

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE
OAK PARK LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Approved Minutes
Saturday, July 12, 2014
Oak Park Public Library
834 Lake Street
9:00 am-10:30 am

Attendees:

Peter Barber – Village
Jim Gates-D97
Denise Sacks - D97
Steve Gevinson – D200
Jeff Weissglass – D200
Matt Baron – Library
Paul Aeschleman- Parks
Ade Onayemi – Township

Absent:

Colette Lueck - Village
Andrea Ott – Village
Bruce Samuels - Library
Clarmarie Keenan-Township
Victor Guarino-Parks

Others Attending:

Teresa Powell – Village

The meeting was called to order at 9:15 am by Peter Barber in the absence of Colette Lueck.

Approval of Minutes

It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes of May 31, 2014. The minutes were approved.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Review of Discussion of Community Forum or Joint Meeting

Mr. Barber noted that District 97 was not able to be represented at the last meeting due to a Board retreat, and he summarized the discussion of the last meeting. He noted that there was a desire to reach out to the public to discussion services provided by local governments and tax dollars to support them. A concern had been raised that only those who may already be well-informed about local government would be likely to attend such a meeting. Another alternative would be first to broaden the conversation of the I-Gov committee to all local elected officials so that everyone would have the same information as a basis for discussion; it was hoped that at least a quorum of each governmental body would attend. There was support for a facilitator to lead the discussion, as well

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as defining topics beforehand and asking the Boards to discuss them. Mr. Barber also noted that having a meeting this fall could avoid the impact of election season next spring.

Discussion of Structure for Fall Meeting

Mr. Aeschleman noted that the goal is to take this idea back to individual boards to determine if they would be interested in a joint meeting in on October 25 or November 1. Mr. Gevinson added that they might seek suggestions from the boards and work at breakout sessions. Mr. Aeschleman noted that the focus of the meeting will be internally-facing versus outreach to the public; learning from and working with each other. Mr. Baron noted that this was ambitious enough. Mr. Barber mentioned that the original idea had been to focus on an internal conversation among the boards. Ms. Powell suggested that this goal was to reach a common understanding of the long term tax goals of each governmental body.

Structure of a Meeting of Local Boards

Mr. Gevinson suggested that last meeting's discussion of the economic development impact of decisions by all boards should be considered. Mr. Baron suggested measuring the impact of improvements, such as the recently completed Ridgeland Commons Recreation Center (RCRC) on the area. Mr. Aeschleman also noted the new Gymnastics Center at the east end of Lake Street as an economic driver for that area.

Mr. Gates, who was not at the last meeting, stated that he was open to anything and suggested that everyone provide a 30 second statement of a key issue. He noted the chronic state underfunding of education over the last several decades, putting Illinois last place nationally. This has put a tremendous burden on property taxes to support good schools. Mr. Barber added that good schools support the community, making it attractive to new residents. Mr. Aeschleman noted that the Park District works closely with state representatives on park funding.

Mr. Onayemi asked what the Council of Governments (COG) is doing in this area. If future referenda fail, what then? Could this group facilitate these issues? Mr. Gates noted that good schools lead to strong housing values. Mr. Weissglass suggested that the group identify the tensions, educate and motivate; a mobilization approach. Mr. Gates suggested that the entire community needs to be motivated.

Mr. Weissglass suggested that this meeting be a kind of "I-Gov on steroids", bringing in the larger group in a facilitated discussion, with opportunities for small group discussion within the process. He noted that the underfunding of education at the state level is a huge issue, creating a high tax burden locally; this is a topic for debate. The most vocal citizens are concerned about taxes, loss of economic diversity and impact on senior residents. Experts could lead a broader conversation toward educating and motivating.

Mr. Gates stated that before anything else the Committee needs a clearer mission from the Boards regarding the purpose of the Committee. Mr. Weissglass noted that he has not yet reported back to his board as he still does not have a clear enough sense of the group.

Ms. Sacks asked the purpose of hosting a forum; what would the focus be? She thought I-Gov on steroids might not be the best approach; could lose focus. The real question is whether to try to educate the public or first educate Board members more deeply to assure that everyone understands the dynamics of the system. Ms. Sacks noted that not all members of her board would be likely to attend such a meeting.

