

**MINUTES OF THE
REGULAR MEETING OF
THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE VILLAGE OF OAK PARK
TUESDAY, APRIL 8, 2025
MILLS PARK TOWER 7:45 AM**

OFFICIAL RECORD

QUORUM

PRESENT: Commissioners Kelm, Socall, Sood, Teitelman, and Chairperson Muse

ABSENT: Commissioners Walz

STAFF: Bottoms, Carpenter, Cobb, Jones, Sinn and Pope

GUESTS: Mills Park Tower Residents and Director Jennifer Stratman

Chairperson Muse called the meeting to order at 7:46 AM.

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

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

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

Nora Natof (Apt. 9F):

Ms. Natof inquired about recent staffing reductions at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), expressing concern about possible budget cuts and seeking assurances that the Oak Park Housing Authority would not experience funding impacts.

Executive Director Pope responded, noting that while the concern is valid, there is no current information suggesting a change to housing assistance payments. He acknowledged the severances and resignations at the Washington, D.C. HUD office, stating that the staff size there has materially decreased, but reiterated that there have been no signals yet indicating a disruption in program funding.

Leslie Coleman (Apt. 13B):

Ms. Coleman raised concerns about building security, specifically regarding surveillance camera coverage. Her car was broken into, and upon requesting footage from management, she learned that the current camera setup does not sufficiently monitor the parking area. She asked for onsite security to be considered.

Ms. Cynthia Carpenter confirmed that Ms. Coleman had discussed the issue with her directly. Ms. Carpenter clarified that while a camera did capture her vehicle, it does not focus clearly on the parked cars. She had already escalated the concern to Executive Director Pope and requested that the cameras be redirected to better cover the parking lot.

Reverend Dora White (Apt. 14D):

Rev. White shared information regarding a grassroots initiative called R.A.G.E., which stands for Retire All Governmental Employees. She emphasized that this applied not just to HUD but across government agencies. Rev. White distributed educational handouts to encourage residents to be informed and to reflect on their financial security, urging them to pray on these matters.

Charlene Lloyd (Apt. 11H):

Ms. Lloyd requested an update on the elevator renovation project and also followed up on her prior inquiry about posting the parking list.

Ms. Carpenter replied that the elevator project remains on schedule and that she will be contacting Suburban Elevator to obtain the next project update. Executive Director Pope confirmed that a current parking list would be made available to residents later in the week.

Marie Perkins (Apt. 19B):

Ms. Perkins advocated for increased security, specifically the presence of an onsite security officer between 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. She recounted a recent incident in which a homeless individual gained entry to the building and was seen attempting to open residents' apartment doors. Ms. Perkins also inquired about accessing lobby camera footage via the in-unit MPT system.

Executive Director Pope acknowledged Ms. Perkins' request but clarified that full-time security coverage would not necessarily address the issue. He emphasized the need for residents to ensure that doors are properly closed when passing through them and not permitting access to strangers. He also shared historical context, noting that the Village of Oak Park Police Department once operated a substation in the building, and in other buildings to help deter criminal activity, but the police later determined that routine patrols were more effective and dramatically scaled back the substation program.

Glenn Benoy (Apt. 9K):

Mr. Benoy noted that recent meeting minutes were not available on the Oak Park Housing Authority's website and pointed out that the staff directory included individuals no longer with the organization.

John Reeves (Apt. 19L):

Mr. Reeves revisited the topic of the former police substation, recalling that officers would patrol each floor of Mills Park Tower, which contributed to a strong sense of safety among residents.

Chairperson Muse addressed the collective concerns surrounding building security, surveillance cameras, the discontinued police substation, and the potential for posting deterrent signage. She expressed appreciation for the residents' engagement and assured everyone that the Board takes these concerns seriously and will continue to evaluate ways to enhance safety and communication.

2025 Q1 – QUARTERLY FINANCIALS REVIEW

Mr. Brad Sinn presented the first quarter financials and reported that overall expenses and revenues are in line with the budget. A notable exception is utility costs, which are currently higher than expected due to seasonal heating expenses during the colder months of January, February, and March. Executive Director Pope shared that this variance is anticipated and should level out over the year, as the reporting system spreads utility expenses evenly across all months, while actual costs are concentrated in winter.

