

**PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES OF WORKSHOP MEETING
MAY 11, 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 6:19 p.m. by President Ruttenberg.

ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioner Bernstein, Commissioner Freeman, Commissioner Kaplan, Vice President Grossberg, 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 Grill, Manager Reyes, Manager Sassorossi, Coordinator Hejnowski

Guest Speakers: Rafael Labrador, Parks Foundation President, Bob Bernstein, Parks Foundation Board Member

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA - None.

PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS ON THE AGENDA - None.

REVIEW OF VOUCHERS

Director Peters reported that the vouchers from March 26 through April 8 totaled a little over \$450,000.

President Ruttenberg reported that he reviewed the vouchers and did not find anything extraordinary that would need to be discussed.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE BOARD – None

APPROVAL OF THE 2021 PARK AVENUE DREDGING PROJECT RE-BID

Director Smith reported that Park Avenue is typically dredged, removing sand that has settled in the channel and adjacent boat launch area, on annual basis to permit powerboats to utilize the concrete boat launch. Every year staff visits the sits and conducts measures to determine if dredging is needed, and while 2020 was an exception due to the high lake water levels, staff determined that the area would need to be dredged

this year and held a bid opening in early May. The Park District received four bids, all of which came in over the \$30,000 budget. As a result, staff reduced the project scope and re-bid the project. Staff received one bid for the altered project from Kovilic Construction Company.

Director Smith provided a summary of the bid components reporting that the base bid for mobilization/demobilization is \$10,000 and the base bid to remove no more than 1,000 cubic yards of sand is \$25,000, for a total of \$35,000. While staff does not know how many cubic yards will be removed, staff are confident that the 1,000 maxima will not be met, so the project should stay within budget.

President Ruttenberg would like to know the water depth that needs to be reached so that powerboats may utilize the concrete boat ramp.

Director Smith reported that the water depth needs to be a minimum of 6ft, and in some areas, the water depths are 3ft or less, so the site must be dredged before powerboats can utilize the boat launch.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bernstein and seconded by Commissioner Kaplan to approve base bid items 1 & 2 from Kovilic Construction Co. Inc. for the Park Avenue Dredging Project and authorize the Executive Director to enter into an agreement in the amount not to exceed \$35,000.

Roll Call:

Aye: Commissioner Bernstein, Commissioner Kaplan, Commissioner Freeman, Vice President Grossberg, and President Ruttenberg

Nay: None

Absent: None

Motion carried.

THE PRESERVE OF HIGHLAND PARK PROJECT UPDATE

Manager Grill shared images of new developments and reported that the Preserve is currently under construction with substantial completion projected for December 2021. Designated Preserve trails are open to the public during construction. Grading and initial planting around the North Pond shoreline are complete. Work has begun on the Connector Trail that will link The Preserve property on both sides of the Skokie River. Overlooks for the North Pond and Gateway Path (on the west side of the river) have been manufactured off-site. All removals of redundant pathways have been completed and those areas restored with native plantings or turf. New internal connecting paths to create better access and more loop options for visitors have been built. Work has begun on amenities including the Sand Play Area and View Seating Area. Unique Park Signage is being developed in conjunction with the District's Communications Department and the community is kept updated on progress through social media and the district's website. Manager Grill reported that his project began in October of 2020, and since then the first and second phases have been completed. Phase One included shoreline grading, the gateway overlook, and trail

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preparations. Phase Two included ongoing trail work and further development of the gateway and site amenities. As of this month, the Park District entered Phase Three of the project which includes plantings, final trail work, and completion of amenities. Staff anticipates that final details and restoration will be completed in December of 2021, so staff are planning to host a sneak preview this October for stakeholders, Park Board Members, and City Officials. Furthermore, staff would like to host a community celebration in May of 2022 as an official opening of the completed site.

As for financials, Manager Grill reported that On September 22, 2020, the Park District of Highland Park Board of Commissioners awarded a construction contract in the amount of \$1,204,290 to Team REIL Inc. of Union IL for Construction of The Preserve of Highland Park. This work is supported by grants from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources OSLAD (\$400,000) and Illinois EPA Section 319 Grant funding, through the Lake County Stormwater Management Commission (\$144,672) for shoreline restoration and vegetative swales. The total Project Budget including grants is \$1,695,209. Year-to-date expenses are \$411,371 and the anticipated Project Cost is \$1,606,006.

President Ruttenberg would like to know if contingency costs are included in the anticipated project cost.

Manager Grill reported that the anticipated project costs include \$80,000 in contingency costs.

