

**PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK  
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS  
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING  
MARCH 30, 2021**

The Regular 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 Regular Board Meeting.

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

**ROLL CALL**

**Present:** Commissioner Grossberg, Commissioner Flores, President Ruttenberg

**Absent:** Commissioner Bernstein, Vice President Kaplan

**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

Vice President Kaplan joined the meeting at 6:03 p.m.

Commissioner Bernstein joined the meeting at 6:43 p.m.

**ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA**

None

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

**CONSENT AGENDA**

A motion was made by Vice President Kaplan and seconded by Commissioner Grossberg to approve the Minutes from the February 9, 2021 Workshop Meeting, Minutes from the February 23, 2021 Regular Board Meeting; The Hidden Creek AquaPark Slide Resurfacing Bid; The 2021 American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO) Affiliate Group Agreement; The First Student Transportation Services Contract Extension for Summer Camp; The Renewal of the 2020 Routine Grounds Maintenance Services Bid; Renewal of the V3 Seed Installation Monitoring and Management Agreement for the Preserve of Highland Park; Purchasing Two Capital Replacement Vehicles; and Bills and Payroll in the amount of \$1,082,449.80

**Roll Call:**

**Aye:** Commissioner Grossberg, Commissioner Flores Weisskopf, Vice President Kaplan, President Ruttenberg  
**Nay:** None  
**Absent:** Commissioner Bernstein  
**Abstain:** None

**FINANCIAL FORECASTS AND TREASURERS REPORT**

***Projected Cash Flow/Operations (Operations General and Recreation Fund)***

Director Peters presented the District's chart of 2021 operations which examines the General and Recreation Funds comparing the budgeted vs. projected cash on hand at the end of each month. There was a significant change in the Park District's cash flow from the previous month due to an unexpected property tax extension payment which was \$76,000 higher than anticipated. As a result, staff increased the budgeted cash flow figures by \$37,000 for July and November, which increased the Park District's budgeted cash on hand as of December 31, 2021, to \$12.6 million from \$12.2 million.

***Operations (General and Recreation Funds) Budget vs. Actual***

As of February 28, 2021, staff budgeted \$1.11 million in operating revenue. Due to the increased mitigation measures which were in effect until Mid-January the actual revenue was slightly less at \$1.01 million. Likewise, the actual expenses were less than budgeted by \$43,000, resulting in a year-to-date net surplus of \$322,869.52 compared to the budget. When comparing the District's current financial status to a three-year average pre-covid (2017 – 2019), the year-to-date monthly net difference is a \$554,411 shortfall.

***General Fund***

The actual revenue is slightly higher than budgeted, whereas, actual expenses are significantly less than budgeted, resulting in a year-to-date net surplus of \$144,746.40.

***Recreation Fund***

The actual revenue is \$100,000 less than budgeted which is due to programs being canceled or significantly reduced because of the COVID-19 Mitigation Measures which were in effect until mid-January. However, this led to reduced expenses which resulted in an overall year-to-date surplus of \$188,123.12.

***Special Recreation Fund***

Director Peters reported that this fund is trending as expected.

***Debt Service Fund***

Director Peters reported that this fund is trending as expected.

***Capital Fund***

The Park District budgeted \$5.7 million in expenditures. As of February 28, 2021, the District has spent \$13,000, however greater expenses will incur in March from the Sunset Woods Playgrounds Renovation.

***Cumulative Monthly Payroll Actual vs. Budget***

Director Peters reported that as of February 28, 2021, the Park District budgeted a little over \$1 million in expenditures. Due to the mitigation measures which reduced programming and services, the Park District has spent \$982,458.29 which is year-to-date difference of \$92,862.91 less than budgeted.

***Non-Cumulative Monthly Payroll Actual vs. Budget***

For the month of February, the Park District's actual expenses are \$24,619.92 less than budgeted.

***Conclusion***

Director Peters reported that several programs and services were canceled until mid-January due to COVID-19 mitigation measures. Fortunately, that allowed the Park District to significantly reduce expenses, which lead to a \$322,869 surplus in revenue. Additionally, the number of people being vaccinated is increasing, while positivity rates and hospitalizations are decreasing so the Park District has seen a significant increase in Spring and Summer registrations. Furthermore, the Park District is continuing to receive unbudgeted financial support, which includes a \$72,000 insurance rebate check from Park District Risk Management Agency (PDRMA), and \$18,000 check from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA), and with the passing of the American Rescue Plan, the federal government will provide relief for 75% of the Park District's unemployment costs and COVID related expenses, along with relief from Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funds.

Commissioner Grossberg asked Director Peters to explain the PDRMA rebate.

Director Peters reported that employees were postponing unnecessary medical visits due to the pandemic, so PDRMA issued rebates for those medical, vision, and dental expenses. This was unexpected and an unbudgeted rebate.

