

**PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
AUGUST 24, 2021**

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners of the Park District of Highland Park was held in the Board Room, 636 Ridge Road, Highland Park, Illinois.

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m. by Vice President Grossberg.

ROLL CALL

A motion was made by Commissioner Freeman, seconded by Commissioner Bernstein to allow President Ruttenberg to participate in tonight's meeting by electronic means.

Roll Call:

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

Nay: None

Absent: President Ruttenberg

Abstain: None

Motion Carried

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; Assistant Director Murrin; General Manager/Superintendent of Golf Operations Ochs; Manager Schwartz; Manager Grill; Manager Johnson; Coordinator Hejnowski

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA - None

PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

Laura Knapp

700 College Place, Highland Park

Park Avenue and Central Avenue Beaches, since 1869, the date of Highland Park's incorporation, have always been a boating and public recreation site; a destination point and an access point for Lake Michigan.

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The NSYC Board of Directors wish to thank the Park District Commissioners and staff for facilitating the use of this site for boating activities over the years and for being stewards of the shoreline of Lake Michigan. Today we ask you to sign the Inter-Governmental Agreement between the City and the Park District that is before you this evening, as well as approve the other Boating Facility items up for approval, so that we can move forward with fixing what is broken.

The NSYC provides to the community what the Park District does not – small craft boating skill classes, water safety education, the use of boating equipment, and safety boats. We have been an affiliate organization to the Park District for over 50 years and have been at Park Avenue site since 1933. I also want to remind you that we are a passionate group of local boaters, a not-for-profit Illinois Corporation, and an all-volunteer club that offers very affordable boating services.

NSYC 2021 Stats in Review – to date

- 607 = Members in 211 Member Families. If they come 2X a week for 4 weeks for 4 months, then = 20,000 visits
- 250 = participants in Sailing, Kayak, Paddleboard classes (that include water safety)
- 120 = Paddlers and guests at the Beach2Beach Paddle Race
- 40 = 2 full moon paddle kayak events
- 12 = CPR & First Aid instructors were re-certified
- 5 = added ACA SUP Level 1 & 2 Instructors – using National on Water Standards (NOWS) by the US Coast Guard

The NSYC educates, provides water safety, and engages the community in appreciating what Lake Michigan can offer, most especially health and wellness. Without a protective cove or boat launch the NSYC would not be able to provide the full extent of our services.

The NSYC asks the Park District to PLEASE - as an emergency measure or resolution - fix the breakwater, boat launch, and failed south parking lot and make it a higher priority over non-boating concepts. Remember that site revenue comes from boat launches, and boat storage - and we need the revenue to come in immediately and not 2 or even 5 years from now. Without a boat launch or boat storage there will be no launch and storage revenue.

Commissioners, act now and vote YES to move these repair and replacement projects forward.

Thank you so much for your time and for all your efforts in making Park Avenue Boating Facility a boating facility!

Julie Graham

306 Ashland Avenue, Highwood

She paid a premium for a parking and boating pass, so she is her tonight to represent neighboring communities.

Tracy Jacobson

1836 McCraren Road, Highland Park

Moved back to Highland Park from the east coast, under the condition that her family would live near the lakefront and have access to the beach.

David Multack

111 Crofton Avenue, Highland Park

He congratulated the Park District for a stellar financial performance despite the pandemic, reporting that the District has a \$3.7 million Year-to-date surplus of revenue. He suggests the Park District should be responsible for funding the replacement of the breakwater and boat ramp replacement project. At the very least, he requested that the Park District meet with the Park Avenue Working Group next week to hammer out a proposal to support the fundraising campaign.

Jean Sogin

1092 Wade Street, Highland Park

Requested that the access gate be open weekdays/nights. She supports closing it over the weekends.

