

**MINUTES OF A THE RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK HELD ON OCTOBER 19, 2021, 4:02 PM. PURSUANT TO SECTION 7(e) OF THE OPEN MEETINGS ACT, THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS HAS MADE A FINDING 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. LINKS TO THE VIRTUAL MEETING CAN BE FOUND ON THE PARK DISTRICT WEBSITE [HTTPS://WWW.PDHP.ORG/PARK-BOARD/MEETINGS/](https://www.pdhp.org/park-board/meetings/)**

**Present:** Commissioner Bernstein, Commissioner Freeman, Vice President Grossberg, President Ruttenberg

**Also, Present:** Executive Director Romes; Director Smith; Director Carr, Director Gogola; Assistant Director Maliszewski, Assistant Director Murrin, Manager Nichols, Manager Acevedo, Manager Johnson; Coordinator Hejnowski

**Guest Speaker:** None

**Approval of the Recreation Committee Meeting Minutes from September 2, 2021**

The minutes from the September 2, 2021 Recreation Committee Meeting Minutes were approved.

**2021 Summer Camp Report**

***Summary***

The camp 2021 season was a significant success given the challenging circumstances. Through District-wide internal collaboration and partnerships with the North Suburban Special Recreation Association, North Shore School District 112, Township High School District 113, and various private organizations the Park District of Highland remarkably accommodated 1251 registrations through 20 various camp offerings.

The 2021 camp marketing campaign continued the “Find Your Adventure” theme while also encouraging families and campers to “Take Back Summer” after having the previous camp season halted due to the Covid-19 global pandemic. Throughout the marketing campaign testimonial videos from staff and campers were included to encourage families to allow the Park District of Highland Park be their resource to help take their summer back! The campaign proved to be successful as there were 241 registrations on the first available day of registration compared to 131 in 2019 and 192 pre-pandemic in 2020.

As always is the case and certainly during a pandemic, health and safety was of utmost importance. Camp staff participated in a thorough in-service training on June 15. Staff not only learned of our consistent health and safety guidelines but also the new Covid-19 mitigation expectations. Staff then held pre-camp meetings with families to discuss the expectation of having the most amazing summer but doing so safely. Staff also continued the past practice of communicating with families via each individual camp’s Sway Page sharing updates, pictures, and important information.

To be able to “Take Back Sumer” staff were able to safely re-implement some of the most exciting components of each camp. Campers, once again, were able to enjoy the amazing amenities the Park District of Highland Park offers including visits to Rosewood Beach to enjoy the beach, Hidden Creek Aqua Park for swim lessons or to take in the exciting water features, Centennial Ice Arena for ice skating or

gymnastics, Heller Nature Center for archery and to enjoy the trails, Highland Park Golf Learning Center for mini golf or the driving range, and Deer Creek Racquet Club to try their hand in pickleball or tennis. Camps were also able to take external field trips to sporting events, Six Flags Great America, Funtopia, or horseback riding, to name a few.

Considering the 2021 camp season was still during a global pandemic, there were various camps and/or provisions that were unable to be done safely. In 2021 CIT Camp, centralized before and after care, and AM/PM bus routes were not available. However, staff are diligently working to re-introduce these offerings in 2022.

In 2021 there were 524 unique participants, which is nearly a 50% reduction from pre-COVID years. As a result, staff offered mini camps to make up for the reduction in participants. Total revenue was \$1.2 million vs. pre-COVID years was around \$1.5 million.

Assistant Director Maliszewski is pleased to report that the following camps returned in 2021.

**A. *Camp Tot Stop & Camp Sunshine***

Younger children could participate in Camp Tot Stop or Camp Sunshine. Camp Tots Stop was available for children 3-4 years and Camp Sunshine was available to children entering kindergarten in the fall. All campers and staff wore face masks during day except for when swimming at Hidden Creek AquaPark or Rosewood Beach. During weekly visits to the AquaPark and beach campers practiced water safety and skill development. All fieldtrips were held in house and on the last day of camp, campers enjoyed an inflatable bounce house and slide.

Staff are recommending offering Camp Sunshine for preschoolers who are 4years of age and to children entering kindergarten in the fall 5-days a week from 9:15 – 2:30 p.m. at Ravinia and West Ridge Center in 2022.

