

Village of Matteson
Board of Trustees Meeting
November 4, 2002
--Partial Transcript--
“RECOMMENDATION OF APPOINTMENT
FOR CHIEF OF POLICE”

PRESIDENT STRICKER: Under Other Business is the recommendation for, time for the appointment of the Chief of Police and as it is pointed out in the scheduling, if there is a desire, the Board may go into closed session pursuant to Section 2(c)(1) under Personnel of the Open Meetings Act with a need to reconvene. But that's going to be up to the Board to call that if they wish.

In the meantime, I would like to make a statement that, in part, as we can all recall when the representative of the PAR Group was here, they stressed the idea of confidentiality, that's why there was a need for Executive Sessions, because in several, a number of the individuals who were applicants, it may or may not be a situation wherein their present employer may be aware of their potential leaving. So we need to respect the professionalism of those individuals.

So, with that said, we've been engaged in a number of months in a lengthy and thorough process of a national scale through the efforts of the Paul A. Reaume firm for the recruitment of a Chief of Police. They advertised in a number of national publications in terms of professional magazines, organizations, government jobs. They advertised in the national Police Chiefs magazine and they did it on the web site. They also advertised in NOBLE, which is a national organization for Black law enforcement. They also advertised in Black Caucus Now. And so there was an extensive amount of solicitation for applicants. And out of that result, there were only 65 applicants that

submitted their name for consideration. Based on the criteria that each of us individually and somewhat collectively developed what we thought would be the desirable qualities that a new chief should possess, plus we also had a group of individuals, residents, who came and visited with the representative of the PAR Group one evening. I was there for the opening, but then I left. And their thoughts and ideas were submitted and incorporated into the criteria. So out of that criteria a profile was established and the result of over 65 applicants we got nine reviews to look at, evaluate, and we did that collectively, that we thought came closest to our objectives. Of those nine, we narrowed it down to five to conduct the first round of interviews. We met right at the conclusion of the interviews and narrowed that five applicants down to three applicants for a second interview session. Given the fact that we cannot divulge too much because of the Executive Session and the private consideration for professional thoughts and involvement, let me just say that of the three interviewed candidates that were invited to come back for the final round, two were from neighboring states and included also in addition was the Acting Chief of Matteson.

It is my responsibility under State Statute to submit to the Board my nominee for the Chief of Police in Matteson. In my twentieth year now of serving in this capacity, this is the third time I've had that responsibility to do, and based on my experience of the process, the interviews, I would at this time submit the name of Robert Park to be appointed as Chief of Police for the Village of Matteson. I feel that he has exemplified the qualities of a professional Police Officer. He obviously exhibits a passion for the position, not only within the Department but in the community. I believe that he commands a tremendous respect within the Department, not only in Matteson but in

additional surrounding communities and very importantly, with the residents of the Village of Matteson and our business personnel.

The opportunity with 26 years of experience to submit the name of Robert Park to be our Police Chief is a privilege I feel that I'm pleased to do. I'm comfortable with that nomination and by State Statute it is my responsibility to submit that to you and your responsibility to make any judgments. So, I think that he has possessed and exhibited the dynamic leadership, professional knowledge and the personality within the Department and within the community to reflect the growing needs and responsibilities of this position. And that's my nomination.

TRUSTEE ASHMORE: Mr. President.

PRESIDENT STRICKER: Trustee Ashmore.

TRUSTEE ASHMORE: Yes, I move that the Board of Trustees approve the appointment of Robert Park as Chief of Police of the Village of Matteson.

****TAPE CHANGE: LENGTH OF TIME UNKNOWN****

TRUSTEE BROWN: Mr. President.

PRESIDENT STRICKER: Trustee Brown.

