



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Park District of Oak Park Workers Fight for Fair Wages

Oak Park, IL – Park District of Oak Park (PDOP) workers were at the Oak Park Farmer’s Market today where they gathered more than 200 petition signatures urging the Park District Board to provide higher wages that keep up with inflation.

PDOP workers, represented by SEIU Local 73, want to see wages which reflect the cost of living and ensure competitive pay with other park districts. No one working for the PDOP should earn less than \$20/hour.

After a simple search of comparable jobs from Chicago, Oak Park River Forest High School, and suburban park districts, we found:

- River Forest Park Specialist- starting pay \$20-22.90/hr.
- Berwyn Park Maintenance Worker 1- starting pay \$20/hr.
- Westchester Park Maintenance Worker- starting pay \$22-27/hr.
- Skokie Park District Park Specialist III- starting pay \$28.84-31.25/hr.
- Chicago Park District Maintenance Laborer- starting pay \$24.84/hr.
- Park Ridge Park District Park Maintenance I- \$22-\$27/hr. / II \$27.50-\$31.60/hr.
- OPRF District 200 Grounds Maintenance- starting pay \$31.05/hr.

“It’s frustrating that we are paid below what other park districts pay. We ask you to consider the value we bring- experience in maintaining buildings, the knowledge of how to keep our parks beautiful, and the sacrifices of plowing at 4 am on snowy nights. We are worth more,” **said Robert Poirier, Maintenance Worker 7 years with the District, who has made countless sacrifices for the job.**

Pay Grade B General Maintenance Worker’s starting wage in 2020 was \$17.60. Based on the US Bureau of Labor Statistics Inflation Calculator , it should be \$21.42. Instead, it is only \$18.56.

“We are struggling to make ends meet on our current wages at the Park District of Oak Park. Most of us cannot afford to live in Oak Park, and many of us are forced to work second jobs. The District invests heavily in our buildings and facilities; it’s time to invest in us. We need living wages; otherwise, many of us will have no choice but to leave,” **expressed Roger Oney, a Maintenance Worker who has been with the District for five years.**

The Park District of Oak Park invests millions in recreation programs, parks, and building improvements. Last year, the district even spent \$140,000 on vehicles. But the investment in the people committed to making our parks beautiful and safe is pennies. We estimate the District spent seven times more on cars than our staff wage increases.

“I take care of the baseball diamonds and facilities, and I love it. I took this job hoping my kids would be able to play baseball here, but I cannot afford it. We are just not paid enough,” **said Jorge Hernandez, a Maintenance Worker for five months with the District.**

PDOP workers testified at the August and September board meetings highlighting the need for higher wages and that most

workers can't even afford to live in the city they service. Board members responded that Oak Park isn't for everyone. It appears the Park District Board does not share the inclusivity for which Oak Park is known.

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SEIU Local 73 represents more than 35,000 workers, primarily in public service and publicly funded positions in school districts, municipalities, social service agencies, and many other job classifications in Illinois and Indiana. We are dedicated to improving the lives of workers and their families.