Vice President Grossberg would like to know how many trails are currently available for the public to use during construction.

Manager Grill reported that the east bike trails are open, a pathway to the legacy club along Route 22, and a trail in the southwest corner.

Vice President Grossberg would like to know if the existing golf paths will be removed.

Manager Grill reported that the existing golf paths were converted into walking trails along the short grass prairie.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to know if an analysis has been conducted so that emergency vehicles and first responders will have access throughout the site after construction is complete.

Manager Grill reported that there are two trails providing access for first responders and emergency vehicles.

Executive Director Romes reported that the City of Highland Park permitted the design. Additionally, the Park District's Emergency Action Plan was shared with the City and staff held a separate meeting with the Fire Chief. However, staff will follow up with the Fire Chief and City regarding progress and changes.

PARKS FOUNDATION OF HIGHLAND PARK UPDATE

Executive Director Romes reported that the Parks Foundation of Highland Park is a 501C-3 Not for Profit that exists to ensure everyone has access to Park District Programs, Services and Facilities, by providing

such things as SMILE scholarships for families with financial need, as well as raising funds for Park District infrastructure such as the new Sunset Valley Short Game Area. Essentially, their efforts are an essential conduit to the Park District reaching our Mission of enriching Community Life. As you also know, Vice President Grossberg is the Park Board Liaison to the Parks Foundation and typically provides a monthly update. Tonight, we welcome two members of the Parks Foundation of Highland Park, Past president Bob Bernstein, and newly elected President, Rafael Labrador as an opportunity for the Park Board and Community to meet them, as well as provide an update on the Foundation's progress.

Executive Director Romes reported that Mr. Bernstein embodies the true meaning of "community service and dedication". He joined the Parks Foundation Board in May 2017 and quickly offered his service as the Foundation's first President. At the time, Mr. Bernstein humbly admitted he did not have much of an idea of what it meant to be President of the Foundation, but he would do his best and learn along the way. He attended every event and worked tirelessly to recruit members, sponsors, and donors.

Mr. Bernstein's passion for providing opportunities to those less fortunate is often evident in his words and through his actions. Under Bob's guidance as President, the FYI Program providing scholarships for Highwood families and the Michael Goldman Golf Scholarship Program were initiated. He worked closely with NSSD 112 and the Nuestro Center and various City commissioners to successfully promote Park District programs and scholarships.

During his term, Mr. Bernstein also created numerous fundraising events including the Shrimp Boils at Bluegrass, Yoga at Ravinia, Funk Fest in Highwood, and many more. Not only did these events raise funds to benefit his community, but they also embodied the District's ideals of having fun and connecting the community.

Overall, he is a roll-up your sleeves guy. You may have seen him at Fourth Fest schlepping water at the beverage booth, participating in the Firecracker 5Ks, or even honorably representing the Foundation in the fourth Fest Pie eating contest. He volunteered at information tables at numerous events, attending Chamber of Commerce meetings and events, and much more.

Under his leadership as President, all eight seats on the foundation Board were filled including three officer positions. The Foundation's Strategic Plan was developed along with key working committees including governance, marketing, fundraising, and finance.

Mr. Bernstein is a hard-working, motivating, fun, humble man who loves his community, which we could ask no more from our Foundation President. On behalf of the Park District of Highland Park, the Parks Foundation, and the Highland Park community, Executive Director Romes reported the Park District is lucky to have you and thanked him for his service.

Lastly, Executive Director Romes reported that the Park District is excited to have Mr. Labrador as the newly elected President and are more than confident that he will take the Foundation to another level.

President Ruttenberg welcomed Rafael and invited him to attend future meetings.

Vice President Grossberg commended Mr. Bernstein for his year's servings as the president of the Foundation, reporting that he has built a strong foundation.

Commissioner Bernstein commended Mr. Bernstein for bringing fun to the Parks Foundation and developing wonderful events.

Commissioner Freeman commended Mr. Bernstein for his services.

Mr. Bernstein reported that he has built lasting friendships and the events he developed over the past five years were fun, the intentions were to recruit and showcase the Park District and the Parks Foundation to the community. He is pleased to report that during his presidency the Parks Foundation created a board manual with governance info and a junior board in addition to several successful events.