TRUSTEE BROWN: We have had a tremendous amount of deliberations with regard to this appointment. I believe that the process was sound, I believe that the process was open, and I believe that the process was fair. And when it came down to it, everybody basically voiced their opinion based on their mind, analysis, and the way they feel in their heart. And I respect each one of my fellow Board members for doing that. Unfortunately, the potential exists for a deadlock situation. And I've given that a lot of thought and quite frankly, I'm a little bit uncomfortable with it because of the fact that

this is one situation where you cannot break a tie. Gridlock is not, for me, a very desirable situation. I have flashbacks from the days of Harold Washington and what gridlock did to his administration. I have a lot of feelings about, and forgive me if I ramble just a little bit, but I have a lot of feelings about how I would be viewed if I went one way versus another way down the road. Then I kind of realized that for me to even presume that I would even have the privilege of being here down the road is a little presumptuous and arrogant on my part. I'm only here at the will of the people and how the people determine that is certainly not in my control. So, with that in mind, I have to make the best decision, at least in my mind, that can be made on behalf of the community for right now, while I'm here. There's no guarantees that I may not be here, that I may be here two years or four years down the road. But I know I'm here now and in my heart and in my mind I've got to make the best decision for right now.

The candidate that I wanted is not the candidate that you nominated. However, the candidate that you nominated is certainly qualified. There's no question about his qualifications. There's no question about the other candidate's qualifications. But I think that greater harm would be caused by us putting ourselves in this position where we're deadlocked because we can't move forward, we can't move ahead. We're just stuck with a wound that might continue to fester. That would leave Chief Park as an Acting Chief, which would limit his ability to be effective in the position. I believe our community deserves a chief, not an acting chief. So I guess I'm saying all this to say that rather than have a potential deadlock situation, rather than be afraid of how I may be viewed in history, because nothing is promised to me or to any of us down the road in terms of our

political or whatever other ambitions we may have, I will vote in support of Robert Park as the Chief.

TRUSTEE MOTTON: Mr. President.

PRESIDENT STRICKER: Trustee Motton.

TRUSTEE MOTTON: You know, I'm real glad you said about down the road, and how you feel down the road, because it all starts off when you begin the process of campaigning, what you campaign for when you come to the people and talk about what you, your views are, that you don't have any hidden agendas, that you're going to do the best with just who you are. I don't have any hidden agendas, but I do have an agenda. Okay, as a politician, we're all politicians, we have to have an agenda. Okay. Well, I came before the people as part of my campaign, I had an agenda. I was for diversity, but for inclusion. I made that very well known I was for inclusion. When any opportunity would come before us, our Board, I said to everyone in the public, and everyone heard me speaking if you came to any homeowners association meeting, if there was an opportunity for diversity, I would seek that diversity and inclusion. I believe that in the PAR Group process of 65 people that went out throughout the nation, a certain amount and group of people, we came back with nine, and narrowed it down to about five, then we came down to three. I saw some potentially truly qualified people in the process. I learned when we narrowed it down to three, I saw a potential candidate that I thought was highly qualified for the position. He was not the one selected. And I realize now the power of being at the top, because changes start from the top on down. Okay, appointments start from our President. And that makes me wonder if I hadn't, if the vote of the will of the people were for that particular person, would he have gotten it? I'm

really concerned about that. I wonder. I have doubts about that. But that's my doubts, okay, my viewpoint. I believe that the person that I wanted, the person that was not selected, was a truly qualified person, served as a deputy chief of a major metropolitan city, had outstanding credentials, and would have also diversified our Department Heads. How does it be that we have replaced in the last five years the Public Works, we replaced the Village Manger and the Park and Rec, notwithstanding we still don't have any African-American diversity. I saw that candidate where the qualifications, I'll say, of no other as far as going through that whole PAR process, and he also had the potential of diversifying. Matteson thrives on diversity. Matteson to me has also thrived on inclusion. For this community not to have any inclusion at the top ranks to me is unaccountability to our Board. The City of Chicago sees it. When Mayor Daley does his Board, he sees it, believe me he sees it. He does see it. When the President of the United States sees it, you look at his top officials, he also sees it. That's why he has a diversified group of people. There is a need for that. Now you may say that that's going to happen down the road. Well, let's look at these positions. Most people that get these positions hold them for a very, length of time. They retire with 30 some years, stay for many years per se. So, yeah, they happen, but they happen down the road.

