

THE RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK HELD ON SEPTEMBER 2, 2021, 4:03 PM. THE MEETING WAS HELD AT WEST RIDGE CENTER, 636 RIDGE ROAD HIGHLAND PARK.

Present: Commissioner Freeman, Vice President Grossberg

A motion was made by Commissioner Freeman and seconded by Vice President Grossberg to allow Commissioner Bernstein to join the meeting through electronic means as his absence was due to employment purposes.

Roll Call:

Aye: Commissioner Freeman, Vice President Grossberg

Nay: None

Absent: None

Abstain: None

Motion Carried

Commissioner Bernstein joined the meeting at 4:04pm

Present: Commissioner Bernstein, Commissioner Freeman, Vice President Grossberg

Also, Present: Executive Director Romes; Director Gogola, Director Carr, Manager Johnson, Coordinator Hejnowski

Guest Speaker: None

Additions to the Agenda

None

Public Comment

Samantha Asher

54 Oakmont Road, Highland Park

I am a current resident of Highland Park. My family and I moved in this summer, and we absolutely love the community. That said, I ran into a bit of trouble when attempting to sign my child up for a class through the HP Park. The majority of classes appear to take place during the day throughout the week. This presents a problem, as both myself and my husband work full time. I would really appreciate it if more weekend classes were added so that families in which all adults hold full time jobs can still participate in the activities that the park association offers.

Sarah Gaines

418 Prospect Avenue, Highland Park

Many of us wish there were more open skate times for the children who are in school full days. We would also like options for kids to skate on weekends! There are NO Sunday times! And very limited times on Saturday. Such a shame! We have a great facility and some wonderful coaches that are ready and willing to coach our children. But aren't ever given ice time to do privates, semi privates or create small groups. Or to just go with a friend. It would be nice to see the skaters have more ice time.

Shannon Dsida

1357 Green Bay Road, Highland Park

I am writing to request the addition of programming that meets the needs of working parents. Currently, much of the programming for young children is nearly impossible to participate in if you have working caregivers.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor's 2020 report, both parents are working in nearly 60% of families with children under 18, which means that most parents are balancing work and families. As a mother of a 19-month-old, I am well aware of the struggles of balancing both – and I have the luxury to work from home.

While the Park District of Highland Park offers many exceptional programs, the vast majority are held during the weekday and are not accessible to those with young children who do not have a parent or other stay-at-home caregiver. I would like to ask the board to consider this when scheduling programming for upcoming seasons.

We are grateful to the park district for maintaining the many beautiful parks my family enjoys almost daily. We hope that the district can continue to move toward more inclusive programming for families of all types.

Marketing Update

Director Gogola reported that the marketing team is updating the Park District Website (www.pdhp.org), integrating the seasonal guides into our website, developing a Park District Application, and finalizing a welcome kit for new residents. The website and application changes will be live in 2022.

a. Website Updates

The current website is over 500 pages, so staff are improving the navigation system for mobile and desktop users. The common customer and staff complaints when navigating the site includes larger fonts, more images, and symbols, and overall improve the navigation functions so that users can quickly find information such as registration, permits, and rentals. Additionally, staff used Google Analytics and Heatmaps to determine which pages and links receive the most visits.

She shared images of the proposed changes to the Homepage, which includes the possibility of integrating a shopping cart so that users could quickly make donations, purchase merchandise, and purchase programming items such as uniforms. Since the "What's New" and "Upcoming Events" pages are heavily utilized by visitors there will be few changes to those pages. Overall, Director Gogola no longer wants the website to function primarily for promotional purposes, instead, it needs to support the brand and provide important information unrelated to promotions.

Vice President Grossberg would like to know where staff gathered information to support these recommended changes.

Director Gogola reported that the data was pulled from customer/community feedback, mainly their complaints and frustrations when using our website.

Vice President Grossberg would like to know if the new website could include a recommendation engine as seen on Amazon.

Director Gogola reported it's a great feature for upselling opportunities, however, she will need to follow up with Manager Rendler to see if RecTrac can integrate this component.

Vice President Grossberg reported that he always has challenges with registration, so he would like to know if the website updates would improve this function.

Executive Director Romes reported that unfortunately that's tied to our registration software, WebTrac.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to know how staff plans to disseminate emergency information.

Director Gogola reported that a quick snippet alert bar (red) will appear at the top of the home page. When clicked on it will link to the full details.

Commissioner Bernstein requested that the alert bar be the first thing users see when visiting our website. Additionally, he would like to know if the push notifications could be proactive vs. reactive.

Director Gogola agreed with Commissioner Bernstein, suggesting that all push notifications will be proactive.

Lastly, Director Gogola reported the test site will be operational in December so staff and a group of community users could provide feedback. Staff are hoping to launch the new website in February of 2022.

b. *Integrated Online Seasonal Guide*

Director Gogola reported that the Park District is saving \$100,000 annually by eliminating the print brochure. Wilmette, Glencoe, and Hoffman Estates Park Districts are neighboring districts that eliminated print brochures; however, staff would like to release a 4page mailer to promote the seasonal guides.

Director Gogola reported that staff are going to run a trial this December with Summer Camp programs and shared the updated layout and splash page with the Committee. She quickly navigated through the trial site so the Committee could better understand the changes to the user experience. Lastly, the integration will eliminate duplicate or inconsistent information since staff would no longer have to manually enter programming data into three systems. Instead, the website will automatically populate the data into WebTrac and RecTrac.

c. *New App*

Director Gogola shared a layout of the app, which includes push notifications for virtual passes, facility conditions, events, registration, fitness, summer programs, and much more. She ran through several navigation scenarios, such as facility conditions. In this case, users can indicate which facilities and parks they would like to receive push notifications from, such as closures due to weather or changes in operational hours.

As for virtual passes and memberships, Director Gogola reported that the app allows individuals and families to scan those items through their phones.

Commissioner Freeman would like to know if print passes are still available.

Director Gogola reported that print passes will still be available, however, she is hoping the need for print will significantly decrease due to the app.

Commissioner Freeman would like to know if the app has a survey function and if a user's location is on can the District track where those users are.

Director Gogola will check with the web developer to see if the survey function could be integrated. As for tracking users, that is not a function.

As for the schedule, Director Gogola reported that staff plan to submit the app to Apple and Google on September 20, however, it could take up to four months to get approved, so there is no launch date at this time.

d. *Resident Welcome Kit*

Director Gogola reported that the welcome booklet is 28 pages, which introduces the Park District and the community. She is pleased to report that advertising offset all the costs for production and print. She shared images of the welcome kit. The Park district's website, social media, and registration links are promoted in the welcome kit booklet and each page is dedicated to a facility and unique programs such as ParkSchool. Overall, Director Gogola reported that staff plans to mail these out this October.

Other Business

Executive Director Romes reported the next meeting in October 19, which staff will provide an update of the business plan for the Recreation Center of Highland Park and the 2020 Summer Camp report.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:59 p.m.