

**PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK  
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS  
MINUTES OF WORKSHOP MEETING  
FEBRUARY 9, 2021**

The Workshop Meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners of the Park District of Highland Park 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 Workshop Board Meeting.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by President Ruttenberg.

**ROLL CALL**

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

**Absent:** Commissioner Flores Weisskopf

**Staff Present:** Executive Director Romes; Director Smith, Director Voss, Director Dunn, Director Peters, Director Gogola, Director Carr; Assistant Director Maliszewski; General Manager/Superintendent of Golf Operations Ochs; Manager Johnson, Manager Schwartz; Coordinator Hejnowski

Commissioner Flores Weisskopf joined the meeting at 6:52 p.m.

**PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS ON THE AGENDA** – None

**ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA** – None

**CONSENT AGENDA**

A motion was made by Commissioner Grossberg and seconded by Vice President Kaplan to approve the Minutes from the December 8, 2020 Workshop Meeting; the Minutes from the December 15, 2020 Regular Board Meeting; Resolution 2021-01 Adopting a Temporary Personnel Policy Related to COVID-19 Benefits; Temporary Telecommuting Policy; and the Northern Suburban Special Recreation Association (NSSRA) Capital Renovation Contribution.

**Roll Call:**

**Aye:** Commissioner Bernstein, Commissioner Grossberg, Vice President Kaplan, President Ruttenberg

**Nay:** None

**Absent:** Commissioner Flores Weisskopf

**Abstain:** None

## **Motion Carried**

### **SUNSET WOODS PARK**

#### ***A. Schematic Design for Playground Renovation and Site Park Master Plan Update***

Manager Schwartz reported that a draft of the preliminary plans for the playground renovation and master plan was presented to the Park Board of Commissioners and the community in December of 2020. Following the public meeting, the community received a survey to gather feedback related to the proposed plans. The responses guided the refinements for the updated schematic designs for the playground renovation and the master plan.

#### ***Playground Renovations***

Mr. Konters of Hitchcock Design Group reported that a draft of the final concept plans will be shared after tonight's discussion with the community to gather final input until February 18. From there, Hitchcock Design Group and Park District staff will finalize the designs for the playground, begin the bidding process, and gather construction documents. Construction of the playground is scheduled to begin in the late summer or early fall.

Staff received 353 responses from the community survey related to the preliminary plans for the playground renovation and the master plan. Regarding the master plan, the most supported elements include renovations to the fieldhouse, a Park Avenue seating plaza with a memorial garden and an Oak Tree seating plaza, a splash pad, a bandshell structure with seating, an adult fitness area, a wheel friendly skate area, and seating plaza, along with improvements to the existing parking lot, pedestrian crossing, and entrances to the park. Additionally, the top five elements ranked as a priority include a splash pad, an adult fitness area, a bandshell with seating, and renovations to the field house, and the shelter with restrooms. As for the playground renovations, 41% of the respondents preferred the nature-inspired theme vs. the 34% who preferred the solar system-inspired theme. The top five elements ranked as a priority for the playground renovations include a tower structure with slides, climbers, and similar activities for the 5-12 age area, a multi-deck structure for the 2-5 age group, along with a sand play station, hillside embankment slides, and climbers. Overall, most respondents asked that the Park District maintain the natural and open character of the park, keep the current tennis courts and clay surfaces, and opposed an additional parking lot on the northside of the site. Mr. Konters reported that since the Park District currently has four unique playgrounds and since the community supports both themes Hitchcock Design Group recommends that the 5-12 age group have a solar system inspired theme with a rocket shop tower structure for their playground and the 2-5 age group have a nature-inspired theme for their playground.

Phase One of the playground renovation will improve pathways and connectivity between the playgrounds and parking lot. Additionally, there is a future phase being proposed for the master plan that will incorporate a seating area between the two playgrounds. This will anchor the two play areas and provide a gathering space for families. As for the proposed playground renovation, Mr. Konters shared conceptual images for the play equipment, reporting that the solar system inspired theme (5-12

age group) area includes a rocket ship tower, a large space net climber and spin structure, group swings, and belt swings, and climbers and slides along the embankment. For the nature-inspired theme (2-5 age group) the play area includes a sand play station, balancing rails, belt, and tandem swings, a multi-deck structure, and play domes.

