

**MINUTES OF A PARKS AND NATURAL AREAS COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK HELD ON WEDNESDAY, JUNE 16, 2021, 4:05 PM. THE MEETING WAS CONDUCTED REMOTELY DUE TO THE GOVERNOR'S DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY AS A RESULT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.**

**Present:** Commissioner Freeman, Commissioner Kaplan, and Vice President Grossberg

**Also, Present:** Executive Director Romes; Director Voss, Director Smith, Director Gogola, Manager Schwartz, Manager Grill, Manager Johnson; Coordinator Hejnowski

**Guest Speaker:** None

**Public Comment for Items on the Agenda**

None

**Park Site Plans**

Manager Schwartz reported that the Park Site Plan initiative sets standards for outdoor parks to easily identify areas needing improvements, and whether those improvements fall under capital, operational, or maintenance expenses. Through this process, staff will have a strong grasp of what needs to be accomplished to meet both short and long-term goals while remaining fiscally responsible and within budget. The standards examine capacity, access, quality, and experience.

- **Capacity:** looks at diverse elements within the neighborhood.
- **Access:** are parks easily accessible for pedestrians, bikers, vehicles, etc.
- **Quality:** identifies the scale of landscaping and ongoing maintenance needed.
- **Experience:** examines how parks contribute to the community.

Manager Schwartz reported that staff will be using the GreenPrint Park Data Sheets as a foundation to incorporate the park site standards. Furthermore, this plan evaluates existing conditions and compares them to newly developed site standards. Overall, the final deliverable will include a confirmed inventory of each park, an evaluation of standards (scores), an assessment of needs, and provide recommendations that will be incorporated into capital and operational repairs.

Commissioner Freeman would like to know the metric used for evaluation and how staff will prioritize projects.

Manager Schwartz reported that staff are basing our evaluation standards on an industry level of service provided by community Feedback from GreenPrint and the Community Attitude and Interest Survey. For example, the community identified tennis courts and walking paths as crucial community components.

Commissioner Freeman would like to know if the data from the Attitude and Interest Survey needs to be refreshed.

Manager Schwartz reported that surveys such as the Attitude and Interest, are conducted every 10years, so the current data is supported.

Executive Director Romes reported that the Park District could conduct another one prior to the 10year expiration marker if the Park Board feels it's necessary.

Commissioner Freeman would like to know if the cycling of the Attitude and Interest Surveying aligns with GreenPrint.

Manager Schwartz reported that the GreenPrint Master Plan will need to be renewed in 2024.

Vice President Grossberg would like to know if the public will also be evaluating our parks

Manager Schwartz reported that staff will be incorporating survey data from the community when evaluating each park. For example, Sherwood Park is a neighborhood park, so staff has determined that neighborhood parks need four (4) recreational elements to meet the community standards. All the recreation elements were identified in GreenPrint.

#### **Sunset Woods Playground and Site Master Plan Updates**

Manager Schwartz reported that the Park District has five (5) separate bids going out tomorrow for projects at Sunset Woods Playground and she shared an image of the Concept Plan presented to the Park Board this past February since she recently received community feedback.

#### ***Southeast Corner of the Site***

The Park Board and the community had concerns that the proposed wheel-friendly plaza would eliminate a significant amount of green space, so Hitchcock Design Group removed the pump track from the wheel-friendly plaza. The skate and bike park will remain in this area along with an adjacent seating area.

#### ***Central Point of the Site***

Staff would like to keep the water spray elements, such as a splash pad, as a seasonal option, but are looking at introducing other year-round elements.

Manager Schwartz reported that while these new improvements received positive feedback, staff would like to keep the community involved so the Park District will host an event on July 10 at Sunset Woods Park in conjunction with the Unplugged Illinois event, to further discuss elements for the site.

Vice President Grossberg would like to know if piping and water to operate a splash pad is still a cost issue.

Manager Schwartz reported that since there are piping and water fountains near the playgrounds installing a splash pad in this area would not be a significant cost. Furthermore, the community strongly supported the installation of a splash pad and staff feel this is the ideal location. However, the Park Site Plans may determine that Sunset Woods Park may not be the best park for a splash pad, to which staff will explore other parks to introduce this element since it is strongly supported by the community.

Commissioner Freeman would like to know when staff conducted an evaluation of parks and checked inventory.

Manager Schwartz reported that an evaluation was conducted during GreenPrint. At that time, staff looked at parks holistically, whereas the Park Site plan examines local and neighboring parks in addition to community parks.

**The Preserve of Highland Park Signage Plan**

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.

**Other Business**

None

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 5:17 p.m.