

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE  
OAK PARK LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Minutes  
Saturday, December 13, 2014  
Oak Park Township Board Room  
105 S. Oak Park Avenue, Oak Park  
9:00 am-10:30 am

**Attendees:**

Paul Aeschleman - Parks  
Peter Barber – Village  
Graham Brisben - D97  
Jim Gates - D97  
Clarmarie Keenan - Township (9:25)  
Ade Onayemi – Township  
Andrea Ott – Village  
Colette Lueck - Village  
Jeff Weissglass – D200

**Absent:**

Matt Baron – Library  
Steve Gevinson – D200  
Victor Guarino - Parks  
Bruce Samuels - Library

**Others Attending:**

Teresa Powell – Village

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 9:16 a.m. by Colette Lueck.

**Approval of Minutes**

It was moved by Jim Gates and seconded by Ade Onayemi to approve the minutes of September 20 and November 15, 2014. The minutes were approved.

**Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**Eisenhower Issues**

Ms. Lueck provided background on meetings of staff with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and her meetings with staff regarding concerns and potential solutions for the proposed expansion of the Eisenhower expressway. Ms. Lueck explained that feedback on issues is only accepted at particular steps in the process; too early and it is ignored, too late and it is not considered. She noted that the four final proposed configurations differ only in the proposed use (general purpose, HOV or HOT) but not in other respects. The input of the Village was not

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE  
OAK PARK LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

incorporated into the designs chosen by IDOT. Consideration is being given to "lowering" the Eisenhower which will require addressing flooding and plumbing infrastructure issues. Lowering is required with the additional lane so that trucks can clear the bridges over the expressway and may avoid the "double-decker" ramps currently under consideration which have many negative impacts including environmental and visual to the surrounding neighborhoods. Most of the local governments (except the high school) have facilities which will be impacted by these changes and schools are affected by children crossing the expressway to school.

The Village will hold a Study Session on the last Monday in January and members of the Intergovernmental Committee may want to attend.

The CTA is excited about the prospect of multi-modal options with expanded decking at the bridges over the expressway, with an intermodal deck at Oak Park Avenue and a four story building on the deck. Other communities have done this with minimal local investment using state and Federal funding sources. Such developments would have clear sightlines to the east and west. The CTA has noted that with the right technology these developments could provide a kind of multi-modal museum to demonstrate what is possible.

Ms. Lueck noted that the highway construction projects of the 1950's were detrimental to local communities. Choices can mitigating negative impacts now or make the situation worse. When building decks the construction should be strong enough to support the possibility of structures as part of the design.

The discussion turned to train right of way. Ferrara Candy receives two deliveries of sugar daily and has indicated that alternate transportation cannot accommodate the volume they require. Trains have total control over their property and they have not agreed to narrow the rails.

There was discussion of the need for a "catch-up session" to bring other governments up to speed on these issues, preferably with a knowledgeable staff member from the Village. Ms. Lueck suggested Assistant Village Manager Rob Cole, who has been following developments closely. Mr. Gates suggested Mr. Brisben from D97; Mr. Weissglass noted that although the high school is least impacted but that the high school would be interested in participating. Ms. Lueck will try to arrange an early January meeting with Mr. Cole. Ms. Ott suggested that informational materials be provided ahead of time for participants. Mr. Weissglass suggested two staff and two board members from each government. Mr. Barber suggested that this meeting address the impact and opportunities for governments.

Mr. Barber asked about plans for the Home Avenue pedestrian bridge. Mr. Gates asked if this route could be made safer and possibly open to traffic. Mr. Barber asked whether Garfield might be changed to a one-way street. Ms. Lueck said this had been discussed but the Fire Department is concerned about that. To accommodate trucks the Ike must be lowered but at Home the deck must be made flatter for traffic.

