

**MINUTES OF A FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS OF THE PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK HELD ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2021, 4:04 PM. THE MEETING WAS CONDUCTED REMOTELY DUE TO THE GOVERNOR’S DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY AS A RESULT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC WERE ABLE TO VIEW A LIVE STREAM OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING AND SUBMIT ITEMS FOR PUBLIC COMMENT VIA EMAIL TO THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO BE READ ALOUD DURING THE MEETING.**

**Present:** Commissioner Bernstein, Vice President Kaplan, President Ruttenberg

**Also, Present:** Executive Director Romes; Director Peters, Director Dunn, Director Gogola, Director Voss, Director Smith, Director Carr; Assistant Director Maliszewski; Manager Ochs, Manager Warsaw; Accountant Rosen; Manager Johnson; Coordinator Hejnowski

**Guest Speaker:** None

**Public Comment for Items on the Agenda**

None.

December 17, 2020 and January 21, 2021 Finance Committee Meeting minutes were approved.

**Park Avenue Updates**

**A. Site Master Plan Proposal**

Manager Schwartz reported that staff have begun the Park Avenue Boating Facility Site Master Planning efforts and provided an overview of the project plan and the next steps.

***Scope***

She reported that the intent of the Park Avenue Boating Facility site plan project is to build upon existing planning efforts and assess, in collaboration with key stakeholders the vehicle, pedestrian, and biking access to the site, boating storage, and amenities, explore passive and active recreational opportunities and address infrastructure repair, replacement, and improvements for the barge, parking lot, storage areas, landscaping, and the building.

***Foundation of the Site Plan***

She reported that the Lakefront Master Plan update from 2020, the 2018 Community Input Surveys, the Beach Management Strategy Plan, the SmithGroup Barge Replacement Study, and the Capital Improvement Plan are the documents serving as the foundation for the Park Avenue Boating Facility Site Master Plan.

***Timeline***

She reported that staff are looking to begin working the Lakota Group this month, the bulk of the planning efforts will occur in March through June, and staff will request approval of the Site

Master Plan in July from the Park Board of Commissioners. If approved capital planning and budgeting will begin in August.

***Proposed Planning Steps:***

Manager Schwartz reported that staff are proposing to work with the Lakota Group since they are the same firm who helped the District develop the Master Plan for GreenPrint. Additionally, the Lakota Group is currently working with the Winnetka Park District to develop a Lakefront Master Plan, so staff are recommending their expertise. As for the Park District's site master plan, staff are proposing a three-phased approach. The first phase is to analyze, engage, and develop an internal Project Steering Committee to review existing data and planning. Additionally, the Lakota Group will conduct a site analysis exhibit and provide their input along with a summary of conditions to the Project Steering Committee and the Park Avenue Working Group.

President Ruttenberg requests that the site analysis exhibit and summary provided by the Lakota Group be reviewed with the Project Steering Committee before it is presented to the Park Avenue Working Group.

Executive Director Romes and Manager Schwartz reported that the site analysis exhibit and summary provided by the Lakota Group will be presented to the Project Steering Community before it is presented to the Park Avenue Working Group. Commissioner Grossberg and Vice President Kaplan are the liaisons on the Project Steering Committee.

Manager Schwartz reported that the second phase focuses on visioning, so the Project Steering Committee will use the site analysis exhibit to develop conceptual site plans. Keep in mind there are various options of how to approach the site, so the Lakota Group will conduct a comparative analysis to evaluate which of those options is best which will allow for a team working session with the Project Steering Committee to review those options. Based on the feedback from the Project Steering Committee the Lakota Group will refine those plans so staff can present the refined plan to the Park Avenue Working Group, the Finance Committee, and the Park Board of Commissioners.

President Ruttenberg requested that the comparative analysis and refined plan be reviewed by Park District Staff and the Project Steering Committee before being presented to the Park Avenue Working Group.

As for the third phase which is the final preliminary site plan, Manager Schwartz reported that feedback from the vision phase will be used to develop the final site plan which includes the budget and supporting illustrations to help communicate the plan. Additionally, the Lakota Group will develop a priority implementation plan and the timeline for staff and the Project Steering Committee to review. Based on feedback from those discussions the preliminary plan will be refined so that a Final Site plan and Summary Report can be presented to the Finance Committee and the Park Board of Commissioners.