Mr. Labrador commended Mr. Bernstein for instilling passion into the Foundation. Moving forward, Mr. Rafael reported that the Parks Foundation has engaged with a consulting firm to better understand and develop key tactics to raise money. The firm has offered a series of trainings to improve prospecting since the Parks Foundation cannot afford to spend a lot of time on events and projects, instead, the team needs to recruit regular donors. As a result, the Parks Foundation has been focused on learning how to connect with members of the community with a stretch goal to raise \$25,000 more than 2020. Furthermore, Mr. Labrador reported that he is pleased to hear that the Park Board of Commissioners have a desire to engage with the Parks Foundation since our missions align, and our goals are aiming in the same direction. He requested that the Park Board of Commissioners meet with members of the Parks Foundation and provide three names of people who may be interested in supporting the Foundation's goals.

President Ruttenberg reported that the Park Board of Commissioners will share recommendations with Executive Director Romes.

RECREATION FACILITIES UPDATE

A. Centennial Ice Arena

Manager Sassorossi provided a recap of 2020 programming and facility operations, reporting that the year started strong, but once the pandemic hit, staff decided to take advantage of the closure and replaced the ice compressor. As a result, the ice rink was closed until September. As of September, skating classes were able to resume along with rentals, but games and spectators were not permitted due to the restrictions outlined in the COVID mitigation measures. The restrictions remained in effect through mid-January, so the 2021 hockey season had a delayed start.

As for gymnastics, the team was able to compete and placed 2nd in the state competition, several youth and preschool age classes were added to accommodate children on waitlists, and 132 private lessons were conducted. As a result, staff exceeded the budgeted revenue for gymnastics.

As for ice programming, staff offered a scaled-down version of the ice show, developed the ASPIRE figure skating program, created additional basic skill classes to accommodate children on waitlists, drop-in ice slots resumed, 237 private lessons were conducted, and hockey rentals were able to resume.

As for special events, staff offered a tri-skating and gymnastics day last October, Winter and Spring skating exhibition.

Commissioner Bernstein, Commissioner Kaplan, and President Ruttenberg thanked manager Sassorossi, indicating it was a great report.

B. Heller Nature Center

Manager Reyes reported that staff developed a one-way trail system so that the trails could be used throughout the pandemic including the winter for walkers and cross-country skiers, along with unique programs such as Story Walk, and a mile-long art exhibit along the red trail with 60 exhibits.

Manager Reyes is pleased to report that 2021 programming participants significantly increased so additional staff were recruited to expand programs and class offerings. In the fall of 2019, there were 56 participants enrolled in Heller programs and 43 participants enrolled in Rosewood Interpretive Center programs. Last winter, there were 157 participants enrolled in Heller programs and 13 participants enrolled in Rosewood Interpretive Center programs. Currently, Heller has 364 participants in spring programs and the Rosewood Interpretive Center has 136 participants.

As for special events the Maple Syrup Harvest, Digging the Outdoors, and the Enchanted Forest quickly sold out, so staff expanded the rosters.

As for after-school classes were in high demand, so staff expanded the class offerings. Ravine Rangers added three more classes and the Heller Nature Center offered two more classes. In the fall of 2019, there were 13 children enrolled in after-school classes. As of this spring, there were 68 children enrolled in after-school classes at Heller and 82 children enrolled in classes at the Rosewood Interpretive Center. Regarding summer camps, Into the Wild, is almost full and High-Tide/Low-Tide maxed out and had 20 children on the waitlist. To accommodate those children on the waitlist, staff developed Camp Driftwood. Additionally, most mini-camps and popular post camps are full.

Furthermore, staff are eager to offer the teams course this summer which will be utilized by camps and outside organizations, such as New Trier High School.

President Ruttenberg is pleased to hear that the community has been taking advantage of the outdoor programming.

Commissioner Bernstein, Commissioner Kaplan, and Vice President Kaplan thanked Manager Reyes and her staff.

WATER SAFETY PROCLAMATIONS

A. Adoption of the Beach Safety Week Proclamation and the Safe Boating Week Proclamation

Director Gogola reported that the water safety campaign started after meeting with aquatics department to discuss marketing of the lakefront and the Hidden Creek AquaPark. The aquatics department requested that communications shared with the community should focus on beach safety, specifically that guests visiting the lakefront cannot swim at unguarded beaches. Director Gogola reported that the goal of the campaign, is to grab people's attention while sharing fact-based knowledge stressing why it is important to only swim at a guarded beach. As a result, staff

connected with the Great Lakes Organization, the Red Cross, and the US Life Saving Association, and the Great Lakes Water Safety Consortium. The corner stone of the campaign, is a sign with a red shark, signifying that swimming is prohibited at this lakefront property since the beach is not guarded. Director Gogola reported that the campaign was shared with the City of Highland Park who supports the messaging.