Ms. Lueck discussed the ramp changes, loss of center ramp and impact of ramp changes on neighbors in terms of noise and sound pollution. Bridges will need to be rebuilt first. Other states are more progressive in their planning. IDOT prepares visuals of the completed roads with lots of vegetation, but that responsibility falls to local municipalities. Other communities are more concerned with flooding issues than quality of life issues raised by Oak Park.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE  
OAK PARK LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

**Next Steps from the October 25 Assembly of Local Boards**

Mr. Brisben reviewed the summary he had prepared of the responses from the October 25 Assembly. Mr. Gates suggested that members bring this information back to local boards to discuss and asked what mission or questions should be presented to the boards.

Ms. Lueck noted that all responses support continuation of the Intergovernmental Committee with another Assembly to focus on finance. She asked what we really know about the tax structure and the range of tax rates: How does Oak Park rank with other communities and in terms of services? She mentioned relative transit costs, public school quality. What about population changes or demographic shifts? A future discussion should be fact-driven.

Mr. Gates proposed commissioning a study by an outside expert to examine these issues. Ms. Lueck expressed concern about trying to "justify" taxes. Mr. Weissglass said that the really critical issue is economic diversity. Whether taxes are "too high" differs depending on income and wealth inequality, and the range is increasing. Mr. Gates noted that racial and ethnic diversity are also important.

Mr. Weissglass asked if a study should be board-led, staff-led or should use an outside expert. Mr. Gates suggested an outside expert. Mr. Aeschleman suggested identifying ten key metrics to measure. Mr. Weissglass suggested that urban planners do this. Ms. Lueck suggested that this could be an outgrowth of the Comprehensive Plan, understanding the fiscal implications of the proposals. How to pay for a consultant was discussed.

Mr. Barber suggested comparing to other "like" communities. Mr. Weissglass suggested Forest Park as an "alternative." Mr. Barber suggested that a Planner could do that, if good or bad, what then? Mr. Weissglass suggested getting "granular." Others suggested looking at data such as police response rates and school costs, with targeted reductions in growth. Mr. Barber asked if we are still willing to live with results.

Mr. Gates suggested that the CFOS should be encouraged to talk and discuss "Where can we save?" CFOs do meet; have they discussion ways to look for tax savings?

Mr. Onayemi said he was not interested in a study to document incremental savings which are probably not significant. The real question is why people choose to live in Oak Park. Mr. Gates noted that diversity is a choice. Mr. Weissglass suggested that Paul's idea of a few key metrics was good. Ms. Keenan suggested that this process could be divisive with some opposed to supporting schools, for example. There was further discussion of current and upcoming school spending issues, various taxes (use tax as well as property tax, test scores).

Mr. Gates suggested that diversity was integral to the community and must be part of the discussion. Ms. Lueck suggested that a consultant would know relevant issues and how to respond. Mr. Gates noted that taxpayers get value compared to other communities.

It was agreed that this is very challenging; next step would be to review the October 25 responses with boards, get feedback by the February meeting of I-Gov to discuss further.

Mr. Brisben suggested that taxpayers are concerned about taxes but appreciate services and that I-Gov appears to want to defend itself. He suggested that I-Gov had not yet scratched the surface of getting debt service in sync, when referenda are proposed, with messaging to the public about this.

Ms. Lueck suggested that a study would be done not to "defend" but to "discuss" these issues and that the study should not come across as defensive. No one has discussed the debt load, by working

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE  
OAK PARK LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

with boards we can develop strategies to pay these off. Mr. Gates noted that data is important; without data there are just anecdotes.

There was discussion of a request to get further information from Tax Assessor ElSaffar for the next meeting.

Ms. Lueck suggested that data collection is needed and increased opportunities to save money. I-Gov also needs to begin planning for the next Assembly.

Ms. Keenan reported that information from the October 25 meeting will be presented at a February meeting of Rotary.

Mr. Gates again asked that boards review the feedback from the October 25 meeting with board and summarize further comments for I-Gov in February.

**Next Meetings**

Meetings of the Intergovernmental Committee will be scheduled monthly at 9:00 a.m. at the Oak Park Township Office Board Room. Exact dates will be sent out in the coming week.

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:31 a.m.

SUBMITTED AND RECORDED IN THE OFFICE OF:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Teresa Powell, Village Clerk