

**PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK  
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS  
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING  
SEPTEMBER 28, 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. Members of the public may participate virtually or attend in-person. Links to the virtual meeting can be found on the Park District website <https://www.pdhp.org/park-board/meetings/>.

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 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 Johnson

**ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA**

Executive Director Romes reported that staff would like to add "Format for Regular Park Board Meetings due to COVID-19" as an agenda item under Unfinished Business.

**PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

*Annette Lidawer*

*366 N. Deere Park Dr. E. Highland Park, IL*

I am on the City Council of Highland Park, and the liaison to the Park District. She is thankful to be meeting in person and she commended the Park District for the work we have been doing and she is looking forward to working with us moving forward.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

A motion was made by Commissioner Kaplan, seconded by Commissioner Freeman to approve items the Minutes from the August 10, 2021 Workshop Meeting, the Minutes from the August 24, 2021 Regular Board Meeting, the Firewall Upgrade Project, the Purchase of Two Capital Replacement Vehicles, the Lot 3 Parking Lot Improvement Project Change Order #1, the Centennial Ice Arena Renovation Gewalt Hamilton Associates Proposal, the Centennial Ice Arena Renovation Woodhouse Tinucci Architects Agreement, the Park Avenue Boat Launch and Wave Protection Replacement Project Proposal – Final Engineering and Permitting, and Bills and Payroll in the amount of \$1,630,536.37.

**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**

***Operations (General and Recreation Funds) Budget vs. Actual***

Director Peters reported that as of August 31, 2021, staff budgeted \$11.7 million in operating revenue and she is pleased to report the actual revenue is \$14.3 million, surpassing the budgeted amount. Additionally, the actual expenses are significantly less than the budgeted amount. The actual expenses as of August 31, were \$9.3 million vs. the budgeted \$10.7 million, resulting in a year-to-date net surplus of \$4 million. When compared to the 3-year average it's a \$2.4 million year-to-date net surplus. The surplus of revenue is due to the extension from Lake County coming in higher than budgeted and property taxes from 2020 being distributed in 2021, along with athletics, camps, tennis, recreation, and golf generating a \$160,000 surplus in programming revenue as of August 31. As for expenses, Director Peters reported that payroll is \$350,000 less than budgeted.

***General Fund***

As of August 31, 2021, the District's actual revenue was \$3.6 million vs. the budget of \$3.2 million. Whereas actual expenses are significantly less than the budgeted amount. The actual expenses as of August 31, were \$2.8 million vs. the budgeted \$3.5 million, which contributed to a \$1.2 million year-to-date net surplus. When compared to 2019, pre-covid, the District had a \$744,156 surplus.

***Recreation Fund***

As of August 31, 2021, staff budgeted \$8.5 million in revenue, whereas the actual revenue is significantly higher at \$10.6 million. Much like the general fund, actual expenses are less than the budgeted amount. The actual expenses were \$7.1 million vs. the budgeted \$10.6 million, resulting in a year-to-date net surplus of \$2.7 million. When compared to 2019, pre-covid, the District had a \$1.3 million 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 \$358,340 savings. This permitted a \$4 million surplus above the budgeted year-to-date net revenue and a \$2.4 million surplus when comparing the 3-year average. Furthermore, athletics has a \$219,555 surplus, camps have a \$222,283 surplus, tennis has a \$388,207 surplus, golf has a \$627,512 surplus, recreation has a \$166,088 surplus, and all cost centers are operating at a surplus.

Commissioner Kaplan would like to know which areas are under budget.

Director Peters reported that Hidden Creek AquaPark came in \$20,000 under budget, Park Avenue Boating Facility and Beach were \$9,000 under budget, and outdoor tennis was \$9,000 under budget, however tennis overall is operating at a surplus.

Vice President Grossberg would like to know if the 2022 budget assumes normal operations.

Director Peters reported that the 2022 budget assumes a new normal, which aligns with revenue and expenses for the second half of 2021.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**A. Format for Regular Park Board Meetings Due to COVID-19**

Executive Director Romes reported that according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Lake County, Illinois continues to be at high risk for community transmission of COVID-19. Consistent with the Governor's most recent executive order, as well as practices of other local governments, such as the City of Highland Park, because of the current circumstances surrounding the spread of COVID-19, Executive Director Romes and the Park Board President believe it is not practical or prudent to hold Regular Park Board Meetings in person and recommend they be held virtually until further notice. The Park District will remain compliant with the Open Meetings Act and live stream all Regular Park Board

Meetings on the Park District's website, which will remain on our website for the public to view. Additionally, members of the public may register to attend Regular Park Board Meetings virtually. Park Board Committee Meetings, which require fewer Park Board Commissioners and staff to attend, will continue to meet in person. These meetings will also be streamed live on the Park District's website and members of the public may attend in person but are encouraged to view online or register to attend virtually, to assist in slowing the spread of COVID-19.

To note, all facilities of the Park District of Highland Park require a face covering to be worn in public spaces.

President Ruttenberg supports this recommendation as it is consistent with the Park District's vaccine policy and errs on the side of precaution with health and safety as a top priority.

Commissioner Bernstein and Commissioner Kaplan would like the Committee Meetings to be held virtually as well.

President Ruttenberg prefers all public meetings be held virtually until further notice vs. a hybrid option.

Vice President Grossberg prefers meetings to be held in person.

Commissioner Freeman will support what the majority favors.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to know staff's preference.