Commissioner Flores-Weisskopf asked Director Peters to further explain the additional relief opportunities.

Director Peters reported as for the American Rescue Plan, relief funds will be awarded to Lake County, and the county will determine how much if any funds are awarded to the Park District. Additionally, the federal government is providing relief for 75% of the Park District's unemployment costs, which staff was not anticipating, and the budget does not reflect such savings. Lastly, staff has been tracking COVID-related

costs to file with FEMA for reimbursement, which is another savings that the Park District did not budget for.

Vice President Kaplan congratulated Executive Director Romes and Director Peters as the financial forecasts are improving each month.

President Ruttenberg thanked staff for the efforts taken to make the District financially stronger during such unprecedented times.

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

#### **A. Beach Management Plan**

Manager Schwartz reminded the Park Board of Commissioners that the Park District applied for the Illinois Coastal Management Program Grant to confirm existing strategies while building a new management plan to combat the challenges posed by climate change along lakefront properties. The beach management plan will provide guidance for responses to significant storm events, identify beaches, bluffs, and ecological habitats in need of routine maintenance, provide long-term solutions to preserve beaches and access sites, and provide a detailed review of expected permitting for those recommendations. However, the plan does not provide recommendations for lakefront amenities and activities.

Manager Grill reported that overall, this plan is an assessment for adaptation planning, which will provide guidance to combat challenges posed by the ever-changing climate and identify assets, stressors, and vulnerabilities so that the Park District can develop strategies and determine priorities before implementing solutions. One of those stressors and vulnerabilities outlined in the beach management plan are the Park District's clay lake bluffs. As SmithGroup mentioned at the March 9 Workshop Meeting, some of the Park District's bluffs are experiencing subsidence due to the high lake levels and erosion from significant storm events. While subsidences are natural and always occurring along clay bluffs the severity can range from slumps, superficial sliding, to bluff failure so SmithGroup recommended a monitoring schedule along all lakefront properties and a geotechnical review of the bluffs at Millard Park to identify areas of bluff instability due to the significant subsidence of the bluff face.

As for prioritizing actions, Park District staff developed an impact grid and implementation strategy to prioritize objectives and implement solutions. Currently, staff are grooming and regrading the beach at the beginning and end of each season to aerate the sand and remove debris. Additional grooming will occur throughout the open season to promote beach health. Staff will inspect the groins and monitor the bluffs after storms and erect fencing and post signage prohibiting users from accessing areas deemed unsafe. As for the next steps, staff are also gathering quotes so that an engineer could conduct a geotechnical review of failed bluffs so that a long-term bluff mitigation strategy plan can be developed.

As for items that can be implemented as time and money allow, this includes relocating park furnishes along the top of bluffs, additional plantings, placing coarser sand within the sanitary sewer channel to reduce the risk of pipe exposure, and exploring access control to parking lots and the installation of bike parking.

Vice President Kaplan would like to know how the beach management plan and staff's implementation strategy for those recommendations will tie into the plans being developed by the Lakota Group for Park Avenue Beach.

Manager Schwartz reported that the Lakota Group is developing plans to improve amenities and activities, whereas the beach management plan focuses on recommendations for maintenance and preservation of the site, so while both plans are addressing the same site, they have separate focuses.

Executive Director Romes reported that staff shared the beach management plan with the Lakota Group, even though they are addressing amenities.

Manager Schwartz reported that the Lakota Group will build on efforts which the District has already completed, so they will use the beach management plan to further develop a larger site plan for amenities and activities.

Vice President Kaplan would like to know the timeframe to implement strategies recommended in the beach management plan.

Manager Schwartz reported that implementation is ongoing, however, some solutions are currently in the 2022 budget, capital, and annual work plan.

Commissioner Grossberg would like to know if the health of the bluff relies on subsidences.

Manager Grill reported that the entire ecosystem is dependent on some subsidences. Overall, staff has been focused on Rosewood Beach since this site has assets, unlike Millard Park. As staff monitors the bluffs the focus is safety and are resources at risk. Staff have been and will continue to monitor and evaluate each subsidence to see if mitigation is needed.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **A. Parks Foundation Update**

Commissioner Grossberg reported that the Parks Foundation is thriving, which is thanks to the volunteers. A new initiative developed by the President of the Foundation is a student board called Kids Helping Kids and twelve students from the local high school are on the student board. The student board has been given a goal to raise \$3,000 this spring to help fund camp tuition for families in need. Additionally, the Parks Foundation is offering internship opportunities for college students.