**B. *Junior Crew, Senior Crew, and Senior Crew XL***

Junior Crew Camp was located at Sherwood Elementary School as their home base. Senior Crew Camp and Senior Crew XL Camp were originally scheduled to be held at Red Oak School, however, due to extensive construction at the site these camps were relocated to their traditional home of Sunset Woods Park starting the second week. All campers and staff had to wear face masks during the day except for when swimming at the AquaPark or Rosewood Beach. Crew campers enjoyed a variety of weekly activities such as science, art, and cooking, all of which were planned around the theme of the week. Field trips included Maggie Daley Park, Lincoln Park Zoo, Wheeling Family Aquatic Park, Medieval Times, Funtopia, Action-Adventure Territory, Wagner Farms, and Boundless Adventure. Campers also enjoyed weekly in-house entertainment and activities provided by Amazing Minds, Magic by Gary, Nexlore, Improv, and took quick trips to the Heller Nature Center to spend some time geocaching and enjoying archery. In lieu of the All-Camp Event, Senior Crew camps had a few attractions at their sites including an inflatable obstacle course and water slide. Senior Crew and Senior Crew XL also enjoyed snow cones from the Kona Ice Truck.

Staff are recommending that all Crew Camps move back to Sunset Woods Park and bring back Session II (3-week) option for registration in 2022.

**C. *Junior and Senior Spotlighters***

Spotlighters Camps were held at Braeside School so the mid-summer and final shows could be performed on their gym and stage. Staff are pleased to report that campers loved their weekly dance, acting, and musical theater classes along with weekly visits to the AquaPark and Rosewood Beach. Field trips included Maggie Daley Park, Wheeling Family Aqua Park, Medieval Times, and sporadic visits to the Heller Nature Center. Additionally, campers' art and ceramics pieces were displayed at the mid-summer and final performances.

As for 2022 staff plan to keep Spotlighters Camp at Braeside since they have access to a stage for performances, however, they would like to bring back theater field trips and add new field trips such as ballet.

**D. *High Tide Low Tide***

Both were new camps this year. Registration for High Tide Low Tide sold out within an hour of going live. Due to the high demand, an alternative summer camp, Camp Driftwood, was offered. Both camps had identical schedules. High Tide Low Tide was full with 16 campers and Camp Driftwood had 15 campers and 16 campers for the first and second session respectively. Campers enjoyed the location at the Rosewood Interpretive Center for High Tide Low Tide and Ravinia school was a great alternative space that was close to the beach for Camp Driftwood. Both camps swam at the beach or at the Aqua Park 4 - 5 days a week, themed weeks added ta tremendous value to the camp experience, and campers enjoyed presentations from a magician and reptile expert. Lastly, campers enjoyed weekly field trips.

For 2022 staff would like to offer different themes to keep returning campers engaged and excited and increase the number of campers to accommodate interest.

***Hook, Line, and Sink***

Staff are pleased to report that this camp ran at maximum capacity, with 10 campers, even though it was reduced to half days and field trips were eliminated. Campers learned how to fly fish, tie knots, and make lures. Simple sports and activities were also introduced towards the end of each week for variety

For 2022 staff would like to bring back field trips, specifically the salmon fishing boat and offer more education and instruction.

**E. *Golf Academy***

The Golf Academy increased from 27 participants in 2019, pre-COVID, to 31 participants in 2021. With the increased number of campers, staff were able to bring back the Camp Director and two counselors. Campers used the hole behind the range for short game practice as well as practice for learning how to score. Campers enjoyed field trips to Centennial Ice Arena and the Heller Nature Center.

PGA half day camps were offered weekly from 9 – noon. The Park District ran six sessions with 12 campers in each session. Most of the participants were outside the Highland Park.

Staff are recommending additional field trips and other activities in the afternoons for 2022.

**F. *Deer Creek Racquet Club Tennis Academy***

Camp transitioned from weekly full days with additional activities to half-days strictly focused on tennis. In 2021, camp was a 3-hour period with a focus on tennis instruction and other tennis incorporated games like the highly requested “Tennis Baseball” game. Total registration was up to 423 vs. 368 in 2020 when comparing the two years with weekly half-day options. Additionally, total revenue increased from \$90,422 in 2020 to \$107,279.77 in 2021.

As for 2022, our tradition full day tennis camp will return. Mornings will be spent at the Larry Fink Park tennis courts and afternoon activities will include trips to local water parks and beaches, movie theaters, bowling, laser tag, and family fun centers.

**G. *Recreational and Competitive Gymnastics Camp***

Staff offered two sections of gymnastics camp in 2021, recreational or a higher-level competitive camp to current competitive team gymnasts so that they could continue building their skills, strength, and dance over the summer. There was a total of 28 campers between both sections. Competitive Gymnastics Camp was available 3 to 5 days a week from 9am – noon and families could register for 7, 4, or 3-week sessions. Recreational Gymnastics Camp was available 2 to 3 days a week in the afternoons with 7 or 4-week sessions. Recreational Gymnastics Camp included arts and crafts and snack time outside.