President Ruttenberg supports the campaign, and he likes the shark signage.

Commissioner Bernstein supports the campaign however he would like to know what the Park District policy regarding swimming and how will staff enforce the District's policy.

Executive Director Romes reported that swimming is prohibited at unguarded beaches and Park Ambassadors are scheduled 7-days a week from 7:00 a.m. to midnight who will be enforcing the District's policy.

President Ruttenberg read the Beach Safety Week and Safe Boating Week Proclamations.

A motion was made by Commissioner Kaplan and seconded by Commissioner Freeman to adopt the Beach Safety Proclamation declaring May 24 - 31 Highland Park Beach Safety Week and to adopt the Safe Boating Proclamation declaring May 22 - 28 Highland Park Safe Boating Week.

Roll Call:

Aye: Commissioner Bernstein, Commissioner Kaplan, Commissioner Freeman, Vice President Grossberg, and President Ruttenberg

Nay: None

Absent: None

Motion carried.

COVID-19 EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLANNING UPDATE

Executive Director Romes reported that the Governor announced that our State will move into the Bridge Phase starting this Friday. This phase will allow the Park District to increase capacities in programs, services, and facilities, most notably Hidden Creek Aqua Park.

Starting with the Hidden Creek, with these new guidelines staff are able to increase capacity from 50 bathers or 50% of facility capacity to 100 bathers or 60% of facility capacity, thereby increasing our total capacity to 200 visitors per available time slot. This will not change our process for reserving a timeslot.

Executive Director Romes reported that if the state enters Phase 5 this summer, which essentially eliminates capacity standards, staff will permit further increased capacities, and even sell a more economic season pass

to the community. Staff will provide further details once there is clarification from IDPH on Aquatic Center Standards.

In other areas of the Park District, Indoor Recreation programming is not significantly impacted in this phase, however, outdoor recreation increases from a maximum group size of 50 to a maximum group size of 100.

Summer Camp groups are a little different, but capacity per group has increased to 30 participants, which allows us to accommodate more campers, which will now allow us to accommodate almost the entire waitlist at this time.

Private Rentals for Social Events have increased capacities from a lesser of 50 people or 50% capacity to 250 people indoors or 500 people. Social distancing guidelines for tables and seating do remain in place for seated events. This means that all rental facilities can have normal capacities, keeping in mind that social distancing guidelines may reduce that capacity for seated events or meetings.

From an employee perspective, Executive Director Romes reported that while many staff are getting vaccinated, the vaccination benefits you see from the CDC do not apply to staff, or to our facilities at this time.

As you know, staff's number one goal is delivering essential programs and services that enrich community life is the health and safety of our community and employees. Therefore, staff is closely following the Restore Illinois Plan, (DCEO) guidelines, (CDC) recommendations, and the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OHS) guidance

Last year the Park District created a Homecoming Committee in an effort to create a welcoming and safe return of patrons and staff to our facilities and programs. The Homecoming Committee developed a robust Return to Work Plan, which provides a detailed outline of workplace procedures for staff, as well as General Recreation and Facility Safety Guidelines, regarding COVID-19.

As the guidelines change, this plan is updated to ensure the Park District is always adhering to current restrictions and in addition to requiring all staff to be formally trained on this manual, it is now a part of our new employee onboarding process. In addition to internal efforts staff are continuing to maintain the dedicated COVID-19 web page and Communications are regularly shared on social media outlets, through the email database, and in collaboration with the City and their communication outlets.

Executive Director Romes reported that the District is very fortunate to have had very few COVID cases with both staff and patrons, and we believe this is due to our pro-active approach and strict adherence to recommended guidelines.

REVIEW OF VOUCHERS

President Ruttenberg reported that the Park Board of Commissioners reviewed the vouchers and there are no questions.

CLOSED SESSION

A motion was made by Commissioner Kaplan, seconded by Vice President Grossberg to adjourn into Closed Session for discussion of Section 2(c)1 – the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline

of the District including legal counsel for the District; – 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 Kaplan, Commissioner Freeman, Vice President Grossberg, and President Ruttenberg

Nay: None

Absent: None

Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned into Closed Session at 7:44 p.m.

The meeting reconvened into Open Session at 8:20 p.m.

ACTION FROM CLOSED SESSION IF ANY

No action was taken during closed session.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Commissioner Kaplan and seconded by Commissioner Bernstein and approved by a unanimous vote. The Board Meeting adjourned at 8:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Roxanne Hejnowski, Assistant Secretary