Now, I missed the baby boomers years by one year, 1962. '60 was the baby boomers year. I was born in '61. So I missed what was called the baby boomer years. I also missed what is called now to this day Generation X. Okay. So I said, how do I classify myself, who am I? Where do I fit in with this new generation? I consider myself to be Generation N. Meaning I'm considered for Generation Now. Not wait for five, ten, twenty years, or 50 years of age, but for now. When opportunity presents itself. Yes, it's

a hard decision to make, but when you are accountable to the people, you have to make hard decisions. Sometimes it's going to ruffle the feathers of other people. I stand by that. Now also I stand towards, by diversity to help, believe me it's all about diversity, we spent over \$120,000 to a select group of people to come into our community. Basically, we say that we want to obtain a more diversified, whites move into our community, so we spent \$120,000 to help out with our residential marketing with those who may view the papers, so that's diversity. We also pay a salary of over \$60,000 for that person to run the office. And they perhaps have other people help out in that office. We spent over a quarter million dollars in diversity, over a quarter million dollars in diversity, and for us not to have any diversified in the workforce, in a job that means something, to me is a travesty. Now, I'll say this, I'll say this, you have to have a qualified candidate to begin with. That's what you must have. So when I went into this process, I said, you know what, I hope that we have a all too qualified candidate where this Board can also diversity the workforce. And to me, that did occur. Withstanding, I have to also respect the right of the Village President because that's the top, that's our elected official, who this Village voted, our community elected. I respect that. I respect Chief Park. He's a capable person. He can run the Village, but I thought there was someone better out there, better out there. Just as my village, I'm a police officer. Our Village went out, Orland Park had qualified candidates in this Village position, but they also saw somebody outside of the Village, Chief Timothy J. McCarthy. Now that's not an insult to anyone in that department because, guess what, they sought outside. It happens all the time. Look through the ranks. It happens all the time. So, it's not a slap to anyone's face if you go outside. That's just what occurs. Perhaps in this case it did

not occur. That's fine, very well. But, I believe we would have been better served with the other candidate that was not chosen. I believe that we can be served by this, Chief Park right now if he's put in office. I believe that I will sit down and talk to him about the issues at hand progressively. But, I cannot give my vote to him, because this is not what I thought was the best interest of this community. I'm disappointed because, you know what, things move on. I support democracy. That's what I support, democracy. The will of the people and the vote. That's what I support. So, once the vote is done, I support democracy. That's what I support. So having said that, I turn it to anyone else.

PRESIDENT STRICKER: Anyone else?

TRUSTEE MAXWELL: Yes, I'd like to make a comment.

PRESIDENT STRICKER: Trustee Maxwell.

TRUSTEE MAXWELL: My comment is that when I started the process, I thought we were doing a search to find the best qualified candidate. And I believe that person was found. Unfortunately, he is not being considered for the position of Police Chief tonight. Therefore, I simply cannot vote anything other than Nay. And I'm doing that because I, I'm doing it because I think that's in the best interest of the people that we serve.

PRESIDENT STRICKER: Anyone else?

TRUSTEE ASHMORE: Yes, I'd just like to comment...

PRESIDENT STRICKER: Trustee Ashmore.

TRUSTEE ASHMORE: ...particularly for the benefit of the residents that are here and to some of the other comments that were made. I agree totally that every candidate that we were presented with starting with the five and initially narrowed it