Executive Director Romes reported that the Project Steering Committee Liaisons and staff had a recent conversation regarding the proposed planning steps, which they took a thoughtful approach to develop a Project Steering Committee which consists of Park District staff and board liaisons who are responsible for steering the project and making key decisions while incorporating input from the Park Avenue Working Group. As a reminder, the Park Avenue Working Group is

composed of Park District Staff, board liaisons, members of the North Shore Yacht Club, and City Officials. Lastly, the current cost of the project is slightly over the \$15,000 budget, however, this is a significant reduction from the Lakota Groups original proposal which was over \$30,000. He reported that Commissioner Grossberg and Vice President Kaplan support the proposed plan and recommend the Park District move forward with the Lakota Group, so staff are looking for consensus from the Finance Committee to approve the contract. Since the contract is under \$25,000 it does not require approval from the Park Board of Commissioners. If staff receives consensus from the Finance Committee, staff will provide an update at to the February 16 Park Avenue Working Group Meeting then schedule a kick-off off meeting with the Project Steering Committee.

Staff received consensus from Commissioner Bernstein, Vice President Kaplan, and President Ruttenberg.

**B. Access Gate Control Update**

Director Smith Reported that Park District staff recently met with staff from the City of Highland Park to review the Park Avenue Access Gate Control Plan. Discussions included ongoing maintenance and finalizing a general location for the gate to be installed along the roadway. Currently, Park District staff are working with Gewalt Hamilton Associates to conduct a turning radius analysis of the roadway, which will determine where the gate should be installed. Park District staff should have results from the analysis by early next. Once those results are available, Park District staff will continue looking into options for the gate and determine a finalized location and present a proposal for the purchase of the gate at the next Finance Committee Meeting.

**Highland Park Golf Learning Center Site Master Plan Proposal**

Manager Schwartz Manager Schwartz reported that staff have begun the Golf Learning Center Site Planning efforts and provided an image of the site before providing an overview of the project plan and the next steps.

***Scope***

She reported that the scope and project objectives are to develop a long-term site optimization plan that aims to improve financial performance while meeting community and regional recreational needs. This optimization plan includes a comprehensive assessment that will provide future recommendations for the driving range, mini-golf, building, and general site connectivity along with programming, operations, agreements, and marketing strategies. Additionally, it will provide recommendations regarding the relationship between the dome and the Preserve of Highland Park and look at possible new amenities or capital improvements that will support recommended programming.

***Timeline***

She reported that staff are looking to begin working this month and would like to have the project completed by May of this year.

Commissioner Bernstein reported that the timeline seems a bit aggressive.

Manager Schwartz reported that staff are trying to front-load this so that golf staff can invest as much time as possible before the course reopens.

### ***Planning, Deliverables, and Cost***

Manager Schwartz reported that this is a two-phase project. The first phase is conducting a data review and providing an optimization report. During this phase, the planning team will examine existing data and current site conditions, so that in March staff can conduct collaborative meetings with the Project Steering Committee and key stakeholders. The goal of these meetings is to identify the key factors that are going to drive facility and programming participation. Additionally, a firm will visit the site to develop a detailed optimization report which will review site findings and recommendations. Those recommendations will include organizational and business development, operational processes and systems, programming review, financial performance, and physical facility improvements.

President Ruttenberg requested that Manger Schwartz explain the optimization report in simpler terms to better understand what the firm would be providing to the Park District.

Manager Schwartz reported that the Golf Learning Center is an enterprise facility, so staff are trying to understand what drives participation at the site, what increases users, and how to increase revenue as well as understand what types of capital improvements should be recommended to support those programming changes and/or improvements.

Executive Director Romes reported that like the Park Avenue Boating Facility Site Master Plan, staff has data from the Attitude and Interest Survey and Capital Plan along with feedback from staff recommending how to optimize the site. This firm will take that data to conduct a market evaluation and a competitive analysis which will recommend long-term options to address this site. He reported that there are a variety of things to consider, so this will provide finality to those discussions regarding what is recommended and tie in with the 2021 schedule updates such as the parking lot repairs, the sign replacement, the pathways connecting to the Preserve of Highland Park. Lastly, there have been several discussions regarding future use at the dome, which will also be tied into this optimization report.

As for the second phase, Manager Schwartz reported that staff will present financial recommendations and based on the optimization report and provide a project timeline or implementation strategy. She is pleased to report that the cost proposal came in within the \$15,000 budget.