Executive Director Romes reported that staff prefers meeting in person, however, they support the Park Board if they prefer meetings to be held virtually until further notice.

Staff received consensus from the Park Board of Commissioners that pursuant to Section 7(e) of the Open meetings Act, that it is not practical or prudent to hold in-person meetings because of the COVID-19 public health emergency. Neither the elected officials nor the public will be allowed to attend Regular or Committee Meetings in person but will participate virtually.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **A. Parks Foundation Update**

Vice President Grossberg reported that the Parks Foundation met on September 21 and provided a brief summary of the items discussed.

#### ***Sunset Woods Plaza Brick Sales***

Currently the Foundation is conducting a Capital Campaign for the Sunset Woods Playground Plaza. They are selling donation bricks and hopscotches. As of last week, \$7,200 has been raised. The

Foundation Board is encouraging all Foundation Board Members, Park Board Members, as well as other residents and park users to consider purchasing a brick in support of the playground and plaza area that will be enjoyed by many families and residents in the community. Foundation members did attend Saturday's Touch-a-Truck event, which was very well attended.

***Pickleball Tournament***

A few weeks back the Foundation coordinated a community pickleball tournament to raise funds for the FYI program. There were 60 participants and the event raised approximately \$2,000.

***Highland Park Community Foundation Grant Application***

The Foundation recently requested a \$10,000 grant for the FYI program from the Highland Park Community Foundation and received notice of an award but not sure of the amount.

***Summer Recap***

The Foundation reported on a variety of FREE events they sponsored this summer to promote health and wellness in Highland Park and Highwood including Yoga and Zumba in the Park, with approximately 30 participants in each of the sessions. There is one more FREE Zumba in the Park on September 30 at Everts Park in Highwood at 6:00 p.m.

***Park Avenue Breakwater and Boat Ramp Project***

The Foundation has met numerous times with members of the NSYC and Boating community towards the development of a Park Avenue Fundraising Committee. In a very short time, they have made significant progress towards beginning a capital fundraising campaign which they hope to kick off in the next few weeks.

**B. Director's Report**

Executive Director Romes provided a couple community updates.

***Upcoming Events***

On Thursday, September 30, there will be a drive-in movie showing in the RCHP parking lot of Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone. Tickets are still available and can be purchased for \$30 per vehicle or an upgrade including a fire pit is available for \$70. Currently, there are 19 cars registered. On Friday, October 22, the Park District will be hosting the Halloween Hauntings at Larry Fink Park. Registered guests will be walking the haunted trail around the pond. Tickets are still available and are \$15 per person. Currently, 175 tickets have been sold. Sunset Valley Golf Course is hosting the Illinois Junior Golf Association Fall JR Elite Event this coming Saturday and Sunday. Currently, there is a 72-player field for boys and girls ages 10 - 15. Tee times are from 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. on both days. Heller Honey is still available for purchase. Thanks to the hard work of our staff and volunteers, this year the Park District harvested over 800 lbs. Heller honey is 100% natural and produced at the Nature Center. Cost is \$11/jar or .25 for a honey stick, or 5 honey sticks for \$1.00. Honey can be purchased at the Heller Nature Center, Mondays and Wednesdays from 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. or at the RCHP Monday – Friday from 7:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Saturdays and Sundays from 7:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

***Awards***

The Park District of Highland Park received state-wide recognition with an Illinois Association of Park District (IAPD) Best of the Best Award for Sportsmanship, honoring two of our outstanding volunteer coaches David and Andy Engle. Award winners will be recognized at the IAPD Best of the Best Awards Gala on October 15. IAPD winners were selected from entries submitted throughout the state recognizing the “Best of the Best” park districts, forest preserves, conservation, recreation, and special recreation agencies in eight categories. Coaches Andy and David Engle have been with the Park District of Highland Park for three seasons as volunteer Travel Baseball Coaches. Both have volunteered well over 1000 hours throughout their three seasons. They have been instrumental to Highland Park’s baseball community on many levels. Andy and David embody what it means to be committed volunteers, from ensuring our playing fields are safe and adequate to recruit players to organizing home field tournaments. They instill teamwork, hard work, respect, safety, and a family environment while ensuring everyone is having fun. They do not coach to the scoreboard or concern themselves with the team’s record; however, their teams have been very successful. This past season, the 12U team they coached went 31 - 14 and won two out of five tournaments. They both are exemplary role models for their young players. They teach respect, dignity, sportsmanship, hard work, and pride in the community they represent. Andy and David are most deserving of the IAPD Good Sportsmanship Award.

***West Ridge Center Site RFQ***

The Park District is beginning the process to replace the aging West Ridge Center with a new community center at West Ridge Park. The first step is to form a team of design professionals to design the building and the park. The District will issue a Request for Qualifications on September 30 inviting firms to submit qualifications for review. The top-ranked firms will be asked to prepare a presentation and interview with the selection committee. We expect to bring a recommendation to the Park Board in November for approval at the December Park Board Meeting.

**C. Board Comments**

Vice President Grossberg commended Manager Sangern and Manager Saunders for their dedication to the District as they always go above and beyond to please the community and put in long hours during the golf season.

**OPEN TO THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE BOARD** –None

**ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made by Commissioner President Ruttenberg and seconded by Commissioner Bernstein and approved by a unanimous vote. The Board Meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Roxanne Hejnowski, Assistant Secretary