

February BAC Recap

The Business Association Council (BAC) is a meeting between the leaders of business districts and representatives of the Village of Oak Park staff. Of course, all business owners are invited every week and should reach out to BAC Chair Anne Pezalla, anne@livelyathletics.com if they have any questions.

Despite a robust agenda, much of the meeting focused on the debate about a proposed Plastic-Free Ordinance.

1. Plastic-Free Oak Park. Business leaders were given a draft of a flyer for businesses with a rough overview of what is proposed. Some important changes would be in store for business owners as all #6 plastic would be banned. All business owners present were staunchly advocating for environmentalism but had many concerns:
 - a. The majority of plastics used leave the restaurant. Most will be tossed in garbage cans on streets or on public transit. Making them compostable will have minimal impact if they wind up in a landfill. Restaurant owners are worried about the additional cost they will bear for an effort that will have very minimal impact.
 - b. The stream of waste leaving the front of restaurants is miniscule compared to the stream of waste leaving the back of restaurants. Many of the owners present strongly advocated for help dealing with back-end waste (e.g. access to compost and recycling for their waste) rather than focusing on a potentially ineffectual plastic ban. It was also noted that restaurants and cafes make up a small portion of businesses. Offices and professional buildings will not be subject to the same regulations even though they are potentially a bigger chunk of the business community.
 - c. This will not impact that plastic bag tax which generates \$10,000/month for the village which is insane and means around 200,000 bags are still going out EVERY MONTH. Bring a reusable tote, Oak Park. Sorry for editorializing.
 - d. It is unclear if there will be a variance process. For example, if there is a plastic product being used by a restaurant and no suitable replacement exists, that business should be able to apply for a variance to continue to use that product.
 - e. IMPORTANT: there will be an informal conversation with business owners soon. If you're interested in being a part of this conversation, please contact me ASAP. The timeline for this ordinance is tight.
 - f. There will be an informational forum the week of 3/9 (tentative)
 - g. The ordinance will be discussed, tentatively, at the 3/16 and 4/27 Village Board meeting
2. Board goals are available on the VOP website [here](#)
3. The VOP budget is also available on the VOP website [here](#) and it's 358 pages long, but the 15 page letter in the beginning is worth reading
4. Recreational Marijuana- it's now a special use permit
5. The Census is happening and it's important

6. Dementia-friendly Oak Park is still an important initiative to the Village. Expect to see information in your next business license renewal packet on how to get a window decal and online staff training.
7. Chamber of Commerce update- there will be another meeting to discuss the Lake Street Construction project on March 5th at the Lake Theatre. This meeting is targeted at business owners, specifically 2nd floor and above and those outside the traditional business districts. Please come!