

**PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
JUNE 22, 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 6:03 p.m. by President Ruttenberg.

ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioner Bernstein, Commissioner Kaplan, Commissioner Freeman, 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 Schwartz; Coordinator Hejnowski

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA - None

PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

Carissa Coons

1551 Linden Avenue, Highland Park

She shared that her family is a huge fan of the Park District recognizing the programming quality and commending staff for the experiences provided to her children. Additionally, she was pleased with the changes implemented throughout the pandemic. However, since she has a background in youth protection, she has observed gaps and possible risks with the District’s abuse protection efforts. While she learned that there are requirements in place such as mandated reporter and background checks, she suggests these are the minimum requirements that do not necessarily prevent abuse from being perpetrated. She would like to know what other policies and procedures might be in place to address things such as grooming behaviors, what is the District’s response to policy violations, and how compliance is being monitored. Furthermore, she would like to know if the park District recently conducted a comprehensive review of its youth protection efforts, if not, she recommends that one be conducted. She is happy to help and share her services, however, if the Park District finds that it is policies and procedures exceed the standards of care, she recommends that information or opportunities be available to parents so that they can better understand what measures are in place.

Regular Board Meeting Minutes
June 22, 2021

President Ruttenberg requested that Executive Director Romes follow up with Carissa. If staff feel a review is necessary, he would like to further discuss the matter with the Policy Committee.

CLOSED SESSION

A motion was made by Commissioner Bernstein, seconded by Commissioner Kaplan 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; - for discussions between internal or external auditors and the Board.

Roll Call:

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

Nay: None

Absent: None

Abstain: None

Motion Carried

The meeting adjourned into Closed Session at 6:14 p.m.

The meeting reconvened into Open Session at 6:30 p.m.

ACTION FROM CLOSED SESSION IF ANY

No action was taken during closed session.

CONSENT AGENDA

A motion was made by Commissioner Bernstein and seconded by Commissioner Kaplan to approve the Minutes from the Approval of the Minutes from the May 11, 2021 Annual Meeting, the Minutes from the May 11, 2021 Workshop Meeting, the Minutes from the May 25, 2021 Regular Board Meeting, Resolution 2021-04 Authorizing a Contract for Procurement of Playground Equipment, the 2021 Asphalt Project Bid, and Bills and Payroll in the amount of \$1,936,294.25

Roll Call:

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

Nay: None

Absent: None

Abstain: None

Motion Carried

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. As of December 31, 2020, the Park District budgeted to have about \$12.2 million in cash on hand. However, as of May 31, staff are projecting that to increase to \$15.2 million. She reminded the Finance Committee Liaisons that the General and Recreation Funds have a 25% reserve policy, which based on the 2021 expenditures is about a \$4.1 million reserve balance.

Operations (General and Recreation Funds) Budget vs. Actual

Director Peters reported that as of May 31, 2021, staff budgeted \$2.76 million in operating revenue and she is pleased to report the actual revenue is \$4.15 million, surpassing the budgeted amount. Additionally, the actual expenses are significantly less than the budgeted amount. The actual expenses as of May 31, were \$4.54 million vs. the budgeted \$5.89 million, resulting in a year-to-date net surplus of \$2.7 million. The surplus is due to a \$500,000 in unexpected property taxes from 2020, payroll is significantly under budget, Rosewood Beach is exceeding their budget by \$138,000, golf is exceeding their budget by \$367,000, and tennis is exceeding their budget by \$230,000.

General Fund

As of May 31, 2021, the District's actual revenue is \$675,109.84 which is significantly higher than the budgeted amount of \$223,162.83. Whereas actual expenses are significantly less than the budgeted amount. The actual expenses as of May 31, were \$1.5 million vs. the budgeted \$2 million, which contributed to the resulting year-to-date net surplus of \$990,349.82.