Brigitte Wolf

995 Marion Avenue, Highland Park

Applauded the Park District for the investments at Rosewood Beach, however, she would like Park Avenue to receive the same commitment, suggesting that boaters like swimmers deserve a place for recreation along the lakefront. She feels it is only appropriate that the Park District fund safe boating and restoration at Park Avenue.

Annette Johnston - 836 Burton Avenue, Highland Park

Kristie Weber and Tim Johnson – 1508 Oakwood Avenue, Highland Park

Karen and Rich Coplan – 1265 Linden Avenue, Highland Park

Axel Andersson – 3351 Dato Avenue, Highland Park

Ben Wernick – 1089 Ridgewood Drive, Highland Park

Please vote yes for

- The City PDHP Inter Governmental Agreement
- The Lakota Group Master Site Plan
- Grant applications for Park Avenue Boating Facility
- Funding Model for the Barge Replacement

Rich and Julie Coplan added:

I know that many of us adore and cherish the lakefront and its facilities, and they are a major reason for choosing to live here. The Park Ave Beachfront boating facility is a gem in the city, and it is a shame to see it minimized as evident by it being unsafe and deteriorated. There are several reasons to emphasize/prioritize the repair, and get it into the capital improvements budget including:

- Many boaters and users of the facility utilize the area- this year alone the North Shore Yacht Club greatly increased membership.
- People moving to Highland Park expect a decent looking boating facility as all the other North Shore communities who take pride in their boating facilities.

It is in the best interest of Highland Park residents, as well as the non-motorized and motorized boaters to support improvements to the breakwater and boat launch so we as a boating community can move forward and see a future here at Park Avenue Boating Facility.

Jean Meier

948 Judson Avenue, Highland Park

I urge you to adopt the City/PDHP Inter-Governmental Agreement and the Grant Applications for Park Avenue Boating Facility and take all efforts necessary to provide long-term support to the boaters of Highland Park.

In reference to the Park Avenue Beach and Boating Master Plan Update, both concepts A and B include the "Boat Launch Access Gate" in its current position. This gate's location is an unwelcome impediment that unnecessarily prohibits many Highland Park residents from enjoying Park Avenue Beach.

As was acknowledged by the Plan's spokesman at the August 16th public meeting, the 11 parking spaces immediately North of the Water Treatment Plant, and some additional spaces to the East or Lake side of the water treatment plant are not needed by the boaters on a regular basis. And yet, the placement of the gate prohibits fishermen and other Highland Park residents who do NOT have boat launch parking permits from using them.

Prior to the gate's installation, the scene one would witness at that North and Northeast portion of the Park Avenue Beach parking lot was often one of peaceful Highland Park fishermen and other Highland Park residents who simply wanted a place to easily drive up and view the beauty of Lake Michigan during both daylight and evening hours. That opportunity could be restored to them with a simple re-location of the gate, either just past those 11 North parking spots or, even better, around the bend of the Northeast corner to permit 6 to 12 additional diagonal parking spots.

It is in keeping with the Park District's commitment and obligation to encourage the use of Park District facilities by people with disabilities under the ADA. It also behooves the Park District to provide access to all Highland Park residents without regard for their income. Many Highland Park residents neither need nor can afford a boat launch parking permit, yet deserve the chance to view Lake Michigan, perhaps catch a sunset or sunrise. That opportunity could be restored to them with this one simple alteration: moving the gate. I realize that both plan concepts show the possibility of a boardwalk that leads from the northern beach up to that area (feature F). But that won't be as inclusive as permitting those few additional parking spots to non-boat owners.

Mike Jacker
1687 Ridgelee Road, Highland Park

Our Lakefront is a Treasure

Highland Park is one of only a few Chicago suburbs with unspoiled lakefront, free of industry or tall buildings. Our shoreline bluff, characterized by a thick forest of tall trees is truly a unique natural treasure. Our Lake Michigan shoreline property is quite valuable, in part because it is so rare and distinctive. To have this resource in a community that is safe, yet near a big city is a feature that differentiates Highland Park from all the suburbs to the west.

