

**PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES OF WORKSHOP MEETING
MARCH 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 6:01 p.m. by President Ruttenberg.

ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioner Bernstein, Commissioner Grossberg, Commissioner Flores Weisskopf , Vice President Kaplan, President Ruttenberg

Absent: None

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

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

A motion was made by Commissioner Grossberg and seconded by Vice President Kaplan to add the Ravinia Fire Station and Brown Park to the agenda.

Roll Call:

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

Nay: None

Absent: None

Abstain: None

Executive Director Romes reported that the City of Highland Park recently approved design and engineering documents for the renovation of the Ravinia Fire Station and has requested to lease Brown Park during construction to provide a temporary space for emergency responders and their vehicles beginning November of this year through late Spring of 2023. The City will place the temporary structures, provide utilities, insurance, and maintenance during the lease agreement. Afterward, the City will restore Brown Park to its original state. He shared an aerial image of Brown Park, the adjacent Fire Station, the temporary living quarters, and the vehicle bay. Executive Director Romes reported that staff are seeking consensus from the Park Board of Commissioners for the use of Brown Park during the Ravinia Fire Station

Renovation. If the Park Board of Commissioners provides consensus, staff seek approval of the lease agreement at an upcoming public meeting.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to know why the City of Highland Park proposed a lease agreement vs. a license agreement and requested that the Park District's legal counsel review the lease agreement before seeking approval from the Park Board of Commissioners.

Commissioner Grossberg, Commissioner Flores-Weisskopf, and Vice President Kaplan support the use of Brown Park during the Ravinia Fire Station Restoration.

President Ruttenberg requested that some of the utilities remain at the site even after the lease expires, such as power, that the lease agreement includes extension rights, and that the City of Highland Park covers the Park District's fees from legal counsel to review the lease agreement.

Commissioner Flores Weisskopf and Vice President Kaplan requested that the City of Highland Park split the costs of the legal fees with the Park District.

Commissioner Bernstein requested that a City Engineer from Public Works review and sign off on the lease agreement.

The Park Board of Commissioners support the use of Brown Park during the Ravinia Fire Station Renovation and asked staff to present the lease agreement at an upcoming public meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS ON THE AGENDA – None

CONSENT AGENDA

A motion was made by Commissioner Bernstein and seconded by Vice President Kaplan to approve the 2021 Rosewood Park Drainage-Grading Improvements Project and the Sunset Valley Golf Club Bridge Replacement and Removal Project.

Roll Call:

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

Nay: None

Absent: None

Abstain: None

BEACH MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Manager Schwartz reported that the Beach Management Plan was based on a grant awarded from the Illinois Coastal Management program to develop a plan to identify practical management strategies for lakefront properties so that they are more resilient to climate change. As a result, SmithGroup has developed custom strategies tailored to each site. After tonight's presentation, a video will be posted on the Park District website so that the community will have the opportunity to provide feedback. Additionally, the grant intends to develop a plan that guides responses to event-related maintenance and strategies to guide stewardship for those lakefront properties. She reminded the Park Board of Commissioners that this plan does not cover amenities nor activities, it is primarily a maintenance and operations document.

Executive Director Romes reported that the plan addresses bluffs and natural aspects to improve the environmental health of the lakefront properties.

Purpose

Mr. Blue of SmithGroup reported that the purpose of the Beach Management Plan is to preserve and protect long term access and use of the Park District's beaches, establish guidance for responses to significant storm events, identify routine management strategies for sand, shorelines, beaches, and ecological habitats at the beaches, and outline expected agency approvals and permitting for beach management.

Identified Issues

He identified that the shoreline along all four lakefront properties has diminished and the toe of the bluffs at Moraine Park, Millard Park, and Park Avenue Beach has eroded which will cause the bluff face to subside and eventually collapse.

A. Moraine Park

The trail leading to the beach washed out so the damages will need to be repaired before the beach can re-open and available for dogs and passive recreation. Additionally, the shoreline has diminished and narrowed which led to waves eroding the toe of the bluff. If the bluff were to fail and collapse, there are no structures located atop of the ravine that would be at risk.

B. Park Avenue Boating Facility

The north and south beaches are used for passive recreation and the launching of watercrafts. As for the current conditions, the north beach shoreline is much wider since the projection from the water treatment plant is helping to prevent sand loss, however, this beach is experiencing ravine outfall after significant storm events. Whereas the south beach relies on protection from the barge. If the barge were removed, the south beach would disappear and the bluffs near the south parking lot will continue to erode from significant storm impacts and an abundance of vegetation along the bluff face.