### ***Next Steps***

Staff are seeking consensus today from the Finance Committee to move forward with the contract. If approved, staff will schedule a kick-off meeting with the project team.

President Ruttenberg requests that like the Park Avenue Site Master Plan, this project has a board liaison.

Vice President Kaplan volunteered to be the board liaison.

President Ruttenberg requests that the Finance Committee receive project updates.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to know if this is an open-ended plan or are staff planning within a budget with regard to the property.

Executive Director Romes reported that the optimization report develops a plan that provides cost recovery to generate net revenue for the facility, however, the plan is not tied to a budget at the moment. The goal of the optimization report is to have a return on our investment which will support the proceeds to the City of Highland Park and generate a profit for the District.

Commissioner Bernstein suggests that there is a direction included in the referral indicating how to pay for their services, so they are not providing a plan that the Park District cannot afford to pursue.

Executive Director Romes reported he went through an extensive interview with this company and addresses those same concerns to ensure a high probability of generating a return on our investment.

Commissioner Bernstein thanked Executive Director Romes and reported that he is looking forward to hearing future updates.

President Ruttenberg and Commissioner Bernstein are excited that the District is focusing on improvements for this facility.

### **Sunset Valley Golf Club Youth Walkway Project Update**

Manager Ochs provided a brief update regarding the Sunset Valley Golf Club Youth Walkway Project, reporting that staff went out to bid for the brick paver pathway this past December and received 12 bids. The lowest bid was \$23,670. The base bid includes the placing of pavers from the front of the cart barn to the short game area along with drainage improvements and parking stall installations. Additionally, staff requested bid alternates which include a second brick paver pathway and new curbing along the front of the cart barn to the short game area, however, staff declined the alternates.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to know if the surface of the pathway will be permeable and if the parking spots for electric cars will be impacted by construction.

Manager Ochs reported that the pathway will be permeable, and construction will not impact any parking spots.

Additionally, Manager Ochs reported that staff are also gathering quotes to excavate a mound along the brick paver pathway, as the excavation will ensure the pathway is ADA accessible. Staff are anticipating the excavation to cost \$10,000 since there is a cable underneath the mound. Lastly, staff are also gathering quotes for the installation of synthetic turf, hitting cages, and a safety net along the West side of honey locust trees near the first fairway. Manager Ochs reminded the Finance Committee that this project is fully funded by donations.

President Ruttenberg would like to know if bushes and trees can be planted along the brick paver path and the cart barn to soften the area.

Manager Ochs reported that space is limited, however, grasses could be planted along the building to help conceal it.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to know the width of the pathway and if carts will be able to utilize the pathway.

Manager Ochs reported that the width of the pathway is between 6 - 8ft, so carts can utilize the pathway.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to know if the pathway is wide enough to permit two-lane traffic.

Manager Ochs reported that two-lane traffic is not permissible.

Vice President Kaplan is concerned that golfers will spill into the parking lot since the pathway does not permit two-lane traffic, which he suggests is a safety concern.

Manager Ochs reported that signage will be placed along the pathway and landscaping will be conducted along the East side of the road to provide a buffer from the parking lot to discourage pedestrian use.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to know if an engineer surveyed the area as he too is concerned about the flow of traffic, and having carts share the use of the pathway.

Executive Director Romes reported that an outside engineering firm did not examine the area, however, the Park district's landscape architect surveyed the area.

Commissioner Bernstein requested that staff consider using the pathway by pedestrians only, not carts.

President Ruttenberg agreed, suggesting that the point of this pathway is to provide pedestrian access to the short game area without having to travel throughout the parking lot. He also requested that additional lights be placed atop of the building to add illumination and safety.

Commissioner Bernstein reported that golfers are only using a couple of clubs in the short game area, so there is no need to take your entire bag which reduces most of the need for golf cart utilization of the pathway aside from ADA.

Commissioner Bernstein reported that this should offer more space so that planters and grasses can be added to soften the area.

Executive Director Romes and Manager Ochs thanked the Finance Committee Liaisons for their recommendations and feedback.

Commissioner Bernstein requests that Manager Ochs gather feedback from the rest of the golf staff, additionally he commended the golf staff for their outstanding work last year.

**Other Business**

Director Peters reported that the next Finance Committee meeting is Thursday, February 18 at 4:00 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 4:57 p.m.