Depending on the construction schedule at Centennial for 2022, staff are hoping both gymnastics camps can be offered in 2022. If construction permits, it will be a full day camp that includes field trips and swimming.

**H. *Girls Play Strong***

Registration decreased by 20% compared to 2019 (10 campers). However, camp maximum was restricted to 38 to accommodate the bus maximum of 42 (including 4 staff). Camp focus shifted from a heavy emphasis on sport skill development, to using sports and new activities to focus on weekly themes that would empower young females. Each week had a theme and Athlete of the Week that best exemplified that theme. Themes included Teamwork, Confidence, Leadership, Grit, Mindfulness, Compassion, Advocacy, and Growth. Campers enjoyed weekly Wednesday field trips that encouraged girls to get out of their comfort zone through new and exciting activities like Zip Lining at Boundless Adventure, Rock Climbing at Maggie Daley Park, Canoeing the Skokie Lagoons, or completing an Ultimate Ninja course. Campers enjoyed their trips to various Park District facilities each week, including swimming at Rosewood Beach and Hidden Creek, playing mini golf at the Golf Learning Center, learning Pickleball from Deer Creek professionals, crate stacking at Heller Nature Center, and skating with other campers at Centennial Ice Arena. With our knowledgeable Camp Director and athletic counselors, girls learned a variety of traditional sports each week like soccer, basketball, volleyball, tennis, bowling, and softball, in addition traditional “camp” games like Capture the Flag, Spud, and Kickball. Each week ended with a Friday Fun Day in which campers celebrated with a fun treat like ice cream sundaes, a lemonade stand, popsicles, or a pizza party. During our Friday Fun Days, we also recognized outstanding campers with awards for leadership, attitude, creativity, and sportsmanship. Another favorite activity from campers was the creativity aspect of camp.

Campers loved making friendship bracelets, keychains and lanyards, tie-dying clothes, coloring with chalk, and making cards for each other. Through these creative activities campers spent time making things for other people, teaching new techniques and designs, and creating with intention. Lastly, a new camp director, two counselors, and one experienced counselor created a safe, welcome, encouraging, fun, and exciting space for girls to know what it means to play strong – both as an athlete and as a person.

For 2022 staff would like to bring back outside contractors to teach 4 sport specific lessons throughout the summer (softball, volleyball, basketball, martial arts), attend fitness specific classes at the RCHP such as yoga, Zumba, kickboxing, travel every day, and increase the number of counselors.

**I. *Mini JV Sports (Grades 1- 6) and Mini Baseball Camps (Grades 1 – 8)***

Combined the 2 camps had 271 registrations. JV Sports 155 and Mini Baseball 116 and over \$59,000 in revenue. Weekly Mini Sports camp played everything from soccer to tennis baseball! The vast variety of athletic games and competitions makes the 3 hours of camp go by fast. Weekly Mini JV Sports camp was always highlighted by Thursday color wars. The camp was split into 4 groups of colors and the campers came dressed up representing their color. Always the highlight of the week and peak of fun was color wars. Weekly Mini Baseball Camp was divided into both skill work and games. Players worked on the skill of the day while ending playing games like home run derby or 3 team baseball games. This unique combination allowed players to develop and learn key skills and while learning some great backyard baseball games they can play at home.

For 2022 staff would like to adjust the age groups 1-3 and 4-6 to help divided the camp into smaller groups and play more age-appropriate games for Mini JV Sports Camp.

**J. *Junior Varsity and Varsity Sports Camp***

JV Sports camp registration came in over the original budget of 23 campers. Hosted a total of 39 campers in 2021. Whereas Varsity Sports Camp registration came in over the original budget of 23 campers. Hosted a total of 41 camper in 2021. JV Campers enjoyed field trips to Action Territory, Ultimate Ninjas Libertyville, Funtopia, Classic Bowl, Mountain View Adventure Center, The Forge: Lemont Quarries, AMC Movie Theater Northbrook, and Medieval Times. Varsity Sports Campers enjoyed field trips to Action Territory, Ultimate Ninjas, Classic Bowl, Whirlyball-Vernon Hills, Six Flags Great America, Top Golf, Chicago Dogs Baseball Game, and Boundless Adventures. Overall, sports camps participated in several PDHP activities at various facilities. Campers enjoyed Geo-tracking and Archery with Heller staff, ice skating at Centennial Ice Arena, mini golf at the Golf Learning Center, outings to Rosewood Beach and used a video game truck service for the first time and it was a big hit amongst campers.

