

**PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES OF WORKSHOP MEETING
JUNE 8, 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 Freeman, Commissioner Kaplan, President Ruttenberg

Absent: Vice President Grossberg

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: None

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

Executive Director Romes welcomed Amy Murrin, the Park District’s recently hired Assistant Director of Recreation and Facilities. She will oversee fitness, aquatics, and tennis.

President Ruttenberg requested that item eight, Approval of the Park Avenue Boat Launch and Barge Engineering Services Proposal be the next item presented upon, followed by Public Comment.

APPROVAL OF THE PARK AVENUE BOAT LAUNCH AND BARGE ENGINEERING SERVICES PROPOSAL

Director Smith reported that staff received consensus from the Lakefront Committee Liaisons to provide a proposal from SmithGroup for engineering and design of Concept 7, the Rubble Breakwater with Pre-Cast Walkway, for the barge replacement. The proposal is broken into four phases, which includes:

Phase 1: Data Collection

During this phase SmithGroup will visit the site to conduct a topographic and bathymetric survey, along with the development of base maps which can be used for construction documents.

Phase 2: Preliminary Engineering

During this Phase SmithGroup will turn the concept designs into engineering plans which kicks off the permitting process.

Phase 3: Final Engineering Documents

During this Phase SmithGroup will turn those preliminary engineering documents into construction documents.

Phase 4: Bidding

SmithGroup will assist the Park District and lead the bidding process.

Director Smith reported the Data Collection Phase (Phase 1) is \$19,000, so while staff are not presenting a full proposal, staff are recommending approval from the Park Board of Commissioners to authorize Executive Director Romes to enter into an agreement with SmithGroup to complete topographic and bathymetric survey services for the purpose of creating a Digital Elevation model, necessary for developing future construction drawings for the removal of the existing barge and construction of a rubble breakwater with a pre-cast concrete walkway, in the amount of \$19,000.

Commissioner Kaplan would like to know how long Phase 1 will take to complete.

Director Smith reported that the Data Collection Phase (Phase 1) will take 3-4 weeks to complete.

A motion was made by Commissioner Kaplan and seconded by Commissioner Freeman to authorize Executive Director Romes to enter into an agreement with SmithGroup to complete topographic and bathymetric survey services for the purpose of creating a Digital Elevation model, necessary for developing future construction drawings for the removal of the existing barge and construction of a rubble breakwater with a pre-cast concrete walkway, in the amount of \$19,000.

Roll Call:

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

Nay: None

Absent: Vice President Grossberg

Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS ON THE AGENDA - None.

APPROVAL OF ORDINANCE 2021-03 AUTHORIZING A CONTRACT EMPLOYING BRIAN ROMES AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK

A motion was made by Commissioner Kaplan and seconded by Commissioner Bernstein, to approve Ordinance 2021-03 Authorizing a Contract Employing Brian Romes as Executive Director of the Park District of Highland Park.

Roll Call:

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

Nay: None

Absent: Vice President Grossberg

Motion carried.

Commissioner Bernstein reported that on behalf of the Park Board he appreciates everything Executive Director Romes has done and is looking forward to another 3years under his leadership.

Executive Director Romes thanked the Park Board of Commissioners.

APPROVAL OF THE 2020 COMPREHENSIVE ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT

Director Peters introduced Dan Berg, Sikich LLP, to provide a summary of the Park District's 2020 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report.

Opinions

Mr. Berg reported that it is in our opinion, that the basic financial statements from the 2020 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report present fairly, in all material respects, the respective financial position of the governmental activities, each major fund, and the aggregate remaining fund information of the Park District as of December 31, 2020 ad the respective changes in financial position for the year then ended in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States.

Statement of Net Position

He reported that the Park District has a total net position of \$59,587,478. \$37,659,759, however, \$21,145,676 is unrestricted so it could be used to cover any expense.

Statement of Activities

The Park District had a \$3,605,687 change in net position vs. the previous year which was just under \$3 million. Mr. Berg reported commended staff for the increase to the net position during the year of a pandemic.