Recreation Fund

As of May 31, 2021, staff budgeted \$2.53 million in revenue, whereas the actual revenue is significantly higher at \$3.45 million. Much like the general fund, actual expenses are less than the budgeted amount. The actual expenses were \$3 million vs. the budgeted \$3.8 million, resulting in a year-to-date net surplus of \$1.73 million.

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

Director Peters reported that expenses are increasing each month, however, there is a \$640,228.59 year-to-date net difference due to delays and timing differences in invoices.

Cumulative Monthly Payroll Actual vs. Budget

Director Peters reported that as of May 31, the Park District budgeted \$3.05 million in expenditures, and she is pleased to report that the actual expenses are slightly less at \$2.68 million, resulting in a year-to-date savings of \$362,345.96.

Non-Cumulative Monthly Payroll Actual vs. Budget

Director Peters reported that for the month of May, the Park District budgeted \$718,219.72 in expenditures, whereas the actual expenses are slightly less at \$589,968.06 resulting in a month-to-date savings of \$128,251.66.

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 payroll expenses resulting in a \$362,346 savings. This permitted a \$2.2 million surplus above the budgeted net 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, tennis has a \$230,004 surplus, golf has a \$366,820 surplus, Rosewood Beach has a \$137,934 surplus, and all cost centers are operating at a surplus.

Commissioner Bernstein commended staff for putting the District in a favorable financial situation during such a difficult time. He is looking forward to focusing on the 5 Year Capital Plan.

The rest of the Park Board thanked staff for their efforts.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Approval of the Park Avenue Boat Launch and Wave Protection Replacement Project Proposal

At the June 8 Workshop Meeting, Director Smith reported that the Park Board of Commissioners approved Phase One of the four-phase proposal for the Replacement of the Park Avenue Boat Launch and Wave Protection Replacement Project. SmithGroup should have the site survey completed by early next week along with the development of base maps to support the design process. Phase Two is focused on preliminary engineering and the development of those documents. In Phase Three SmithGroup will submit permitting applications and develop construction documents. As of the final Phase, SmithGroup will assist the District throughout the bidding process by issuing an addendum, reviewing bids, and answering questions from contractors.

Director Smith reported that tonight's discussion will focus on Phase Two, and staff will seek approval from the Park Board of Commissioners to allow Executive Director Romes to enter into an agreement with SmithGroup for Preliminary Engineering of the Park Avenue Boat Launch and Wave Protection Replacement Project. If approved, staff will schedule an initial project meeting to kick off the design parameters, SmithGroup will develop a design document that outlines the conditions of the site, establish project goals, and detail the performance criteria and limitations. Those documents will evolve into preliminary engineering documents, at which time staff will schedule a client review meeting. From there, SmithGroup would contact regulatory agencies to schedule on-site meetings to review the

permitting requirements. After which, staff and SmithGroup would present an updated cost estimate and the project timeline to the Park Board of Commissioners at a public meeting.

Director Smith reported that the second phase will take 2.5 months to complete, costing \$44,000, which staff feels very strongly that moving forward with this phase is critical, as the District will shift from concept drawings to an engineered design to which staff will have a much better understanding of the permitting timelines and construction costs. While the current concept assumes an 8 – 10 month permitting timeline, it's possible the timeframe may be less. Likewise, staff will have a better understanding of the construction timeline and completion date. Lastly, by entering Phase Two, staff will be able to submit grant applications.

President Ruttenberg would like to know what documents are needed so that the Park District may submit grant applications and when those deadlines are.

Director Smith reported that the deadline for the IDNR Boat Access grant is August 31, 2021, and SmithGroup feels the District will have adequate information needed to submit an application so long as the Park Board of Commissioners approves the \$44,000 proposal so that SmithGroup can develop preliminary engineering documents for the Park Avenue Boat Launch and Wave Protection Replacement Project.

Vice President Grossberg would like to know what would happen to the \$44,000 investment should the District and the City decide to discontinue the lease agreement at Park Avenue.

Director Smith reported that staff would lose the investment if the lease agreement were discontinued.