down to three, they were all very good candidates. There's no question about that. I take nothing away from any one of their, as far as qualifications and that type of thing. I think, though, that in terms of, based on a lot of the information that we were given at the very beginning, I think that made all of us, in looking over the resumes, and other things that we received on the final candidates, I am sure like many of the other Trustees, we were very eager for us to being the interview process. And I approached it in several ways, several different ways. I approached it obviously as a Trustee first, making what I believe is the best decision based on what we saw and what we heard in the interviews, as our representative of the residents of this Village. I also approached it as a human resource professional, which I am. Someone who has conducted many interviews. And one of the things that I do know in my own profession, in my real job, as I like to say, is that while a resume can be very, very impressive and look really, really good for in, if that's the case, I would say probably for all the candidates that we were able to review, I do know from in my own profession and having conducted many interviews, you have to see the person, you have to listen to the person, you have to have an opportunity to ask the person questions and that type of thing. And a lot of what generally comes out of that in terms of a decision to offer someone a job is very largely based, as we all know, and I'm sure we've all interviewed at some point of time or another, or perhaps have conducted interviews, we know that that's putting a lot of what, whether or not the person gets the job is riding on that particular interview. And we have to look further than the resume. And one of the things that I looked for in all candidates, and we basically asked all candidates primarily the same questions. I reviewed each candidate in my own mind as to how I thought their personality would fit into our Police Department. I reviewed

each candidate based on, in addition to their overall qualifications, into their demeanor during the interviews, to their answers to various questions, not necessarily looking for the right answer or the wrong answer, but in many cases how the questions were answered. For instance, I specifically looked for in depth answers. I felt that we had spent, extended a great deal of money and as someone said earlier, when we we're doing the search, I mean if we were just going to, wanted to bring in some candidates and ask them some very basic questions to see where they stood or whatever, we probably could have put an ad in the paper and saved a lot of money, but because we decided at the behest of the residents and the decision was made by the Board to conduct this professional search, which I'm glad that we did. I think that was the best way for us to do it, I think that we would be looking for candidates, I mean obviously because of the seriousness of the approach that we took to this process whether it's Police Chief, Fire Chief, or any other department head position, just as we did for the Village Administrator a year or two ago, I was looking for in depth answers. We are always talking about vision. We are always talking about the future. I'm looking for not just one word answers, but in depth, in depth answers. To me that shows vision, that shows someone that has an outlook. And those were a lot of the criteria that I used to determine what my decision would be out of this process. And I approached this process with the utmost seriousness based on, other things that were included were certainly what you, the residents, told us you were looking for in a police chief, as well as some things that the Board set forth in the Board criteria. I took this as a very serious matter. It was one that kept me up nights. It was something that I prayed very, very fervently over before I finally did make my decision. And I was not praying so that someone's face would pop

into my head and I would see their face and say, oh, that's the person that I want, but the reason that I prayed over this is because I know it is a very serious decision. It's one that can have a great effect on our Village and it was one that I wanted to be able to make whichever way I went with it, whether it was in agreement with the other Trustees, whether it was even in agreement with whatever nomination was ultimately going to be made by the President. It was a decision that I would be making that would allow me to sleep at night. And I truly feel having gone through the process, having looked at all the applicants, I truly believe that we have reached the, the name that has been presented for nomination tonight I believe out of the candidates that I reviewed and what I heard, and I think we also have to remember that even though we are a Board, we are all individuals, it still is unfortunately a very subjective process, we're not all going to necessarily always agree on the same thing. I might think it's half empty and someone else might think it's half full. So, it's not taking anything away from any one of the candidates that we reviewed, but I am confident, very confident without any doubt in my mind that I have made the right decision to support the person that I believe out of the three choices that we were left with would best be able to take our Police Department to where we need to go and to where we want it to go.

And on that note, we talked about diversity and all that, and I agree with Trustee Motton on that in relation to diversity, I have a slightly different outlook on that though. And let me just tell you real quick what it is since we're talking about diversity. I'm not saying that we shouldn't have x number of minority department heads or female department heads and that type of thing, but I believe the type of diversity that we're looking for and the type of diversity that I hear from residents that I speak with on a fairly

regular basis, I believe that that can best be achieved, initially it can best be achieved through shoring up our rank and file. That is something that we did here tonight in this very room when we installed one African-American on the Police Department and on the Fire Department. Those are the types of things that I think that we need to spend more time looking at and moving towards in terms of achieving diversity. And that's not to say that if department head positions come up that we're not going to, oh no, those are untouchable, we're not going to vote for any diversity there. That's not what I'm saying. But Andre Ashmore is not going, and let me say this for the record and for anyone who wants to listen or tape me or whatever, Andre Ashmore is not going to vote for anyone for any sort of position based on race or anything like that to achieve a particular goal or quota. Andre Ashmore is going to go for the person that I feel in my heart is the best qualified for the job based on the candidates that are presented to us, or to this Board, and that is what I have done in this particular case. And that's all I have to say.