Liabilities, Deferred Inflows of Resources and Fund Balances

Mr. Berg reported that some of the Park District's fund balances have already been spent on assets and inventory. As for the Recreation Fund, the Park District is committed to spending \$4,936,817 on recreational expenses, \$3,427,476 is restricted for bond proceeds, and \$4,053,385 is in the General Fund which could be used for any expenses.

Change in Fund Balance

Mr. Berg reported that the General and Recreation Funds had a significant excess of revenues over expenditures before transfers, with \$3.4 million in the General Fund and nearly \$2.2 million in the Recreation Fund. As a result, the Park District transferred \$2.5million to Debt Service and Capital Funds, leaving \$758,076 positive net change in the General Fund and a \$261,669 positive net change in the Recreation Fund. He commended the Park District for increasing the net change considering programming and services were reduced due to the pandemic. As for the smaller fund balances, the Park District had a little over \$4 million in capital expenses with \$11.4 million available for future projects.

Budget to Actual (General and Recreation Funds)

Regarding the General Fund, revenues were only \$300,000 under budget, most of which was due to property taxes, however, he is pleased to report that \$300,000 in property taxes was received after February 28, 2021. Unfortunately, since there is a 60-day limit on recognition of property taxes received after year-end, so the 2020 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report could not recognize those taxes in 2020. As a result, the Park District will be over-budget on property taxes in 2022.

As for expenditures, the Park District is \$1.4 million under budget and after transfers, the General Fund was \$1 million ahead of budget. The Recreation Fund was \$4.5 million under budget due to a reduction in services, which lead to expenditures being \$3.8million under budget. The original budget called for a \$3.5 million transfer, which the Park District reduced the transfer by \$2 million to preserve the fund balance which resulted in a new change of \$913,933 ahead of budget.

IMRF Funding

Mr. Berg reported that the employers net pension liability asset is \$9,519,502, which equivalents to 120% funding so the Park District's rates will continue to decrease.

Budget to Actual (Capital Fund)

The capital outlay was under spent by \$3.5 million. Overall, the capital fund finished \$1.8 million ahead of budget.

Unaudited Statistics

Mr. Berg reported that the audit went very well as there were little to no needs for improvement.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to know if the deficiencies have been discussed with staff and addressed.

Mr. Berg reported that all three deficiencies were discussed with staff and the recommendations provided by Sikich have been considered and implemented.

Commissioner Bernstein reported that the conclusion from Sikich, is that the Park District's financial position continues to remain strong, so he recognized the hard work of Director Peters and her support staff. Furthermore, he congratulated his fellow board members, as they have been meeting much more frequently to review and monitor the financial health of the District and it was worth it, since the Park District is coming out of a pandemic in a strong financial position. Lastly, he requested that the Finance Committee discuss the seven factors impacting the 2022 budget as referenced by Sikich.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bernstein and seconded by Commissioner Kaplan, to approve the 2020 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report of the Park District of Highland Park.

Roll Call:

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

Nay: None

Absent: Vice President Grossberg

Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF THE MORAINES PARK PATH ENGINEERING SERVICES PROPOSAL

Director Smith reported that staff received consensus from the Lakefront Committee liaisons to seek approval from the Park Board of Commissioners to enter into an agreement with Daniel Creaney Company for the Moraine Park Path Engineering Services, so he provided a brief overview of the project and shared images of the path prior to failure vs. the current conditions. When the failure occurred in 2019, staff contacted the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) who determined that the failure could not be addressed with quick solutions, so staff hired Daniel Creaney Co. to develop a long-term solution. Daniel Creaney Co. conducted a topographic survey and developed concept, repair, and construction access plans. The proposed plan from Daniel Creaney Co. included path repairs and drainage improvements along the top of the slope and repairs for the steel walls along the bottom of the ravine.

Daniel Creaney Co. provided two solutions.