Mr. Sinn went over routine building and maintenance expenses, including unit turnovers, plumbing, and painting, which are currently under budget. However, these costs tend to fluctuate throughout the year. Questions arose around the non-operating budget items, including the drawdown of CFP (Capital Fund Program) funding for the elevator project, net of depreciation.

Regarding Sojourner House and the main office, financial activity remains steady with no unusual issues reported. The agreement with Housing Forward concerning the use of space is still in process and is expected to be finalized soon.

Lastly, it was noted that while mainstream administrative fee funding appears short for the current year, this is due to overfunding received in the second half of the previous year. The program still maintains sufficient cash reserves, and the funding will rebalance over time as HUD aligns disbursements across fiscal periods.

Chairperson Muse expressed appreciation to Mr. Sinn, thanking him for providing positive news.

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 March. She noted that March's occupancy rate for the month stood at 92%, with a year-to-date average of 93%. Unfortunately, two resident deaths in March contributed to a total of five move-outs so far this year, reflecting a 7% turnover rate. The total number of current residents is 187, consisting of 58 men and 129 women.

The Authority's waitlist has 716 applicants of which 63 qualify for resident preference. Twenty individuals were recently pulled from the waitlist, and three have accepted housing offers. Move-ins are pending the completion of the ongoing elevator project. In March, 27 individuals requested applications, and 12 were returned with 5 meeting resident preference requirements.

Maintenance activity included 52 work orders requested in March and 50 completed. There are 16 vacant units, 8 of which are ready for new residents. Facilities improvements included repairs to several washing machines, and elevator upgrades are nearing completion.

Resident engagement activities continue to thrive. Tai Chi and Yoga classes remain popular, and meal delivery services are ongoing. The Resident Service Coordinator hosted several supportive programs in March, including a visit from the State Health Insurance Assistance Program to discuss Medicare, a "Tails for Togetherness" event promoting cat adoption, and a

session with AT&T to inform residents about affordable internet programs. A birthday celebration was also held, recognizing residents with birthdays in January, February, and March, with 15 attendees.

HCV REPORT

Ms. Cobb, Director of HCVP, reported that the program is operating at 100% occupancy, managing more than 434 regular vouchers. The Mainstream Voucher program has 68 vouchers currently in use representing 82% utilization.

Recently, vouchers were issued to 9 applicants from the waiting list, with potential to convert some to Mainstream if they qualify as persons with disabilities. There are also three Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) vouchers in use, with one applicant actively searching. For the Non-Elderly Disabled (NED) category, the agency is at 27% utilization with four total vouchers.

Seven families were withdrawn from the program due to passing away or exceeding the 180-day limit without lease-up. Currently, 13 families are being billed to our agency through portability, four families have been absorbed, and 22 others are being billed to other housing authorities. There are also nine incoming port participants actively searching in Oak Park. Three new property owners who have joined the program.

A question was raised regarding the ability to serve local residents amid increasing market rental prices in Oak Park, especially in new construction. Executive Director Pope clarified that HUD's zip-code-based payment standards allow discretion up to 110% of the HUD determined fair market rent, and many new downtown Oak Park buildings (particularly 60301) are within range for voucher holders. However, 60304, while more affordable, has a lower HUD payment standard. For example, the Oak Park Residence Corporation's new development in 60304 is needing to provide an additional significant subsidy from OPRC funds simply to enable HCV program participants to be able to reside in the building.

OLD BUSINESS

Executive Director Pope noted that discussions are ongoing to finalize a contract with Housing Forward for the use of the former Accolade space. Details being worked are aligned with prior board direction and approvals.

He also announced that the Housing Authority received notice of a successful renewal of the ROSS (Resident Opportunities and Self-Sufficiency) Service Coordinator Grant. This follows an application submitted in late summer/early fall of 2024.

Elevator Update

Commissioner Teitelman inquired about the performance of the newly installed elevators, specifically regarding door sensitivity and speed. Executive Director Pope reported that Suburban Elevator Company made adjustments based upon requests from Ms. Carpenter and since then the elevator has been functioning as expected, with no further concerns raised.

NEW BUSINESS

NONE

ADJOURNMENT OF APRIL 8, 2025, REGULAR MEETING

Chairperson Muse asked for a motion to adjourn the April 8, 2025, regular meeting.

It was moved (Kelm) and seconded (Socall) to adjourn the April 8, 2025, regular meeting. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote. The meeting was adjourned at 8:44 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew Teitelman, Secretary