Commissioner Freeman feels strongly that the Park Board of Commissioners should allow Executive Director Romes to enter into an agreement with SmithGroup for the development of preliminary engineering documents for the Park Avenue Boat Launch and Wave Protection Replacement Project since time is of the essence.

Commissioner Kaplan supports staff entering into an agreement with SmithGroup for the development of preliminary engineering documents for the Park Avenue Boat Launch and Wave Protection Replacement Project.

Commissioner Bernstein reported that since he has been on the Park Board he has been a large component and supported providing boating access at Park Avenue, and while he is optimistic that staff will execute a lease agreement with the City of Highland Park and develop a plan to reopen the facility for public use, he is hesitant to invest \$44,000 so that SmithGroup can develop preliminary engineering documents for the Park Avenue Boat Launch and Wave Protection Replacement Project without a funding model that clearly outlines and identifies how the Park District will afford the replacement project.

Commissioner Freeman reported that there are members of the community willing to contribute towards the replacement costs and does not want to delay further progress so while she understands Commissioner Bernstein's concerns, she supports staff entering into an agreement so that SmithGroup can develop preliminary engineering documents.

A motion was made by Vice President Grossberg and seconded by Commissioner Kaplan to allow Executive Director Romes to enter into an agreement with SmithGroup for Phase 2: Preliminary Engineering of the Park Avenue Boat Launch and Wave Protection Replacement Project Proposal in the amount of \$44,000.

Roll Call:

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

Nay: Commissioner Bernstein

Absent: None

Abstain: None

Motion Carried

NEW BUSINESS

A. The Preserve of Highland Park Signage Standards

Director Gogola reported that since the Preserve of Highland Park is such a unique property and destination the marketing team worked closely with natural areas staff to develop branding and signage standards for the site. Staff utilized the nouveau-era art style to develop signage since it is commonly used for branding of natural parks, and incorporated cranes that are unique to the site, along with colors that mimic flowers and natural plantings found throughout the Preserve.

As for locations, welcome signs with trail maps and visitor information will be found at the entrance near the monument sign, interpretive signs will be placed around park amenities providing details about those features, such as the pollinator garden, and path and mile marker signs will be installed along the trails. Furthermore, she is pleased to report that the interpretive signs also allow for sponsorship opportunities.

Commissioner Freeman strongly supports the brand and signage developed by staff and commended them for their efforts to develop such a unique style.

Commissioner Kaplan requested to limit sponsorship, so the logos do not consume the brand.

Commissioner Bernstein prefers the style and colors on the monument signs, suggesting the proposed brand has too much contrast.

President Ruttenberg requested a monument be installed on Route 22.

B. Parks Foundation Update

Director Gogola reported that the Parks Foundation generated \$26,000 from the grand opening of the Youth Golf Development Center. In other news, the student board had their first fundraising event, a

pickleball tournament, which raised \$750 towards camp scholarships. She is pleased to report that several players from the tournament requested that the Student Board host another one in the Fall. Lastly, the Parks Foundation developed a PowerPoint presentation, which will be used to attract donations and build awareness about the foundation when meeting with organizations.

C. Director's Report

Executive Director Romes reported that the governors' executive order regarding virtual meetings, expires at the end of this week, so all committee and board meetings will be held in person as of July 8. As for operations, he reported that camps began this past Monday, the first drive-in movie is premiering next week, the Firecracker baseball tournament has 26 registered, and the District is offering a variety of smaller-scale events over the 4th of July Weekend.

Commissioner Bernstein requested that the Park District share a joint statement with the City of Highland Park regarding activities for the holiday weekend.

Executive Director Romes reported that a joint statement was shared with the community a week ago, however, staff can resend the statement.

D. Board Comments - None

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE BOARD - None

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Commissioner Kaplan and seconded by Commissioner Bernstein and approved by a unanimous vote. The Board Meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Roxanne Hejnowski

Roxanne Hejnowski, Assistant Secretary