There are three distinct axes of recreational waterfront usage in Highland Park:

- walking along the shore, watching the lake in its many moods, and participating in activities such as yoga, fishing, etc.
- swimming and playing on the beaches; and
- boating, including power boats, sailboats, kayaks, canoes, paddle boards, etc. I believe that it is essential to provide access that promotes all these uses.

Form Follows Function

A park that is set up to be functional is much more attractive in every way. To try to gauge usage of a facility, such as the current boating launch ramp by current subscription is very short-sighted. If daily launch passes, a friendly traffic pattern and an up-to-date facility were present, the usage would be much greater by residents and non-residents alike.

Image

The lakefront characterizes our city. Waterfronts do so for all lakefront or seaside communities. The appeal of our city, the image of our city, the property values, and the priorities of our city government are all inextricably intertwined. Would you rather visit Gary, Indiana or Manitowoc, Wisconsin? ...same lake, both industrial communities. But one has attractive parkland, boating facilities and a beach.

Kelly Kramer
1338 Ridgewood Drive, Highland Park

There is nothing unique and special about a golf course, however, there are 46 courses within Highland Park and the neighboring communities. The Park District invested over \$7 million in the renovation of Sunset Valley Golf Club, yet the Park District may reject a \$1.5 million investment to replace the breakwater and boat ramp at Park Avenue. As a reminder there are three (3) cities surrounding Chicago that have lakefront access, and Highland Park is one of those communities. She feels the Park District neglected the repairs and maintenance needed at Park Avenue for several years, which resulted in the current financial situation. She feels that Park Avenue is one of the District's most lucrative assets suggesting that launch, storage, and parking fees in addition to concessions will generate revenue. She would like to know if staff visited neighboring harbors and studied the traffic flow patterns. She felt that the design of the launch worked for many years, we just neglected routine maintenance. Please restore Park Avenue boating back to when it was cared and nurtured. We are not asking for \$7 million, not even half of that.

CONSENT AGENDA

A motion was made by Commissioner Kaplan, seconded by Commissioner Freeman to approve items A – E, the Minutes from the July 27, 2021 Regular Board Meeting, the OSLAD Grant Resolution of Authorization, the 2021 Lot 3 Parking Lot Improvements Project, the Park Avenue Preferred Concept Plan Drawings, and the Boat Access Area Development Grant Certification Statement; Item G, Bills and Payroll in the amount of \$1,743,173.09, and the Amended Version of Item F, Approval of an Intergovernmental Agreement with the City of Highland Park for the Park Avenue Boating Facility.

Roll Call:

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

Nay: None

Absent: None

Abstain: None

Motion Carried

Vice President Grossberg requested that the Items under Unfinished Business be presented upon before the Financial Forecasts since there is a guest speaker.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Park Avenue Wave Protection and Breakwater Replacement Project Update

B. Approval of the Park Avenue Boat Launch and Wave Protection Replacement Project Proposal - Final Engineering and Permitting

Executive Director Romes reported that staff intended to have an update from SmithGroup this evening regarding the preliminary engineering for the Park Avenue Wave Protection and Breakwater Replacement Project, followed by a request to approve the next phase, which is the final engineering and permitting proposal. Unfortunately, SmithGroup requested a project extension, so the Park District and SmithGroup will provide an update of the preliminary engineering at the September 9 Lakefront Committee Meeting, and staff will request approval of the final engineering and permitting proposal at the September 14 Workshop Meeting. SmithGroup confirmed they could meet the updated timeline.

Commissioner Bernstein would like a timeline over the next 8 weeks, listing when staff will be seeking approvals from the Park Board of Commissioners regarding projects at Park Avenue.