PRESIDENT STRICKER: Anyone else?

TRUSTEE GREEN Mr. President.

PRESIDENT STRICKER: Trustee Green.

TRUSTEE GREEN: I listened very carefully to the candidate that was in question here tonight that did not receive the bid and I admired his background certainly. But as Andre said so well, you know, what you have on paper was so impressive that I could almost have been persuaded that way. But then I looked beyond the paper and I noticed that he didn't have, to me, the ability to communicate that the Matteson people are looking for or the Matteson Police force. That's what bothered me. I don't think he had the right personality for that. I thought he was much too stringent. Not that I don't

think we should have someone that doesn't think, you know, to follow all the rules of the Police Department. That's not my point, but my point is I thought he was rather autocratic. And I noticed when our other candidate, Commander Park answered questions, he went into them very deep, they were very thoughtful answers. They weren't one word. And I remember that so well, because that was one of the things I had written down. And he had such a key to the whole community. And I realized someone that isn't in the community can't have that, doesn't have that same experience. But I just didn't think there was that ability to communicate in the other candidate, and I will have to say that the interview that was given by Commander Park, his last interview was absolutely excellent and it was very, it really brought me closer to know what Commander Park is all about. And I appreciated that. That's all I have.

PRESIDENT STRICKER: Okay.

TRUSTEE JOHNSON: I guess I'm last. My decision was based primarily on how I felt the candidate answered the questions, how effectively. And that was the biggest thing of all as far as the answers in depth. And as it went along, each one of these candidates, the last three, were very impressive. We were fortunate in getting each one of those candidates to get to that level. And I was very happy to be able to do it. But it also, when I was trying to make my decision, it was very difficult. It was, not sleepless nights, but it was on my mind all the time. There are things that we wanted to do, and if, I could see where we need to go, but I think we have to do it in the right manner and look for the best possible candidate. And while the qualifications were there, I think the person that we're going to, that I will support has all of those qualifications. The qualifications of background, but also the way in which the interview was conducted and the answers that

we got in depth, and I was very happy with that part of it. So I will then cast my vote for the person that I feel is the best qualified candidate.

PRESIDENT STRICKER: Thank you everybody. The Board has had an opportunity to express their thoughts. I would say one thing to the Board, that although there is some disagreement perhaps, if you were there, and I was and so were you, I must say to each of you, thank you for the manner in which you conducted yourselves, in which we openly discussed this topic. And although there was some passion involved, you did it as ladies and gentlemen. And I think that's an important statement to make so that we may not always agree as some of you have said before, but at least we did it in a manner of respect and understanding. So in that regard, I appreciate your thoughts. And with that I guess I'll ask the Clerk to call the roll.

CLERK GRISCO: Trustee Motton.

TRUSTEE MOTTON: Nay

CLERK GRISCO: Trustee Maxwell

TRUSTEE MAXWELL: Nay

CLERK GRISCO: Trustee Johnson

TRUSTEE JOHNSON: Aye

CLERK GRISCO: Trustee Brown

TRUSTEE BROWN: Aye

CLERK GRISCO: Trustee Ashmore

TRUSTEE ASHMORE: Aye

CLERK GRISCO: Trustee Green

TRUSTEE GREEN: Aye

PRESIDENT STRICKER: It's by a vote of 4 to 2 that Chief Park is then, my nomination has been authorized. And let us congratulate you, Bob. Even though this discussion, and it's done in public, I think what in one way will do is, you will certainly be glad to hear that, you know, you're going on to a large challenge. Obviously the ball is in your court. However, given the commentary, I think this will provide you with even a greater challenge to prove yourself. And I'm very confident that you will.