For 2022 staff would like to take daily field trips, create more contest in camp that do not require physical activity, and add more non-sports activities for JV Sports Camp.

Vice President Grossberg would like to know if the prices increased from 2019 to 2021.

Assistant Director Maliszewski reported that prices were similar to previous years.

President Ruttenberg commended staff for their efforts as it was a successful summer, however he would like to know how our prices compare to private camps.

Assistant Director Maliszewski reported that staff considers outside communities when determining prices, however, some camps are based at a premium such as Spotlighters.

President Ruttenberg would like to know if the Park District is relying on the local schools for use of theaters and stages for summer camps.

Executive Director Romes reported that theatre programs will most likely continue to be multi-use with the local schools.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to know if this presentation will be shared with the full Board of Park Commissioners.

Executive Director Romes reported that staff were not planning on providing an update to the full Board.

Commissioner Bernstein would like this presentation provided to the full Board of park Commissioners and include the dollars used from the Smile program to help the community participate in summer camp.

Commissioner Freeman would like staff to explore scale and flexibility with some of the premium camps such as Spotlighters, suggesting the mini camps were a huge success because of their flexibility of not having to commit to 7-week sessions. She would also like staff to call out what's included with the price.

Assistant Director Maliszewski appreciated Commissioner Freeman's recommended, however, a performing arts camp such as SpotLighters which concludes with a performance it's not a good fit for weekly registration. Furthermore, weekly sessions are challenging for staffing, so Managers would have to overcome those hurdles to ensure seasonal staff have guaranteed work.

### **2021 Summer Aquatics Report**

Manager Acevedo provided a summary of 2021 beach season, indicating that the beach was guarded from May 29 – September 16 (12 full weeks and 3 weekends). Open Swim was daily from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Overall, there were 50 seasonal employees who included Facility Managers, Supervisors, lifeguards, ambassadors, parking/access attendants, and Advance Security Solutions supplied security guards.

When considering safety, Manager Acevedo conducting a pre-season training and scheduled a training with Highland Park Fire Department. Internal audits were scheduled throughout the season along with live action drills, and weekly mandatory in-services. Lastly, audits were conducted by Counselman Hunsaker. Because of the COVID 19 health pandemic, additional policies and procedures were implemented along with changes to access control.

Manager Acevedo shared a chart comparing the revenue and expenses from the past three years so the Committee could understand the impacts from the pandemic. Overall, staffing and wages was the largest expense since residents and neighboring communities were flocking the lakefront.

As for the AquaPark, Manager Acevedo reported that the AquaPark was open from May 29 – September 6. From May 29 – June 15 it was reservations only. Lap swim, aquafit classes, and open swim were offered daily. Camp swim lessons were offered weekdays. The District offered the Family Punch Pass and

memberships as of June 15 when restrictions were lifted. Overall, there were 80 employees at the AquaPark.

Like the beach, additional safety measures were implemented which included conducting a pre-season training and scheduled a training with Highland Park Fire Department. Internal audits were scheduled throughout the season along with live action drills, and weekly mandatory in-services. Lastly, audits were conducted by Counselman Hunsaker. Because of the COVID 19 health pandemic, additional policies and procedures were implemented along with changes to access control.

Manager Acevedo shared a chart comparing the revenue and expenses from the past three years so the Committee could understand the impacts from the pandemic. Overall, the coupon books were a huge hit, generating \$58,597 in revenue which was a \$46,743 surplus from 2019. Attendance in 2021 was 23,952 compared to 2019 which was at 24,427. However, the first few weeks started off slow due to cold weather and reservations. Additionally, there were 2 less hours a week for open swim. Overall, the AquaPark operated at a \$38,606 loss.

President Ruttenberg and Vice President Grossberg commended Manager Acevedo indicating it was a comprehensive report and feels staff are moving in the right direction.

Commissioner Bernstein reported that he frequently visited the pool for lap swimming, and he was impressed with how attentive staff were and the cleanliness.

Commissioner Freeman would like to know if the AquaPark closed early some days due to limited staff.

Manager Acevedo reported that the AquaPark closed early on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July due to limited staff.

Commissioner Freeman suggested offering recruitment incentives.

Commissioner Kaplan felt Manager Acevedo did an exceptional job with recruiting, hiring, and training, and he said the same goes for Camp Supervisors. It's been challenging to recruit and retain good part time staff, so he is impressed. Pay has become much more competitive, however increases will be needed next year to retain good employees.

Commissioner Freeman agreed with compliments from Commissioner Kaplan.

### **Other Business**

The Board of Park Commissioners thanked Recreation and Facilities staff for their efforts and the community for coming out and participating in our programs.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 5:10 p.m.