Executive Director Romes reported that SmithGroup will present the final report for preliminary engineering at the September 9 Lakefront Committee Meeting, staff will request approval of final

engineering and permitting at the September 14 Workshop Meeting, staff will provide updates related to permitting and the final engineering at the Fall Lakefront Committee Meetings, The Park District will bid out the breakwater and boat ramp replacement project this December. In January 2022, staff will request approval of the 2022 budget and appropriation. Additionally, staff will need the loyalty club commitments and request that the Park Board approve the recommended breakwater and boat ramp replacement bid in January 2022. Grants should be awarded in the spring of 2022. Construction of the breakwater and boat ramp will occur in April – July 2022. Breakwater and boat ramp should be open for use in August 2022. Staff will begin design/engineering for the Phase 1 Improvements to repair the north parking lot and construction of a boardwalk in 2022 with construction beginning in 2023.

Commissioner Freeman would like to know when staff, the Park Avenue Working Group, and members of the North Shore Yacht Club plan to launch the fundraising campaign.

Executive Director Romes reported that the Parks Foundation met last night to discuss fundraising efforts for this project, however, staff will need preliminary engineering and renderings from SmithGroup before the campaign can launch.

C. Millard Bluff Slope Stability Analysis

Director Voss reported that Millard Park and Beach is one of four lakefront properties maintained by the Park District. Millard Park and Beach is owned by the Park District and is maintained as a passive natural area with minimal recreation amenities. There are seven (7) parking spaces at the end of Ravine Drive which leads to the south end of the park and provides access to the passive, non-swimming beach, and a staircase leading to the park. Access through the park is along a rustic path that runs across the middle of the park and passes both through and around a historic garden. A second path runs along the east edge of the park, along the bluff, and leads to a gazebo structure. Overall, the park encompasses about 1,300 linear feet of bluff face ranging in height from 20 to 75 feet above the lake. The beach is divided into four sections by sheet pile walls extending into Lake Michigan 70 to 150 feet long.

Over the past few years, storm and wave damage exacerbated by high lake levels have led to failures of the slope at the toe of the bluff. Based on a recommendation from the Beach Management Plan completed by SmithGroup, staff received approval to contract V3 Companies to conduct a Slope Stability Analysis and provide recommended strategies for ensuring safety and long-term preservation of the bluff in keeping with its natural character and use as a passive park and beach. Director Voss reported that V3 is here this evening to present their findings from the analysis, whereas he and Manager Grill will provide repair recommendations at the September 30 Parks and Natural Areas Committee Meeting. Director Voss introduced, Greg Wolterstorff, Civil Engineer and Scientist from V3 Companies.

Wolterstorff shared aerial images of the bluffs and beach from 1961, 1974, and 2012 and compared those images with the existing conditions. Currently, the site is experiencing bluff erosion, sloughing, and slope failure along with tree and vegetation failure. Furthermore, V3 Companies

examined the historical trends to better understand how the failures occurred, identifying high lake levels, wave activity, and heavy rains as the culprits. The analysis identified areas of slope which need to be graded to prevent further soil slides and vegetation failure along with runoff pathways and the toe of the bluff are in critical need of repair. While the boring report eliminated seepage and drainage as a concern since the deeper layers of soil are composed of clay, however, once the clay is exposed when trees and vegetation fail it will prevent future vegetation from returning.

Wolterstorff recommends the Park District conduct topographic monitoring along the bluff inflection point to better understand movements (estimated \$2,500), remove 4 acres of trees along the shoreline and replace those trees with grasses (estimated \$100,000), grade 1 acre of slope to address runoff pathways (estimated \$100,000), relocate the trail along the top of the bluff, repair 450ft of the toe of the bluff (estimated \$1.2 million), and repair the seawall (estimated \$50,000).

Vice President Grossberg would like to know if the eastern wall is in jeopardy.

Mr. Wolterstorff reported that the eastern wall is not in jeopardy.

Commissioner Kaplan would like to know if the Park District can defer the repairs for a couple of years.

