

Village of Oak Park Board of Trustees
November 7, 2016

Suzanne Davis, Observer
7:30 Open Session

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

Public Comment:

Bruce and Maureen Kleinman spoke on behalf of OPRF Pragmatic Pool Solutions in opposition to the new pool referendum on the November 8 ballot. Among the points made were that the new pool proposal would entail destruction of the garage, but the garage has 25 years of service life remaining and there is already inadequate parking, such that 100 spaces are being rented from Pilgrim Church; the tax increase that the proposal would entail; the requirement that high school students take two swimming classes, when 50% can already swim, creates an artificial demand for a pool; swimming is not a core mission of the high school, and resources should be directed to economically disadvantaged students who are not performing well academically; and a 25' pool is standard for a high school, and there are schools with high-performing swim teams that have 25' pools. Chris Donovan agreed that destroying the garage would be wasteful. Clarence Ward pointed out that minority residents are struggling to pay ever-increasing taxes, which could lead to diminishing diversity.

Barbara Mullarkey of the Oak Park Environmental Network stated that the Village had not responded to previously-voiced concerns about six truck accidents at the Ridgeland-South Boulevard viaduct since the summer of 2016. Mayor Abu-Taleb promised to "follow up this week."

Public Hearing:

The "Truth in Taxation Public Hearing" pertaining to the fiscal year 2017 budget was held during this meeting. This tax levy is expected to be 8.75% greater than last year's, with an increase of about \$3.2 million. Police and firemen's pension funds have performed poorly, such that the police pension fund is 52% funded and the firemen's pension fund is only 36% funded. Over \$1 million will be allocated to the firemen's pension fund. There is also a large increase in operating funds due to various reasons, including increased water charges from Chicago.

First Readings

There was a first reading of ORD 16-139, an ordinance amending the Municipal Gas Use Tax of the Village Code. Other municipalities are doing this to fund general operations. Nicor customers will not be affected; only those who purchase natural gas from out-of-state suppliers would have to pay. This is expected to bring in \$225,000 for the Village and is expected to cost the average affected homeowner less than \$50 per year.

There was a first reading of ORD 16-140, which would make the Village's electric utility tax rates consistent with the rates set forth in a state statute and is expected to bring in \$100,000 in additional revenue.

There was a first reading of ORD 16-142, regarding rates for garbage and other refuse collection services. Waste Management has been awarded a five-year contract and has increased its fees. It will also provide additional services, such as paint and electronics pick-up. The Public Works Director said that residents would be notified of the new services through an education campaign.

Regular Agenda:

ORD 16-129 was approved. This adds a new provision to the Public Health Section of the Village Code, entitled "Home Kitchen and Cottage Food Operations." The "home kitchens" provision, or "cupcake law," allows persons who bake goods at home, on a small scale, to sell those goods out of the home. A "cottage foods" provision allows homemade foods to be sold at the Farmer's Market, if the Farmer's Market Commission approves their application and they register with the Health Department. Allergen labeling is required. The Interim Health Director is not opposed.

ORD 16-128 was approved. In the Hemingway District, zoning laws disallow offices within 50' of the street line. A State Farm Insurance agent was granted a variance to operate an office at 177 South Oak Park Avenue in a storefront that has been vacant for several years. The Zoning Board of Appeals had approved this use by a 4-2 vote.

Observer left at 9:25 p.m.