

VILLAGE OF OAKWOOD  
FINANCE MEETING MINUTES  
MAY 14, 2026

PRESENT:

**Eloise Hardin**- Council President  
**Taunya Scruggs** – Ward 1  
**Paggie Matlock** – Ward 3  
**\*Malcolm Sims, Jr.** – Ward 5

**Norman Bliss** – Council -at-Large  
**Yvonne Wvans-Warren** – Ward 2  
**Mary Davis** – Ward 4

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\*Late Arrival

Davis opened the meeting at 5:43pm

**Davis** referenced the newly reached FOP agreement and distributed letters containing items. **Hardin** interrupted to say she had important announcements following a meeting with the mayor and believed the information would be highly relevant to the evening's discussions.

**Financial Oversight Concerns**

Members voiced lack of recent audits and oversight. Questions about whether the previous finance director's debt or repayment obligations had been resolved. Concerns about how investments were handled, including a \$300,000 money market investment reportedly earning \$9,000 in six months. Clarification that municipal investments must remain liquid and follow legal investment rules.

Council stressed the need for transparency, ongoing audits, improved internal controls, and stricter oversight of spending and vendor management.

Discussed all passwords previously used by the past Financial Director had been changed, whether all credit cards had been accounted for, and who currently has authority to sign out credit cards. Council then referenced an email from Mr. Climer stating July 15th was the deadline for adopting the Village tax budget and July 20th was the deadline for submitting it to the county, emphasizing the July 15th adoption deadline was approaching quickly.

**Budget Discussions**

Council discussed finalizing the 2026 budget.

Council also discussed excessive or duplicated cellphone expenses across departments, departments exceeding budget appropriations, and the need to enforce spending limits required by the village charter.

The costs appeared excessive and difficult to justify, particularly a charge of about \$35,000. The concern was the village appeared to have multiple phone arrangements instead of consolidating services under a single plan, especially given the large number of Verizon cell phones. There should be a more efficient group plan in place that offers phone services through providers. Individual departments were already budgeting for their own cell phones, yet the budget also included an additional \$30,000 line item for Verizon cell phones. Council questioned how the

village could be spending \$30,000 on top of what departments were already allocating, suggesting the total costs might exceed \$50,000.

### **Mayor's Court Debate**

A lengthy discussion focused on the Mayor's Court budget and staffing.

Main concerns The Mayor's Court reportedly no longer generates revenue like it once did. Bedford Municipal Court now handles many court functions. Council questioned whether maintaining current staffing levels was financially justified. Members criticized repeated delays in receiving operational details and financial explanations. Discussion points included reducing staffing, possible elimination of positions, restructuring operations, and whether the Mayor's Court should continue in its current form. Council debated whether to wait for additional information from the Mayor or make immediate reductions because of broader financial pressures and the new FOP contract costs. Council announced for the record the mayor was withdrawing her nomination for finance director.

*\*A motion was approved to eliminate one salary position from the Mayor's Court, with the final determination to be made by the mayor.*

Council discussed a proposed financial stabilization plan was being developed for Oakwood Village. Council said the Mayor wanted to retain the services of the audit firm Julian and Grube following the departure of the previous finance director, emphasizing the urgent need for professional assistance. The firm would potentially provide reconciliation services, conduct an internal audit, and, if affordable, continue in an ongoing advisory role. Council noted costs were attached to each of the proposed services and the Mayor would share those figures with Council. The Council would then need to determine funding.

The Mayor assumes the responsibilities of the finance director on an interim basis under the village charter. Council discussed this would likely include serving as a signatory on financial accounts but noted the bank and checking accounts would probably require dual signatures. Council's concerns had already been raised about the financial viability of the mayor's court, noting that the numbers presented suggested it was not sustainable. Council expressed frustration that important matters were not being resolved and predicted emergency legislation related to the mayor's court would continue unless council established clear consequences and more firmly exercised its authority. It was also suggested council meet ~~privately~~ with the Mayor to communicate the current situation was unacceptable. If the mayor believed the mayor's court could become financially beneficial, Council said the Mayor should present that information ~~privately~~ to council rather than through public emergency legislation discussions at council meetings or financial committee meetings. Council stated they have to figure out where they're going to cut and see an area that they've received evidence.

Council discussed proposed budget reductions, asking whether the group wanted to proceed with the previously discussed 3% figure. In earlier discussions about eliminating a wage position and said department would still be asked to reduce its budget, adding that they were aiming for at least a 1% decrease. Council moved to eliminate once the highest salary between two individuals that work in Mayor's Court, then decrease to one person, the highest person with the highest salary.

## **Fire Department Budget Review**

Council reviewed the fire department's 2025 spending. Members noted the department spent significantly less than budgeted in salary and contractual services. Questions were raised about proposed increases in the 2026 budget and whether raises had already been built into projections. Council discussed balancing fairness to fire employees with the village's financial constraints and new police union obligations. They were given \$2 million and for salaries.

\$234,992 they used, balance left over from wages of 2025 was \$246,390. Council reviewed budget figures for contractual services, noting that the department still had a remaining balance of \$62,737 and suggesting the contractual services budget had been inflated. Members pointed out that the department spent about \$149,000 despite requesting roughly \$192,000. Davis said several budget categories appeared higher than necessary and then shifted the discussion back to wages, clarifying the figures being discussed were based on what had actually been spent in 2025 according to the department's report.