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Mr. Aeschleman suggested that this Committee would be in the best position to provide topics for a meeting. He suggested the topic of "sustainability", understood as the ongoing viability of the governmental unit rather than its more common meaning, was a major topic of a recent Board retreat.

Mr. Weissglass stated that if it is possible within the confines of the Open Meetings Act, a meeting where elected officials break into groups with representatives from other boards for discussion and report their discussion, this would be a great way to structure a meeting.

Mr. Gevinson noted that discussions of the COG are not reported to his Board; the appeal of having all Boards at one meeting is that everyone will be hearing the same information. He suggested that Tax Assessor Ali ElSaffar would be a great resource for such a meeting. He likes the idea of all Board members learning together. Mr. Barber agreed that the elected officials should learn first, get "smarter". There was general agreement that a facilitator would be appropriate for this meeting.

Proposed Topics for Discussion

The group proposed topics to consider:

- State and federal funding sources/structures and unfunded mandates
- Legislative lobbying
- Future fiscal viability of local governments
- Economic development roles of each government/local economic dynamics
- Impacts of TIF and growing populations
- Local services/amenities provided by each government
- Impacts of referenda and borrowing decisions: sequencing and coordination
- Infrastructure and personnel issues

Mr. Gevinson suggested that each Board provide topics for discussion. Mr. Barber was concerned that the list may already be too long. Mr. Gates asked about when and where this could be held and setup (number of tables). Ms. Sacks suggested limiting the agenda to a learning topic – the tax structure, and main budget drivers of each Board. She suggested that this meeting be a first step in a long-term process.

Mr. Barber suggested several of the above topics. Mr. Baron suggested that "less is more" to focus narrowly on a few. Following further discussion of the options, three broad topics were selected:

1. Future fiscal viability of local governments. Are all positioned to be "sustainable" from that perspective, and can all work together to help address any limiting factors?
2. Govt. funding challenges (could be federal, state or local). Are there opportunities for the governing bodies to all work together in making a community case, rather than each pursuing its own concerns alone?
3. Oak Park economic development. How does each governing body currently contribute, and are there ways we could collectively do more?

Each Board is asked to provide a link to their most recent strategic/comprehensive plan.

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Mr. Aeschleman proposed that this meeting be linked to the annual Park District barbecue for elected officials (to follow the meeting) and that the preferred date would be October 25, with November 1 as an alternative. The meeting will be three hours (9:00 am to noon). Location is to be determined.

Structure of Intergovernment Committee

Mr. Barber reviewed the origin of this Committee as a reaction to the COG providing more transparency of discussion of fiscal issues and collaboration and reporting back to each Board. Mr. Aeschleman suggested that if the proposed joint meeting works, organizing this meeting annually could be a focus of the Committee.

Mr. Onayemi asked if Oak Park has benefitted from this Committee. Mr. Barber noted that it "looks good" but that practical results have been limited. Mr. Gates suggested that the biggest success to date has been the consolidated Village newsletter (OP/FYI) which now includes news of all governments.

Mr. Weissglass noted that getting to know the members of other Boards has promoted better inter-governmental understanding and cooperation among local governments. Members had a brief discussion of the mission of the Intergovernmental Committee. Based on that conversation Mr. Weissglass offered language for a mission statement to "promote inter-governmental understanding and cooperation among Oak Park's governing bodies." The group agreed that this was a good draft.

Mr. Aeschleman suggested that the current joint meeting could be an ongoing key action item. Ms. Sacks suggested waiting to commit to annual meetings until the first one has taken place.

Mr. Barber asked that members of the Committee offer recommendations for facilitators and email them to him. Future discussion can address the legal structure, facilitation and leadership.

Mr. Barber suggested that members prioritize the three topics with their boards.

Reports from Taxing Bodies

No reports were given.

Next Meeting

Ms. Powell will send a Doodle request for the next meeting for August 23, 30 or September 6.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:54 a.m.

SUBMITTED AND RECORDED IN THE OFFICE OF:

Teresa Powell, Village Clerk