

**MINUTES OF THE
REGULAR MEETING OF
THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE VILLAGE OF OAK PARK
TUESDAY, MARCH 11, 2025
MILLS PARK TOWER
7:45 AM**

OFFICIAL RECORD

QUORUM

PRESENT: Commissioners Teitelman, Kelm, Socall and Chairperson Muse

ABSENT: Commissioners Sood and Walz

STAFF: Pope, Carpenter, and Jones

GUESTS: Mills Park Tower Residents

Chairperson Muse called the meeting to order at 7:47 AM.

APPROVAL OF THE FEBRUARY 11, 2025, OPHA REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Chairperson Muse asked if there were any corrections to the February 11, 2025, meeting minutes. There were none.

It was moved (Kelm) and seconded (Teitelman) to approve the February 11, 2025, meeting minutes of the Housing Authority of the Village of Oak Park. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Kathy Bradshaw (Apt. 19J):

Ms. Bradshaw shared her appreciation for the recent improvements, specifically noting her satisfaction with the installation of name labels at the mailboxes. However, she expressed concern regarding the elevator doors closing too quickly, which she felt could pose a safety issue for residents.

In response, Executive Director David Pope acknowledged the concern and assured the board that Ms. Carpenter is aware of the issue and is currently working with Suburban Elevator to address and correct the door timing problem.

Nora Natof (Apt. 9F):

Ms. Natof inquired about the status of the first-floor reconfiguration proposal, asking if funding had been appropriated with a specific time frame for spending.

Executive Director Pope responded, explaining that the first-floor reconfiguration project had not yet been developed, defined, or approved by the Board of Commissioners. He explained that

funding for capital projects generally is determined by a congressional formula that allocates funds to each housing authority. The Housing Authority operates within a two-year period to allocate funds for specific projects, followed by an additional two years to spend those funds. He further highlighted that capital expenditures are managed on a rolling basis, with ongoing projects such as the roof replacement, the waterproofing and corrosion prevention efforts, and the multi-year elevator reconstruction work having been carried out over multiple HUD funding years. Commissioner Socall further clarified the distinction between undecided funds and the next available capital funding cycle, emphasizing how funds are strategically allocated for long-term improvements.

Mary Ayers (Apt. 10H):

Ms. Ayers raised concerns about the difficulty of securing a parking spot at Mills Park Tower (MPT). She expressed frustration, stating that newer residents have received parking spaces while she has lived at MPT for five years without one. Executive Director David Pope clarified through asking questions of Ms. Ayers, that she has been a resident of the building for just over 3.5 years (which is the current approximate waiting list duration for a parking spot at MPT). He explained that the parking waiting list is filled on a rolling basis and that it is being continually updated based on names moving off the list or coming onto the list. He also indicated that residents, in order to maintain their parking spots, are required to provide regular proof of insurance, vehicle ownership, and vehicle registration.

Ms. Carpenter confirmed that the two parking spaces referenced by Ms. Ayers are in fact still assigned to two respective residents and remain part of the managed inventory. Ms. Charlene Lloyd stated that many residents are listening to speculation rather than following official procedures. She highlighted that the former practice of publicly posting the parking waiting list might improve transparency and reduce misinformation among residents.

Linda Harris (Apt. 4F):

Ms. Harris again raised concerns regarding structural issues under the tunnel by the Green Line "E" train station at Harlem Avenue and South Boulevard. She noted that cracks and safety hazards have become increasingly apparent. She emphasized the urgent need for repairs to ensure resident safety. Director Pope reminded Ms. Harris that the maintenance of the area is a responsibility of the Village of Oak Park, acknowledging her repeated concerns and indicated that he has not yet received any updates or information from the Village of Oak Park about the matter.

John Reeves (Apt. 19L):

Mr. Reeves revisited the ongoing parking space challenges that residents are experiencing at Mills Park Tower. Speaking as a member of the Resident Council, he noted that many residents approach the council with questions and frustrations about the parking process, placing pressure on the council to provide answers they do not have. Mr. Reeves added that if residents were able to see where they stood on the parking list, it would alleviate a great deal of confusion and stress, and help ease the burden on both residents and the Resident Council.

Chairperson Muse responded to the concerns raised regarding parking challenges and transparency. She recognized the confusion and assured residents that the Board acknowledges and takes their concerns seriously.

INTRODUCTION OF JASMINE BOTTOMS, SENIOR PROPERTY MANAGER

Ms. Jasmine Bottoms was formally introduced in her new role overseeing multiple properties for the Oak Park Residence Corporation. Those properties include The Oaks, Farrelly-Muriello Apartments, and the Oak Park Housing Authority's Mills Park Tower. Board members welcomed Ms. Bottom's return and her expanded responsibilities. Ms. Bottoms noted that she was originally hired five years ago as the Property Manager for The Oaks.

Ms. Bottom's background includes experience as a service coordinator, compliance specialist, and extensive work with HUD and national housing compliance. She is excited about the work that Oak Park Residence Corporation and the Oak Park Housing Authority are doing and will have direct reports from the property managers of these buildings. Ms. Bottoms is eager to lead in this capacity and welcomes the opportunity to institute a deep connection in the Oak Park community.

Chairperson Muse expressed appreciation for Ms. Bottoms, thanking her for being part of the organization.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

MPT REPORT

Property Manager Carpenter briefly summarized Mills Park Tower's occupancy, leasing, resident demographics, waiting list, building activities, and maintenance for the month of February. She noted that February's occupancy rate remained the same at 93% and stated that no one moved in or moved out of MPT. The current waiting list expanded during the reporting period, with 37 individuals requesting applications, and 10 completed applications having been returned.