*\*A motion to approve a 4% increase for the fire department. In fact, the wages are effective immediately and retroactive.*

## **Police Department Budget Review**

**Matlock** said an assessment needed to be conducted to determine exactly what was necessary and what could be reduced, suggesting that significant savings might be possible if expenses were carefully reviewed. It was estimated that the city could potentially save nearly \$8.2 million and said council should communicate its proposals to the mayor, who would ultimately handle administration of the matter. During the discussion, he also asked about figures related to the mayor's court budget, noting that the total had been \$218,098 before an additional 5% increase was added.

**Matlock** reminded the group of the previous year's discussions that led to an 8% increase for employees in an effort to make compensation more equitable. She acknowledged that the police department had negotiated its 8% increase but argued that the village could not realistically continue giving similar percentage increases across departments, especially considering the fire department represented skilled labor as well. She also raised concerns about the village's long-term planning, questioning whether there was any strategy in place to replace businesses or address future financial challenges if revenue declined. Council returned to the budget calculations and clarified applying a 4% increase to the reported \$1,986,002 amount would bring the total to approximately \$2,067,000. Council reviewed the police department's equipment budget, which totaled approximately \$83,000, and went through several listed items including ammunition, detective gear, first responder medical bags, MDT replacements, new radar units, cruiser equipment, chargers, fleet tires, police workstations, promotional products, range equipment, tasers and cartridges, uniforms, cleaning supplies, and in-car camera systems. Council clarified that none of the listed expenses involved a carport project and noted ammunition and related supplies had increased in cost, which explained the rise in that portion of the budget.

During the discussion, it was clarified that the proposal was not intended to eliminate police positions but rather to avoid replacing officers who retire and to pause additional hiring. Questions were also raised about auxiliary and part-time positions listed on the department's

organizational chart, particularly positions that had remained unfilled. Council members discussed removing vacant auxiliary slots from the chart and noted that the department currently had only one part-time officer, while at least two openings remained unfilled, possibly three. Council asked whether existing personnel would still be allowed to move up into higher positions if vacancies occurred. Council confirmed that internal movement or promotions would still be permitted, emphasizing that the goal was to maintain adequate coverage while preventing any additional hiring. Time is needed to stabilize its operations before making major staffing decisions, Council suggested waiting at least 30 days before taking action, emphasizing that implementing a hiring freeze was a significant decision that required careful consideration. Implementing a hiring freeze was in the best interest of both the village and its residents given the uncertainty surrounding the village's financial condition and the absence of a current Finance Director. The speaker said the village was also facing the obligation of paying back wages that had accumulated, making financial caution necessary. It was emphasized that council had a responsibility to protect residents and carefully oversee finances, stating that failing to impose a freeze under the current circumstances would be a disservice to the community.

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*A motion was made by Council to give a wage, a 3% wage increase to every department, excluding directors, the mayor, police and fire. Any new employees that are below two years, or in eligible.*

*\*A motion made specifically to place a hiring freeze for the police department, including auxiliary positions, with no new hires allowed while still permitting existing staff to advance into open roles.*

### **Safe Build Project**

Council referred to the recent "Safe Build" discussion about revising the village's ordinances, particularly those related to rental properties. Council noted some ordinance updates had already been completed to comply with state requirements, while other areas still needed work. Members stated the revisions were supposed to be coordinated with Climer and the Mayor but expressed concern that the village was already receiving bills connected to the project without any public discussion or updates about its progress. **Davis** explained she had contacted Gwen, who works in finance, and requested records showing all money collected from permits, including both residential and commercial permits. She wanted clarification on who receives the money and where it is allocated within the budget, questioning whether the revenue goes into the general fund or remains within the building department. **Davis** raised concerns after seeing a \$2,104 Safe Build bill for April inspections alone, arguing that inspection costs should already be covered by permit fees, especially since new fees approved earlier in the year were supposed to have been implemented. It was unclear where the related income was going.

**Matlock** responded by discussing the Safe Build contract, explaining after the city eliminated its own building department, Safe Build was brought in temporarily to provide services such as a chief building official, inspectors, and technical support. She noted that the arrangement was originally expected to last only about a month but instead extended for nearly half the year. As a result, the city incurred much higher costs than anticipated, with **Matlock** stating she had reviewed bills totaling more than \$300,000. **Matlock** responded to the issue should be coordinated with the Mayor to determine exactly what the city was being billed for and whether the charges were appropriate.

**Pavement Project**

Davis stated the village should not allocate additional money in the current budget for poor-quality street patching work. Evans added after patches were placed on roads, loose gravel and debris were left behind, creating rough driving conditions and causing material to be tracked onto residents' driveways and properties. Members raised the issue with village staff and were told the village did not have a street sweeper available. Comparing Oakwood's streets unfavorably to nearby Bedford Heights and suggested the village may need to acquire a sweeper, noting that a company located in Oakwood sells them. Matlock then urged the village to stop merely discussing the issue and instead direct a department head to draft legislation establishing clear requirements and standards for the work.

**Overall Finance/Budget Meeting Theme**

Throughout the meeting, recurring themes included financial accountability, tighter budget controls, improved auditing, reducing unnecessary spending, and preparing for the transition to a new Finance Director.

Motion to adjourn by Davis and seconded Sims

6 YES: Hardin, Bliss, Scruggs, Evans-Warren, Matlock, Davis and Sims

Adjourned at 10:00pm

Approved: 5/26/2026

5/27/2026  
Posted (date)

Eloise Hardin  
Eloise Hardin, Council President

Carol Jackson  
Carol Jackson, Clerk of Council