Mr. Wolterstorff reported that the bluff is not in imminent failure, however, it is unhealthy, so the recommendations presented this evening will return the bluff to health. The Park District can tackle the repairs all at once or space them out.

Commissioner Kaplan would like to know if the Park District is in danger of total bluff failure.

Mr. Wolterstorff reported that the Park District is not in danger of a total bluff failure, however, if ignored, areas identified in critical will pose geotechnical and vegetation issues along with environmental concerns.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to know if V3 Companies identified any imminent/emergency repairs that must be completed immediately.

Mr. Wolterstorff reported there are no imminent/emergency repairs needed.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to know what the next steps are for Millard.

Executive Director Romes reported that Director Voss and Manager Grill will provide immediate recommendations based on v3 reports at the September 30 Parks and Natural Areas Committee Meeting, along with the district's 5-year plan.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to know if the recommendations will be included in the 5-Year Capital Plan.

Executive Director Romes reported that immediate repairs will be included in the 5-Year Capital Plan.

President Ruttenberg would like to know if V3 identified any concerns for the sanitary lines.

Mr. Wolterstorff reported that any repairs to the bluffs and the beach will not impact the sanitary lines.

FINANCIAL FORECASTS AND TREASURERS REPORT

Operations (General and Recreation Funds) Budget vs. Actual

Director Peters reported that as of July 31, 2021, staff budgeted \$10.7 million in operating revenue and she is pleased to report the actual revenue is \$12.2 million, surpassing the budgeted amount. Additionally, the actual expenses are significantly less than the budgeted amount. The actual expenses as of July 31, were \$7.8 million vs. the budgeted \$9.3 million, resulting in a year-to-date net surplus of \$2.9 million.

General Fund

As of July 31, 2021, the District's actual and budgeted revenues we're almost spot on. Actual revenue was \$3.2 million vs. the budget was \$3.1 million. Whereas actual expenses are significantly less than the budgeted amount. The actual expenses as of July 31, were \$2.4 million vs. the budgeted \$3.1 million, which contributed to an \$886,486 year-to-date net surplus. When compared to 2019, pre-covid, the District had a \$175,141 surplus.

Recreation Fund

As of July 31, 2021, staff budgeted \$7.6 million in revenue, whereas the actual revenue is significantly higher at \$8.9 million. Much like the general fund, actual expenses are less than the budgeted amount. The actual expenses were \$5.4 million vs. the budgeted \$6.1 million, resulting in a year-to-date net surplus of \$2 million. When compared to 2019, pre-covid, the District had a \$394,053 surplus.

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 \$332,177 savings. This permitted a \$2.9 million surplus above the budgeted year-to-date net revenue and a \$1 million surplus when comparing the 3-year average. Furthermore, athletics has a \$162,513 surplus, camps have a \$285,420 surplus, tennis has a \$183,911 surplus, golf has a \$553,281 surplus, recreation has a \$136,565 surplus, and all cost centers are operating at a surplus.

Vice President Grossberg would like to know if staff are predicting changes in the Park District financial situation come the winter.

Director Peters reported that it is possible the District may not end with the projected figures, however, she does not anticipate an operating loss as of December 31, 2021. The bulk of the Districts revenue has already been netted.

Executive Director Romes reported that staff will review end-of-year projections at future Finance Committee Meetings.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Parks Foundation Update

Executive Director Romes reported that the Parks Foundation met last night to discuss current and future fundraising campaigns, which included the Amateur Pickleball Tournament occurring this weekend, since registration fees will be used to support the scholarship fund for 2022 summer camp, and the upcoming funds needed to support projects at Park Avenue. Additionally, the Parks Foundation also met with David and Jean Sogin to discuss fundraising at Park Avenue.

B. Director's Report

Executive Director Romes provided a couple community updates.

