

Village of Oak Park Board of Trustees
January 17, 2017

Suzanne Davis, Observer
7:30 Open Session

In attendance: Trustees Barber, Lueck, Button Ott, Tucker, Brewer, Salzman

Public Comment:

Chris Donovan suggested that public support for the Madison Street Streetscaping project should be evaluated in light of recent inactivity.

A commenter suggested a resolution whereby Oak Park could decide on its own pesticide laws, restoring the right of local home rule government on the pesticide issue that would enable local governments to enact democratic reforms on pesticide use.

Ms. Sheehan voiced concerns about the safety of the elevator in the high school garage, which has been out of service for four months without adequate response to inquiries. The Village should have an adequate maintenance schedule and has spent thousands of dollars on an engineering study but is not following its recommendations.

Citizen Commission Appointments:

Joyce Wesolowski was appointed to the Community Relations Commission. Nicholas Reise was appointed to the Housing Programs Advisory Committee.

Regular Agenda:

On the agenda was the consideration of an ordinance amending Chapter 13 ("Human Rights") of the Village Code by adding a new Article 7 ("Welcoming Village"), similar to ordinances that are welcoming to immigrants in Chicago and Evanston. The ordinance would consider how each Village agency would treat immigrant community members with dignity and respect.

A great many persons attended the meeting to support a strong ordinance, including one that would eliminate Section D of the proposed ordinance, which exempts the application of the ordinance in certain circumstances involving actual or suspected criminal activity. The room was filled to capacity, standing room only. The Board allowed more comments than the usual three.

Mony Ruiz-Velasco, immigration attorney and executive director of the West Suburban Action Project, stated that we can do better than the ordinances in Chicago and Evanston, and that there should be no collaboration between the Village and immigration authorities. In particular, she advocated the elimination of a "loophole" (set forth in Section D) whereby the police collaborate with ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) when one is merely charged with a crime. Another concern was the exemption for persons listed in gang databases, which have been found to be overly inclusive. It was pointed out that Cook County has an ordinance that is more favorable to undocumented immigrants than the proposed Oak Park ordinance.

The Chair of the Oak Park Committee for a Just Peace in Israel and Palestine voiced a concern over Islamophobia and stated that the Village government and police should not cooperate with deportation schemes or registries based on religion.

Anthony Clark, OPRF teacher and founder and director of the Suburban Unity Alliance, stated that Oak Park's progressiveness should not be merely on the surface and that we should take the lead in ensuring that anti-immigration sentiments have no place in Oak Park. He asked that the Board defer on voting on the ordinance until they "get it right," and called for "protection, not collaboration."

A resident called for the removal of Section D from the ordinance and observed that stress from the fear of immigration enforcement by the police, including as to family members, was correlated with "rapidly declining health outcomes," including mental health outcomes.

Others who spoke out in favor of a strong ordinance were the Reverend Colleen Vahey on behalf of the Unity Temple ministers, and several immigrants or family members of immigrants.

The Village Manager indicated that additional time was required to examine, in light of the comments, the requirement that the police must collaborate with federal immigration officials on matters such as criminal warrants. Trustee Salzman suggested further study of whether the enforcement of ICE detainer warrants was mandatory for the States or whether units of local government could view them as requests rather than orders. The Village Manager indicated that an effort would be made to draft a revised ordinance by the next regular meeting, February 6.

Meeting adjourned: 8:40 p.m.

Oak Park River Forest High School Board
January 26, 2017
Mary Haley, Observer

Present: Jeff Weissglass- President, Jackie Moore-Vice-President, Tom Cofsky, Steve Gevinson, Sara Dixon Spivy, Jennifer Cassell and Fred Arkin

Mr. Weissglass called the meeting to order at 7:42.

Public Comments: There were an unusually large number of people who spoke during this period. Eleven people including former students and their parents spoke in praise of Danielle Dobias, an OPRFHS teacher and coach whose employment by OPRFHS was terminated in December, 2016. Speakers characterized this action as a miscarriage of justice and praised Ms. Dobias as a mentor, coach, friend and teacher. Three students and one parent asked the board to allow the students to participate in the IHSA gymnastic meet under the auspices of the high school. Although the school does not have a boys' gymnastic team, IHSA does allow individuals to compete if the school district approves it in writing. Five people spoke of the need to overhaul the district's sexual harassment/misconduct policy. The speakers included students and some adults with backgrounds in developing such policy.

Consent Items: All items were passed unanimously.

Information Items: The discussion of "Being a Welcoming Community" was postponed to allow the administration to research the topic more fully. A District 202 policy to protect undocumented students is seen as a prototype for such a policy.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:12.