As for the playground renovation budget, Mr. Konters provided a brief overview, reporting that site construction is estimated at \$450,000, which includes all the drainage, pavement, support elements, and removals. Testing and soil analysis is estimated at \$20,000. The purchasing of the play equipment is estimated at \$400,000, which covers custom and semi-custom features. There is \$150,000 set aside for project contingencies to cover any unknowns and \$130,000 to cover the final designs and engineering costs. Overall, the total estimated budget is \$1,150,000.

### ***Park Master Plan***

As for the park master plan, Mr. Konters briefly reviewed the changes to the plan since it was last presented to the Park Board of Commissioners on December 9 reporting that the additional north parking lot has been omitted, the seating plaza and splash pad has been relocated near the playgrounds, the adult fitness area has been relocated to the southwest corner next to the tennis and clay courts, a pump track for scooters and bikes is being constructed in the southeast corner along with renovations to the existing skate park, an amphitheater or bandshell will be constructed in the central area along with renovations to the existing field house and pathways, and a seating plaza will be constructed in the northeast corner along with pathway renovations providing access to the parking lot and surrounding neighborhoods. Additionally, Hitchcock Design Group will expand the width of the current parking lot to permit two-way traffic flow, additional parking spaces will be added along with a drop-off zone, and significant improvements will be made to the entrance and exit for vehicles and pedestrians. As for construction phases, Mr. Konters reported that based on community input and staff guidance the parking lot improvements, enhancements to the sports courts and construction of an adult fitness area, a plaza in between the playgrounds, and splash pad are high priorities. The fieldhouse and restroom renovations, construction of an amphitheater or bandshell, and improvements to the pathways are moderate priorities. The construction of a pump track and renovations to the existing skate park along with the north area path improvements and seating plaza are a low priority. Overall, the estimated total cost is \$4,848,821, however, this does not include interior renovations for the field house or the north restroom shelter.

President Ruttenberg asked Park District staff to provide commentary regarding the schematic design for the playground renovation and the master plan.

Manager Schwartz reported that tonight's presentation from Hitchcock Design Group was guided by community feedback and input from the staff task force. Some of the key changes included finding creative ways to address the parking challenges while preserving open space, so Hitchcock Design Group presented a solution that addresses access, safety, and traffic control while increasing the number of parking lanes and adding a drop-off zone without increasing the original footprint. Additionally,

Hitchcock Design Group proposed new amenities such as a splash pad and amphitheater along with existing building renovations to increase programming capacities while enhancing the experience. Overall, Sunset Woods Park is intended to be an intergenerational attraction and Hitchcock Design Group has offered elements for every generation from the playgrounds and splash pad, the sports courts and adult fitness area, the wheel friendly plaza, to the amphitheater and seating plazas, this park has something to attract everyone while preserving open spaces and the natural areas. Lastly, Hitchcock Design Group proposed significant improvements to pathways and access points to address the connectivity challenges for pedestrians.

Commissioner Bernstein reported that since the park is located in downtown Highland Park the community has a kinship to it, and what makes the park unique is it offers active recreation while preserving open spaces and natural areas, so he is concerned that the updated designs for the master plan might be too ambitious. He is concerned that the proposed changes for the southeast corner, with the introduction of a pump track and the renovations to the existing skate park, may detract from the overall ambiance of open space. As for the southwest corner, he is concerned that there is too much active recreation with the introduction of the adult fitness area as this tends to be a wet area. As for constructing a splash pad, he understands that this is a high priority however such a structure might not be practical as it is costly to maintain. However, he strongly supports the connectivity and access point renovations so that all the trails become one inter-connective park that offers active and passive recreation while preserving open space and natural areas.

Commissioner Grossberg requested that the third ball field remains in the southeast corner, if possible.