C. Millard Park

The north and south beaches are used for passive recreation; however, the north beach has disappeared leaving the toe of the bluff exposed and susceptible to wave impacts. As a result, a portion of the bluff along the north beach failed and scoured last summer. Mr. Blue reported that the failure was likely a result of subsurface lateral runoff from the top of the bluff and erosion and undermining of the toe.

D. Rosewood Beach

Mr. Blue reminded the Park Board of Commissioners that Rosewood Beach was renovated in 2014 and 2015, which included the placing of stone revetments 200ft into the lake, which has protected the shorelines from significant sand loss and bluff erosion. Erosion at the site is a result of the ravine outfall near the Interpretive Cove which caused undermining of the boardwalk. Most erosion is in the inlet cove. He reported that this is a direct result of the high lake water levels, significant storm events, and climate change.

He reported that climate change and human development have forever changed the beaches along Lake Michigan, causing all the Park District's beaches to require some engineered solutions to maintain the existing conditions. All of the beaches are dependent upon groins or stone revetment structures placed into the lake water to maintain the shorelines and prevent sand loss. As the lake levels recede the submerged shorelines will emerge and some of the sand loss will decrease. However, the bluffs that have been impacted cannot be healed in the same fashion as shorelines and beaches, so it is recommended that the Park District work with SmithGroup to identify protection strategies to salvage the bluffs, especially the ones where structures are located atop the bluffs.

Recommendations

A. Moraine Park

This beach is expected to stay in a natural condition, so SmithGroup does not have significant recommendations relative to how the beach should be maintained or protected. When the trail is repaired and access to the beach reopens, SmithGroup recommends the Park District create a schedule to regularly monitor the bluffs and visit the site after significant storm events. If in the future there is evidence of significant erosion at the toe of the bluff, SmithGroup recommends closing the beach and preventing access to the site until the bluff has been surveyed.

B. Park Avenue Boating Facility

The first step is to repair some of the existing buried revetment that was impacted by significant waves and deep run-up which pulled some of the revetment away from the north beach parking lot. There is also an opportunity for planting and establishing desirable native habitats as the lake water levels continue to recede. Overall, SmithGroup recommends that the Park District periodically reviews and evaluates the water quality near the large ravine outfall structure which is located north of the water plant. Additionally, SmithGroup recommends that the Park District repairs or replace

the barge in order to maintain the south beach and repair the south parking lot which has been significantly impacted by wave scour.

C. Millard Park

This site has the largest subsidence of the bluff face, so SmithGroup recommends the Park District receives a geotechnical review of the bluff which will identify areas of bluff instability. SmithGroup also recommends the Park District relocate structures and park furnishings away from the head of the bluff, so if there is additional subsidence that those structures will not be threatened or pose a safety risk. If structures and park furnishings cannot be relocated, SmithGroup recommends fencing off areas to prohibit access and use should these areas become dangerous. Additionally, since the beach is dependent upon the groins to survive, SmithGroup recommends that the Park District conduct annual inspections of the current groins. Lastly, SmithGroup recommends placing coarse sand over the sanitary sewer line which runs through the groins for protection.

D. Rosewood Beach

SmithGroup recommends that the Park District restore undermined areas along the boardwalk and provide armored protection to prevent undermining from occurring in the future along with developing a beach renourishment program and implementing ecological improvements to restore habitats.

Mr. Blue reported that regulatory permitting is expected for the recommended improvements in the lake, adjacent to, or within creeks, streams, and shoreline. The US Army Corps of Engineers will require permitting for changes or improvements made to existing or new structures. Likewise, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) will require permitting for changes or improvements made to existing or new structures, as well as sand nourishments. He reported there are a couple types of funding sources that could be leveraged to exercise and complete some of the recommendations, including state and federal grants, private funding sources, the District could explore user fees, or develop partnerships with other units of government.

Next Steps

First, SmithGroup recommends that the Park District begins to implement this Beach Management Plan by establishing a bluff monitoring program that will routinely examine the bluff face and toe at Moraine Park, Park Avenue Boating Facility, and Millard Park. Additionally, the bluff should be inspected after significant storm events, and a geotechnical analysis of the bluffs at Millard Park be conducted. SmithGroup recommends that the Park District works with the City Forestry Department to establish a bluff vegetation management plan to manage the vegetation along the bluff faces.

Second, SmithGroup recommends that the Park District identifies protection strategies for existing infrastructures at Park Avenue Boating Facility and Rosewood Beach to prevent further erosion and undermining along with developing a plan for water quality monitoring at the beaches.

Lastly, SmithGroup recommends the Park District conducts annual groin repair or replacement studies at Moraine Park, Park Avenue Boating Facility, and Millard Park along with establishing a budget and plan for beach nourishments at Rosewood Beach.

