no”) the Zoning Board of Appeals’ recommendation to adopt an ordinance granting a special use permit for a financial institution, Bank of America, to operate on the ground floor of the building at 1144 Lake Street, the northeast corner of Harlem and Lake (the former “Borders building”). A financial institution is not an ordinarily permitted use for the location, which lies within the Transit-Related Retail Overlay District . The property, however, has been vacant since 2011 despite efforts to find tenants, and it was expected that it would remain vacant for several more years if not leased to the financial institution. Nick Karris, on behalf of Bank of America, described the operation as more than a bank -- a “full-service financial center” providing a wide range of services, including mortgage services, that would foster long-term customer relationships. Despite offered incentives and concessions, other tenants could not be secured because the space, with its “deep layout” and old mechanical systems, is challenging. Those opposed to the ordinance felt that with new development occurring in the area, there might be improved chances for another type of business to come in within a reasonable amount of time.

Meeting adjourned: 8:50 p.m.