Donations

Recently the Park District received a letter thanking us for our online fitness platform, RC On the Go, specifically mentioning how Park District Fitness Supervisor and group exercise instructor, Lauren Worthy, impacted her life through the Pandemic. In fact, this participant was so grateful, that her thank you letter was accompanied by a \$1,000 donation check for the Parks Foundation of Highland Park in honor of Lauren's impact. To our surprise, the participant resides in Florida, and she chose our virtual platform as an outlet for recreation during the pandemic. As you know the Park District's Virtual fitness platform, RC on the Go is available to residents and nonresidents for the low fee of only \$5/month, all of which is provided to the Parks Foundation to support the Highland Park Community including programs such as the SMILE Scholarship Program. RC on the Go is still active with 96 members.

Moraine Township Food Pantry Garden

Anne Flanigan Bassi, with Moraine Township, emailed me today to thank the Park Board for our 13th year in partnering with Moraine Township to make their Food Pantry Garden possible at Woodridge Park. The Park District prepares and provides the Garden for Moraine Township generating at least 30 items of produce weekly for the Pantry and providing garden plots for 12 of their Pantry clients. It's the second summer during COVID protocols and she wanted to provide special thanks to Dan Voss, Brian Dumas, and Parks Staff for their efforts to prepare the garden for planting, which makes an important impact on providing essential resources to Moraine Township Residents. Anne also extends an invitation to take any of the Park Board members on a tour of the garden or the Pantry.

Daddy Daughter Luau

This Saturday, August 28 will be our first ever, Daddy Daughter Luau at Rosewood Beach. There are 130 participants enrolled in the first session, beginning at 4:30 p.m., and 70 participants enrolled in the 6:30 p.m. session. Registration is still open for the later session. Participants will park at Ravinia School, where a shuttle bus will transport them to the Beach. The evening will be filled with dancing, limbo, hula-hooping, and crafting. Guests will also make their own lei and create a sand sculpture before meeting the queen of the beach, Muana!

Parks Foundation Pickleball Tournament

This weekend the Parks Foundation Jr. Board is hosting a 2-day Pickleball Fundraiser tournament at Danny Cunniff Pickleball Courts. Registration is still available for the pre-tournament clinic with a pro (\$25/player), along with Women's Doubles (\$50/player) and Mixed Doubles (\$50/player). The Men's division is sold out. Each event entry will be entered into our drawing for prizes and registration will help the Parks Foundation raise funds to send local children in need to a 2022 Summer Camp.

Chicago Open Pickleball Tournament

Labor Day weekend The Park District is hosting the 2021 Chicago Open Pickleball Tournament which is a Pro and Amateur Pickleball Tournament beginning Thursday, September 2 – Sunday, September 5, at Danny Cunniff Park. Registration for all divisions is still available through Eventbrite. An estimated 650 players are expected to compete with a \$35,000 purse for professional competitors. Spectators can purchase admission tickets (\$10/day for general or \$75/day for VIP which includes snacks, a boxed meal, non-alcoholic refreshments, and 3 drink tickets. The event will be televised on CBS Sports.

Autumn Fest

September 24 from 4:00 – 7:00 p.m. will be our Annual Autumn Fest at Heller Nature Center. Families will enjoy a petting zoo, pumpkin patch, campfire, games, and more. This is a pre-registered ticket event. Tickets will not be sold at the door. Timed entry begins at 4:00 p.m. Fee is \$30 per child / \$15 per adult.

Touch-A-Truck

Saturday, September 25 from 10:00 – 12:00 p.m. will be our annual Touch a Truck event where children can check out the view from the driver's seat of the biggest trucks around the Park District and City. The event is planned to take place at Sunset Woods Park.

C. Board Comments

Commissioner Kaplan reported that he has received several compliments from the community regarding the recently introduced rules for pickleball court usage.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE BOARD – None

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ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Commissioner Bernstein and seconded by Commissioner Freeman and approved by a unanimous vote. The Board Meeting adjourned at 7:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Roxanne Hejnowski

Roxanne Hejnowski, Assistant Secretary