Commissioner Bernstein is confident that staff can take recommendations from SmithGroup to develop plans and address the issues along all four lakefront properties, however, he would like to know if the neighbors atop the bluff at Millard Park are at risk from the bluff subsidence.

Ms. Boshek reported that the bluffs at Millard Park are going to fail to stabilize since the toe of the bluff along the north beach has fully eroded. As a result, SmithGroup recommends the Park District conduct a geotechnical analysis of the bluffs since neither she nor Mr. Blue can estimate how severe the failure will be. She reported if the failure is severe along the north end, it could extend and impact the private residents. A geo-technical analysis will determine how severe the failure will be which will allow the Park District to develop a repair plan.

Commissioner Bernstein requested that the Park District conduct a geotechnical analysis as recommended by SmithGroup so the Park District can determine liability. Additionally, he requested that staff contact PDRMA, and the Park District's legal counsel based on the results from the geotechnical analysis.

President Ruttenberg requested that staff contact the neighbors who could potentially be impacted by a severe bluff failure.

Commissioner Bernstein agreed with President Ruttenberg suggesting it is a team effort to examine the bluff, and potentially repair based on the results from the geotechnical analysis.

Ms. Boshek reported that bluffs can remain unstable for several years.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to know how much the geotechnical analysis will cost and if the Park District has funds available.

Ms. Boshek reported the analysis could cost up to \$25,000.

Executive Director Romes reported that the Park District did not budget for such assessments and repairs.

Commissioner Bernstein and President Ruttenberg requested staff to follow up with the Water Reclamation regarding the additional sand being placed along the sanitary lines.

Commissioner Bernstein requested that staff schedule a follow-up meeting to discuss how the Park District plans to implement the recommendations from SmithGroup.

Commissioner Grossberg asked Ms. Boshek and Mr. Blue to rate the bluffs along Moraine and Millard Parks relative to stability.

Ms. Boshek reported that the Park District of Highland Park like many other lakefront communities has experienced bluff erosion and undermining, however, this is a natural process of the ecosystem as it helps to provide sand along the beaches. Regarding Moraine Park, since there are no structures or furnishings atop the bluff subsidence will not pose any risk, so SmithGroup recommends that staff develop a schedule to regularly evaluate the area. Whereas Millard Park is a priority since the bluff is going to fail and depending on the severity it could impact private residents along the north end and Park District structures. A geo-technical analysis will determine how severe the failure will be which will allow the Park District to develop a repair plan around public safety and continual programming use.

Commissioner Grossberg thanked Ms. Boshek and Mr. Blue nothing that tonight's presentation is one of the most valued discussions regarding lakefront properties.

Vice President Kaplan reported that he supports implementing the recommendations provided by SmithGroup, regardless of costs.

President Ruttenberg thanked Ms. Boshek and Mr. Blue for highlighting the District's lakefront issues, and for providing recommendations to address those issues.

PARK AVENUE BOATING FACILITY ACCESS GATE

Director Smith reported that in an effort to control access at the Park Avenue Boating Facility boat launch area, and to reduce the need for an on-site attendant, installation of an access gate is planned for May 2021. This gate will limit vehicular access to the boat launch area to season pass holders while allowing access to the north parking lot for all vehicles. This system will also allow boat launch access with a daily pass, in addition to accommodating City, Park District, and other emergency vehicles through an access control system. The gate is anticipated to be installed and operational before Memorial Day and staff have been working with the City of Highland Park on logistics, as well as the development of a license agreement since it will be installed on City property.

Director Smith shared images of the proposed gate style and location, which is on Park Avenue Road near the north parking lot entrance and intersection of Egandale Road. A card reader, security camera, and signage will be installed along Park Avenue Road before entering adjacent to the north parking lot to minimize vehicle back up, and it provides the opportunity for a vehicle to enter the north parking lot or exist the site up the Egandale Road Staff conducted extensive research for the proposed location of the gate along with a turning analysis to determine how much space is needed for large vehicles and trailers to pass through the gate, however, if the Park Board of Commissioners does not support the proposed location, and alternative location is available and shared an image of the alternate location. Regardless of the location, the gate will be installed and operating before Memorial Day weekend.

As for operations, Director Smith reported that the schedule mimics the boat launch season, May 1 through October 15. The Park District will provide City Officials, Fire, EMS, Police, and water plant employees with access fobs, to not disrupt any operations, however, if any issues arise the system permits remote and

manual overrides, so Park District staff will be able to open the gate at any time. Currently, the Park District is selling annual passes, however, daily passes will be available at the Recreation Center of Highland Park. After the first year, staff has the option to install a pay station, like the one at Rosewood Beach. Overall, the installation of the access gate will not impact usage of the north parking lot or pedestrian access to the south beach.