Option One

Regrading the path for an estimated construction cost of \$344,301, however, there were concerns this may not be sustainable over time.

Option Two

Construct an elevated boardwalk over the sections of failed path for an estimated construction cost of 364,063, which is the option staff are recommending and Daniel Creaney feels this is the most sustainable solution since runoff can flow underneath the boardwalk without damaging the repairs.

Director Smith reported that staff are seeking approval from the Park Board of Commissioners to enter into an agreement with Daniel Creaney Co. so that they may develop construction documents in an amount not to exceed \$28,000. If approved, the Park District is not committed to construction. He reported that the Park District has \$35,000 budgeted for construction documents and \$450,000 budgeted in 2022 for construction.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to know if areas not being repaired are experiencing any issues.

Director Smith reported that an engineering firm determined there are no other areas at risk, however, staff gathered quotes to extend the boardwalk the entire length, which is estimated at \$150,000 - \$200,000.

Commissioner Kaplan is upset that people are using the path even though staff has placed fencing around the site to prevent access. He would also like to know who utilizes this lakefront property aside from dog owners.

Executive Director Romes reported that a significant number of people use it for beach access, not just the dog beach.

Commissioner Freeman would like to know how long the boardwalk will last, how much will it cost to maintain, what are the plans to prevent further loss and damages.

Director Smith reported that Park District staff cannot safely access the site for maintenance, so while it's been poorly maintained, once repaired, parks staff will maintain the site and staff are confident that this solution will be less likely to fail and the most stable for the future longevity.

Executive Director Romes reported that the recently approved Beach Management Plan includes recommended maintenance practices for the site which have been built into site operations.

President Ruttenberg is concerned with how the District is characterizing the area. If the site is characterized as a dog beach, he is hesitant to spend \$450,000 in repairs. However, if the site is re-characterized as a site for passive recreation that allows for off-leash dog usage he would consider the construction costs.

Executive Director Romes and Director Smith reported that both the Beach Management and the Lakefront Master Plan have characterized this lakefront property for passive recreation which

allows for off-leash dog usage, and staff are exploring ways to further improve the site to accommodate people who are using it for passive recreation.

Chadd Berkun

856 Judson Ave, Highland Park

Would like to know if the proposed repairs would permit the site to be ADA accessible.

Director Smith reported that the proposed repairs would not improve the site so that it would be ADA accessible, however, that is not a requirement since the Park District has other lakefront properties and a dog park that are ADA accessible.

A motion was made by Commissioner Freeman and seconded by Commissioner Kaplan, authorizing Executive Director Romes to enter into an agreement with Daniel Creaney Company for the Moraine Park Path Engineering Services in an amount not to exceed \$28,000.

Roll Call:

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

Nay: None

Absent: Vice President Grossberg

Motion carried.

THE PRESERVE OF HIGHLAND PARK PROJECT UPDATE

Manager Grill reported that in May, work continued on amenities at The Preserve and shared images of the progress. She reported that excavation, path layout, and stone seating was completed for the Nature Maze, Pollinator Garden, North Pond Overlook, and View Seating Area. The concrete turtle mound sculptures were poured for the Sand Play Area.

Permeable pavers were laid in the Entry Plaza area. After rejecting initial costs for the original bid design in the Sand Play Area, Change Order 7 was approved to include a sand play table and additional pour in place surfacing for ADA accessibility. Repairs were completed to an irrigation line servicing the Golf Driving Range. Coming up, landscape plantings for the North Pond as part of the IEPA 319 grant for shoreline restoration. 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 website. Overall, she reported that the project is still on schedule with an anticipated opening in May of 2022.

Commissioner Bernstein and President Ruttenberg reported that the enhancements look great, and they requested a tour before the grand opening.

REVIEW OF VOUCHERS

Director Peters reported that the Park District is at less than half a million in expenses, which 40% of those are costs are due to the Rosewood Park Drainage Project.

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 7:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Roxanne Hejnowski

Roxanne Hejnowski, Assistant Secretary