Ms. Carpenter also reported that year-to-date 246 work orders were submitted and 244 were completed. Regarding community activities, Mills Park Tower continues to host regular programs. Tai Chi class and yoga sessions on Fridays remain popular, with strong resident participation. Home-delivered meal services continue, with seven residents receiving meals and an additional eight residents benefiting from these services.

Ms. Carpenter also shared an update regarding the elevator repairs at Mills Park Tower. She explained that Suburban Elevator was informed about the elevator doors closing too quickly, and she personally experienced the issue as well. However, after observing the situation, she was able to explain the cause to Suburban Elevator. Although no parts were replaced, the company adjusted the timing of closure, and it is expected that residents would no longer experience the problem.

Additionally, Suburban Elevator has targeted April 15th as the completion date for the freight elevator. Executive Director Pope noted that this falls well within the original 16-week timeline shared during the previous board meeting, as there has been hope all along that the work on the second elevator could progress more quickly due to prior upgrades completed during the first elevator's restoration. The fact that Suburban Elevator now anticipates an earlier completion is seen as a positive development.

During the meeting, residents raised concerns about the elevator wall pads being continuously in place in the small elevator. One resident questioned the rationale for this, especially since the walls are supposed to be durable. They pointed out that if the new elevator walls are so fragile that they need constant protection, it raises concerns about their quality and practicality. Ms. Carpenter clarified that the pads were up to protect the walls during instances such as moving furniture or unit cleanouts, including a recent situation following a resident's passing. While move-ins are not occurring regularly, exceptions like these still require some protective measures. She clarified that, once the freight elevator is back in service – estimated to be sometime around April 15 – the pads would then be removed from the small elevator, since it will no longer be used for furniture transport. Until then, the small elevator is being used for all such activity out of necessity. Ms. Lloyd expressed understanding once it was clarified that the current elevator situation is temporary and that residents will have the option to wait for the freight elevator once it becomes available again.

Commissioner Socall reflected on past challenges with maintenance work orders and wanted to acknowledge the noticeable improvement in the timely addressing and cataloguing of these maintenance requests. She expressed her appreciation to Ms. Carpenter and her team.

Mr. Reeves added that many tenants have not received clear communication about the new elevator's features. He suggested that a notice or instructional guide be circulated to help residents understand how to use the buttons, the dimensions, and what has changed. In response, Executive Director Pope acknowledged the suggestion and agreed that additional communications would be sent out upon project completion, which would include guidance on elevator use.

On a positive note, feedback from some residents highlighted appreciation for the improved lighting, the voice feature, and illuminated buttons, which have made the elevator more accessible, particularly for residents with visual impairments.

HCV REPORT

Ms. Cobb, Director of HCVP, reported that the agency is operating at 100% occupancy and managing more than 436 regular vouchers. The Mainstream Voucher program also remains in good shape with 68 vouchers currently in use. The team has also drawn names from the waiting

list, with several individuals actively searching for units, and more to be onboard in the coming weeks. A more comprehensive update is expected in April.

For the Non-Elderly Disabled (NED) transition vouchers, there are currently four in use. Efforts to increase utilization continue, though identifying qualifying individuals remains a challenge. In the Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Voucher program, two individuals are searching for units and three more are expected to join. Progress in this area has been positive, aided by partnerships with Hephzibah and other regional agencies that support youth aging out of foster care.

Regarding portability, three OPHA participants have transferred to other housing authorities. Meanwhile, OPHA is being billed for 13 individuals who moved into Oak Park using vouchers from outside agencies. OPHA has absorbed some cases and is billing 22 other agencies for residents who moved out using Oak Park vouchers.

OLD BUSINESS

Executive Director Pope reminded everyone that a portion of the OPHA office building (approx. 30% previously occupied by Accolade Adult Daycare and Catholic Charities) became vacant due to program closures driven by changes in federal and state funding policies. OPHA is repurposing the space to support Housing Forward's low-income housing-related initiative to establish an overnight shelter. The shelter will serve up to 44 individuals nightly, with arrivals around 5:30 p.m. and departures by 9:00 a.m.

Facility modifications will include converting two bathrooms into four, with added shower facilities, utilizing the existing commercial kitchen, creating gender-segregated areas, and providing dedicated spaces for specific populations. Housing Forward, known for its work with individuals facing or at risk of homelessness, is finalizing lease agreements with OPHA. Once the lease is executed, contractors will begin build-out work, with the shelter expected to become operational shortly thereafter.

NEW BUSINESS

Residents inquired about the physical setup of the meeting space, suggesting that the current layout does not support inclusive or comfortable conversation. A request was made to arrange tables in square or semi-circle formations, encouraging more engaged dialogue and the creation of multiple groupings of tables that seat 8–12 participants each, mobility access, particularly for attendees using walkers.

Staff confirmed that they are actively working on ordering additional round tables and reevaluating the configuration. The current square-shaped table layout is preferred for some committee-style meetings, but improvements are being considered to balance functionality and accessibility.

Residents also raised a proposal regarding enhancing the building's outdoor camera system to improve campus-wide security. This comes in response to a resident's report that her vehicle

was broken into in an area outside the current camera range, making it impossible to investigate the incident.

ADJOURNMENT OF MARCH 11, 2025, REGULAR MEETING

Chairperson Muse asked for a motion to adjourn the March 11, 2025, regular meeting.

It was moved (Socall) and seconded (Kelm) to adjourn the March 11, 2025, regular meeting. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote. The meeting was adjourned at 8:34 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew Teitelman, Secretary