As for financial impacts, Director Smith reported that staff received a proposal of \$24,999 for the gate system, plus a \$30,000 estimate for power and low voltage required to operate the system, another \$6,850 for the access control system, and \$1,000 to install a security camera. The total project is estimated at \$62,849, and the Park District budgeted \$75,000. When presented to the Finance Committee, staff received consensus from the liaisons to move forward with the project, so staff are seeking consensus from the rest of the Park Board of Commissioners.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to know if staff will still be on-site after the gate is installed and if the gate will prevent bikes from accessing the south beach. staff still need to present.

Director Smith reported that staff will still be on-site, however, the number of staff will be reduced, since staff will no longer need to check passes. As for bikes, they can utilize the sidewalk, however, staff are exploring other options.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to know if fisherman will be required to purchase a pass to utilize the south parking lot.

Director Smith reported that anyone wishing to utilize the south parking lot will need to purchase an annual or daily pass.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to know if yacht club rentals will need to purchase a daily pass.

Director Carr reported that yacht club rentals will be given daily passes which they can utilize during the duration of their rental.

Commissioner Grossberg reported there have been several questions posed over social media, so he would like to know why a gate is needed and if the Park District worked jointly with the boating community for the purchase of the proposed gate.

Director Smith reported that the boating community proposed an access gate, and the Park District supported this recommendation as it will help reduce staffing costs.

Executive Director Romes reported that the purchasing of the proposed gate was a collaborative effort with members of the North Shore Yacht Club and City Officials.

Commissioner Grossberg would like to know what roles the City of Highland Park has related to the access gate.

Executive Director Romes reported that the City does not have a role, as they no longer provide a police officer to monitor the site, however, the Park District worked collaboratively with City Officials regarding the proposed access gate as it impacts some of their employees.

Commissioner Grossberg would like to know what role the water treatment plant has related to the access gate.

Director Smith reported that the water treatment plant has no role.

Commissioner Grossberg would like to know if the access gate will change the general nature of the site and impact people using the site.

Director Carr reported that access to the north beach and passive recreation does not change. Before 2020, patrons were required to show proof of their pass to utilize the south parking lot Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. After the challenges faced last summer, Park District staff and members of the north shore yacht club who are on the Park Avenue Working Group Committee, feel there is a need for access control. Park District staff and the Park Avenue Working Group can evaluate weekday usage and implement changes.

Vice President Kaplan would like to know if the access gate prohibits pedestrian access to access the south beach.

Director Smith reported the access gate does not prohibit pedestrian access to the south beach.

Vice President Kaplan would like to know if staff received feedback from other communities using this system or something similar.

Director Carr reported that Waukegan, Evanston, Winthrop harbors have similar systems, however, he has yet to receive feedback. However, Wilmette provided feedback, and they recommended installing a security camera as the gate has been hit by vehicles passing through.

The Park Board of Commissioners provided consensus permitting staff to proceed with the Park Avenue Boating Facility Access Gate Project in the estimated amount of \$61,849.

APPROVAL OF THE PARK AVENUE GATE NON-EXCLUSIVE SPECIAL LICENSE AGREEMENT WITH THE CITY OF HIGHLAND PARK

Director Smith reported that staff has been working closely with the City of Highland Park to address access control at the Park Avenue Boating Facility boat launch area, and to reduce the need for an on-site attendant, installation of an access gate is planned for installation in May 2021, so both parties developed a license

agreement since the gate will be installed on City property. The license agreement has been reviewed by the Park District's legal counsel as well as PDRMA, so staff are recommending approval from the Park Board of Commissioners for the Executive Director to enter into the Park Avenue Gate Non-Exclusive Special License Agreement with The City of Highland Park.

A motion was made by Vice President Kaplan and seconded by Commissioner Grossberg to allow the Executive Director to enter into the Park Avenue Gate Non-Exclusive Special License Agreement with The City of Highland Park.

Roll Call:

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

Nay: None

Absent: None

Abstain: None

REVIEW OF VOUCHERS

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

CLOSED SESSION

A motion was made by Vice President Kaplan, seconded by Commissioner Bernstein to adjourn into Closed Session for discussion of Section 2(c)5 – the purchase or lease of real estate including discussion on whether a certain parcel of property should be acquired; Section 2(c)6 – the setting of a price for sale or lease of property owned by 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 7:47 p.m.

The meeting reconvened into Open Session at 8:18: p.m.

ACTION FROM CLOSED SESSION IF ANY

No action was taken during closed session.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Commissioner Bernstein and seconded by Commissioner Grossberg and approved by a unanimous vote. The Board Meeting adjourned at 8:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian Romes". The signature is stylized with a large initial "B" and a long, sweeping underline.

Brian Romes, Secretary