**B. Deer Creek Racquet Club Update**

Manager Zullo reported that tennis significantly increased during the pandemic, so staff are focused on understanding their current customer's behaviors to retain their client base. As of today, junior, and adult programs are exceeding budget, there were 3,186.75 hours of private lessons taught in 2020 vs. 2,248.25 hours in 2019, and weekly tennis camps were highly sought after with 368 participants in 2020 vs. 135 in 2019. As for this summer, there are 145 participants currently registered, which staff anticipates those numbers to increase. Unfortunately, permanent court reservations have continued to decline, so staff began utilizing those courts for programs and private lessons to make up for lost revenue. Last year there were 35 groups with permanent court times vs. 59 groups in 2019.

As for pickleball, Manager Zullo is pleased to report that staff are offering drop-in drills, a new league, private lessons, and court rentals. Additionally, a national pickleball tournament will be hosted this summer at Deer Creek Racquet Club.

As for the facility, there have been several upgrades over the last few years, including the installation of a new roof, court-level HVAC replacement, and the ceiling being repainted. Lastly, a court resurfacing will occur before the start of the indoor season.

Commissioner Flores Weisskopf congratulated staff for enforcing the restrictions so that the highly sought-after programs at Deer Creek Racquet Club could be enjoyed during the pandemic.

Vice President Kaplan commended staff at Deer Creek Racquet Club, stating it is always a pleasure to visit the facility as it provides a “wow” factor.

President Ruttenberg would like to know if any junior tournaments are scheduled for this year.

Manager Zullo reported that she is meeting with USTA tomorrow to discuss scheduling a tournament in April or May.

President Ruttenberg would like to know many people the National Pickleball Tournament will attract.

Manager Zullo reported that the tournament is expected to attract a total of 500 people, 125 per day.

President Ruttenberg requested that staff promotes Deer Creek Racquet Club as a tournament venue, heavily promote the upcoming tournament, and remind the community of the upcoming solar panel installation at the facility.

Commissioner Bernstein commended patrons for adhering to the rules as he understands it is difficult to wear a mask and play tennis.

**C. Director's Report**

Executive Director Rome reported that the governor released new details on March 18 for the Phase 4 guidelines along with updated metrics for future phases including a Bridge Phase once 70% of those age 65 and older have received at least one vaccination. As of today, the state is at 69.4%. Additionally, the state will enter Phase 5 once 50% of those 16 years or older receive at least one vaccination. Currently, the state is at 36%. Once the state enters Phase 5 of the Restore Illinois Plan there are no longer capacity limits, but staff assumes there may be other guidelines still required. Today, the state remains in Phase 4, however, the Park District's spring, summer, and fall registrations are significantly increasing. The spring has 2,888 registrations, which is 50% higher than 2019 pre-covid, which accounts for 1,000 additional registrations. This is thanks to a 129% increase in baseball registrations, which is 250 additional participants, 53% increase in ice skating registration, which accounts for 153 additional participants, 24% increase in tennis registration, which accounts for 141 additional participants, and a 556% increase in nature programming registration, which accounts for 523 additional participants. Summer camp is still under strict capacity limitations, so many camps are full and wait-listed. Currently, there are 633 children registered, with an additional 100 children on the waitlist, so staff will be working over the next few weeks to try and accommodate those on the waitlist by offering additional opportunities or alternative options such as sports and tennis camps. As for the fall, ParkSchool registration has 285 registrations vs. 235 in 2019 pre-covid. then 2019, pre-covid.

As for 4th of July activities hosted by the City of Highland Park, those will be rescheduled to Labor Day weekend. The City will provide official details in the upcoming future. With this being said, the District's traditional 4th Fest will not take place, instead, staff are developing a variety of safe smaller-scale events to provide to the community over the holiday, some that are currently confirmed include the Annual Summer Firecracker Baseball Tournament, Virtual 5k Race, and Virtual Fireworks at Hidden Creek AquaPark.

Vice President Kaplan would like to know if the current capacity for camps is based on COVID restrictions.

Executive Director Rome reported that the capacities are based on the COVID restrictions, so staff is offering additional weekly options for camps with the largest waitlists.

Commissioner Flores Weisskopf would like to know if the District will be offering before and after camp.

Assistant Director Maliszewski reported that the District will be hosting after camp at each location, so long as minimums are met. Before will not be offered.

#### **D. Board Comments**

None.

**CLOSED SESSION**

A motion was made by Vice President Kaplan, seconded by Commissioner Grossberg to adjourn into Closed Session for discussion of Section 2(c) 21 – the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline of the District including legal counsel for the District; - for discussions between internal or external auditors and the Board.

**Roll Call:**

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

**Nay:** None

**Absent:** None

**Abstain:** None

**Motion Carried**

The meeting adjourned into Closed Session at 7:12 p.m.

The meeting reconvened into Open Session at 7:47 p.m.

**ACTION FROM CLOSED SESSION IF ANY**

No action was taken during closed session.

**ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made by Commissioner Grossberg and seconded by Vice President Kaplan and approved by a unanimous vote. The Board Meeting adjourned at 7:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Brian Romes, Secretary