Executive Director Romes reported that from a utilization standpoint, the third ball field is currently underutilized, and will continue to be if the Park District installs turf fields. However, this is one of the final phases of the site master plan so the Park District can reevaluate this area.

Commissioner Grossberg was originally concerned that the southwest corner may have too much active recreation, however, he felt Manager Schwartz did a great job of addressing during the staff task force meetings, so he asked her to share those discussions.

Manager Schwartz reported that the community preferred the relocation of the basketball court to the southwest corner since the current location is hidden amongst the trees and tends to attract negative behavior, so the southwest corner made the most sense since there is ample lighting.

Commissioner Grossberg would like to know what the water retention area will look like after a severe storm.

Mr. Konters reported that the intent is a dry rain garden with plantings, so there should not be standing water. However, their area could be marshy for up to 48hours after a severe storm.

Commissioner Grossberg would like to the type of construction needed for the splash pad, specifically where the water will come from.

Mr. Konters reported that a splash pad requires water service, a storm drainage connection, and power. Storm drainage will be constructed within close proximity, and since the Park District had water service in the past staff will have to determine if the water for the splash pad could utilize those pipes.

Vice President Kaplan commended Mr. Konters and the Park District on the plan reporting that they have done a great job. However, he would like to know if the plan increases the number of play features and amenities within the park site.

Manager Schwartz reported that the community is strongly opposed to overbuilding the park, so the volume and square footage has not increased, instead, staff are re-purposing existing spaces but are recommending new amenities in some of those footprints such as the adult fitness area and the pump track.

Vice President Kaplan is opposed to the removal of the third ball field as he feels it is highly utilized by the community.

Manager Schwartz reported that the third ball field would not be removed until the Athletic Field Master Plan is implemented.

Assistant Director Maliszewski reported that the third ball field is underutilized for programming since it is a grass infield. If the Park District decides to keep the third ball field staff would recommend re-purposing it into a skinned field.

Vice President Kaplan supports relocating the basketball court to the southwest corner; however, he is concerned that the adults utilizing the fitness area, tennis, and clay courts may complain about the noise.

Manager Schwartz reported that staff and Hitchcock Design Group took that into consideration, so we are constructing a landscape buffer in between the courts.

Vice President Kaplan reported that the fields near the water retention area in the southwest corner are heavily utilized for pick-up soccer games, so he is concerned the community may be opposed to that area being re-purposed with a basketball court.

Manager Schwartz reported that staff are proposing that the basketball court be a multi-use court so that it could support futsal and different types of soccer activities.

Mr. Konters reported that as the Park District moves through the phasing of improvements throughout the park, it is highly likely that the District will need additional stormwater retention regardless to meet

the updated codes. When the park was originally built there were few areas reserved for stormwater retention.

Vice President Kaplan thanked Mr. Konters and Manager Schwartz for a well-done job and tonight's presentation.

Commissioner Flores Weisskopf joined the meeting at 6:52 p.m.

Commissioner Flores Weisskopf reported that one of the most crucial aspects of this plan is increasing parking and improving access to the park. It was suggested in the community survey to add 18 lanes to the current parking lot, however, after further examination of the site staff found there is a large tree in the area where Hitchcock Design Group would potentially expand the parking lot, so the staff task force recommends finding other creative alternatives to increase parking spots while preserving trees.

President Ruttenberg requested an overlay of tonight's updated plans with the preliminary plans presented in December so that the Park Board of Commissioners can get a better idea of how much the proposed amenities will impact open space. Additionally, he requested that the Park Board of Commissioners receive a copy of the community survey as he is undecided whether the pump track, splash pad, and adult fitness areas are worth the cost.

Commissioner Bernstein asked if additional rain guards or drains could be installed in the southwest corner along the path near the ballfields.

President Ruttenberg proposed an overflow parking area along Park Avenue for special events since the task force is opposed to expanding the current parking lot at the expense of tree loss. He also requested a copy of the master plan, so the Park Board of Commissioners could better understand how much open space is being impacted by the proposed changes.

Executive Director Romes reported there are a total of 26 parking spaces that would be added to the current parking lot.

President Ruttenberg would like to know which items require approval from the Park Board of Commissioners at this time.

Manager Schwartz reported that nothing requires approval this evening, instead staff was looking for recommendations and feedback from the Park Board of Commissioners for the schematic design of the playground renovation. The final design for the playground renovation will be presented to the Park Board of Commissioners at the February 23 Regular Board Meeting. If approved, the next step for the playground renovation project is to develop construction documents and release an invitation for bid, so that construction can begin this Summer. As for the schematic design discussions related to the master plan and the seating plaza between the playgrounds, this is a separate component of the project

which is not included in phase one of the approved and budgeted playground renovation. However, since connectivity between the playgrounds is a crucial component staff have requested cost opinions for that area to see if this portion of the master plan could be completed during the playground renovation.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to know how staff plan to fund the master plan.

Manager Schwartz reported that none of the elements related to the master plan are funded in the five-year capital plan, however, a design process will be determined for those elements when funding becomes available.

### **COVID-19 EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLANNING UPDATE**

Executive Director Romes reported that our region of the state entered Phase 4 of the Restore Illinois Plan as of last week, which permits gatherings of 50 people or less for indoor and outdoor programs and events. As a result, the Park District has resumed winter programming which was paused due to the mitigation measures.

#### ***Winter Programming***

At Centennial Ice Arena, ice hockey is able to host games, so the Park District's primary rental groups including the Falcons Hockey Association and the Highland Park Giants Hockey Association are updating their schedules. Additionally, gymnastics and figure skating programs have resumed. At Deer Creek Racquet Club, travel tennis teams and USTA tournaments can resume, and doubles play is permitted for youth and adult programming along with permanent team times. As for Heller Nature Center, outdoor programming and ski rentals are in high demand. Additionally, indoor rentals can resume. At West Ridge Center, ParkSchool is continuing to provide extraordinary enrichment services and other general recreation programs are resuming, including martial arts, dance, theater, and art classes. As for athletics, team play can resume so baseball practices are occurring at the Highland Park Fieldhouse and basketball teams are scrimmaging at the Recreation Center of Highland Park and West Ridge Center. At the Recreation Center of Highland Park, indoor floor usage is increasing, so staff has decided to extend the facility hours over the weekends. Group exercise classes have transitioned indoors. Staff are offering 18 classes per week, with a maximum of 25 participants per class. Even though the mitigation measures have been lifted, the Recreation Center of Highland Park is still requiring patrons to wear face coverings even while exercising. However, if the community is uncomfortable returning to the facility, staff created a virtual alternative, RC On the Go Fitness, offering almost 100 on-demand videos for \$5 per month. All proceeds support the Parks Foundation. Overall, the District has over 2,000 active participants in programs and 1,200 fitness memberships, which put the District at a 50% capacity when compared to pre-covid. He is pleased to report that this is on track with the 2021 budget.

***Summer Programming***

As for summer camp, Executive Director Romes reported that registration opened last week, and as of this evening there are a little over 300 enrollments. The early registration discount will be available until February 28, however some camps have already sold out, so staff are looking at ways to provide additional opportunities for residents to enjoy our summer camps.

***Spring Programming***

As for spring registration, Executive Director Romes reported that registration for spring tennis begins tomorrow for programs beginning in March and the spring brochure will be available next week which promotes programs beginning in April.

Lastly, Executive Director Romes reported that Sunset Valley Golf Club came off a record year in 2020 and they have recently been named one of the top ten clubhouses in all the Chicagoland area according to the Chicago Golf Report.

President Ruttenberg thanked staff and the commissioners who participated in the renovation for Sunset Valley Golf Club.

**REVIEW OF VOUCHERS**

Commissioner Bernstein and President Ruttenberg reviewed the vouchers and had no questions or issues related to the vouchers.

**ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made by Commissioner Bernstein and seconded by Vice President Kaplan and approved by a unanimous vote. The Board Meeting adjourned at 7:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brian Romes', written in a cursive style.

Brian Romes, Secretary