

MINUTES OF A THE POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK HELD ON SEPTEMBER 13, 2021, 4:05 PM. THE MEETING WAS HELD AT WEST RIDGE CENTER, 636 RIDGE ROAD HIGHLAND PARK.

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

Roll Call:

Aye: Commissioner Freeman, Vice President Grossberg

Nay: None

Absent: None

Abstain: None

Present: Commissioner Freeman, Vice President Grossberg, President Ruttenberg

Also, Present: Executive Director Romes; Director Dunn; Coordinator Hejnowski

Guest Speaker: None

Public Comment

None

Approval of the Policy Committee Meeting Minutes from July 15, 2021

July 15, 2021 Policy Committee Meeting minutes were approved.

COVID-19 Emergency Response Planning Updates

Director Dunn reported that she and Executive Director Romes have been evaluating the possibility of implementing a vaccine mandate for all active employees based on a recent mandate issued by the President for organizations with 100 or more active employees. Director Dunn confirmed that the President’s mandate only impacts organizations in the private sector, however, staff are awaiting further guidance from OSHA. As a result, Director Dunn and Executive Director Romes have been weighing the risks and benefits of a mandate vs. weekly testing requirements and found that while Illinois requires school personnel to be vaccinated the mandate does not apply to Park District personnel, even those working in childcare settings. Furthermore, all active employees were required to disclose their vaccination status to which Director Dunn discovered that 92% of Park District personnel are fully vaccinated. Based on the Park District’s total vaccination status and since the state of Illinois does not have any mandates required of Park District personnel, and since the Park District Risk Management Agency (PDRMA) has not provided a formal recommendation on the subject, her and Executive Director Romes are opposed to a vaccine mandate and would prefer to continue educating and encouraging employees to get vaccinated.

President Ruttenberg would like to know how many full-time employees are active with the Park District of Highland Park.

Director Dunn reported that the Park District of Highland Park has 93 full-time active employees.

President Ruttenberg is opposed to staff's recommendation. Instead, he would like to follow the same standards and guidelines of Illinois schools requiring all personnel to be vaccinated.

Director Dunn reported that the state requires medical and religious exemptions even under a vaccine mandate, so there may be some employees seeking a medical or religious exemption, in which case those unvaccinated employees would undergo an interactive process with Human Resources.

Commissioner Freeman would like to know how many employees are not vaccinated.

Director Dunn reported that the 8% is composed of 27 employees. Half of those work behind the scenes and the other half are in front-facing positions interacting with children and the public.

Vice President Grossberg would like to know if employees were required to show proof of their vaccine cards.

Director Dunn reported that employees were not asked to provide proof of their vaccine cards.

Commissioner Freeman would like to know if weekly testing could be required of unvaccinated employees vs. a vaccine mandate since the mandate could result in a loss of employees, however, since children 12 years and under cannot be vaccinated, she would like to mitigate unvaccinated employees from coming into close contact with children.

Director Dunn reported that any programs utilizing school district space, such as a gymnasium at Elm Place, would need to follow the school district mandate, so unvaccinated employees would not be able to instruct those programs.

Vice President Grossberg would like to know if there is a cost to the Park District to accommodate unvaccinated employees.

Executive Director Romes reported that the Park District is not going to change programs to accommodate unvaccinated employees. Furthermore, the Park District will follow the same protocols as the school district, permitting religious or medical exemptions.

President Ruttenberg feels that any employee who comes into close contact with children should be vaccinated.

Vice President Grossberg reported that school districts 112 and 109 require unvaccinated employees to get tests each week and provide proof of a negative test result to enter the institution.

President Ruttenberg supports the school district requirement.

Commissioner Freeman does not feel the mandate or weekly testing should apply to employees who do not come in close contact with children.

Vice President Grossberg agreed with Commissioner Freeman; however, he feels the mandate or weekly testing should also include front-facing employees. Additionally, he would like to know which Park District enforced the mandate and what the neighboring District are doing.

Director Dunn reported that the Hoffman Estates Park District enforced the mandate for full-time employees, and the neighboring districts are not enforcing a mandate.

Vice President Grossberg would like to know how much weekly testing will cost the Park District.

Director Dunn reported at this time there is no cost for testing, however, there will be a cost to accommodate time spent to get tested.

Vice President Grossberg would like to know how long it typically takes to receive results from a free testing clinic.

Director Dunn reported that she would need to investigate that as it will affect the policy.

President Ruttenberg feels the district has the best model and would like the Park Board of Commissioners to approve a policy that mimics the school district's model.

Vice President Grossberg would like to know if there is concern about the 27 employees leaving should the Park Board approve a mandate.

Director Dunn and Executive Director Romes reported there is a risk of those employees leaving if a mandate is approved.

President Ruttenberg feels that the Park District's commitment to the community is more valuable than a disgruntled employee. Furthermore, he suggests that our District should lead and set an example vs. following the neighboring districts.

Commissioner Freeman would like to know if the Park District can collect employee vaccination forms.

Director Dunn reported that the Park District is permitted to collect forms, so long as each file is confidential.

Vice President Grossberg and Commissioner Freeman would be in favor of enforcing a mandate if the 92% of fully vaccinated employees significantly drops after proof is required.

Vice President Grossberg requested that staff draft a policy that clearly defines which positions come into close contact with children.

Executive Director Romes reported that Director Dunn will collect vaccine cards from all active employees, and they will work with the District's legal counsel and Risk Management Agency to define what is considered close contact with children, and identify which positions fall into that category. Furthermore,

they will draft a policy requiring employees who come into close contact with children to get vaccinated or test weekly.

Vice President Grossberg would like to know if the Park District's insurance premiums are suspected to rise due to unvaccinated employees.

Director Dunn reported that PDRMA does not anticipate a significant increase in insurance premiums since most of the Park District's workforce are seasonal or part-time employees.

President Ruttenberg requested that a message be shared with the community as soon as a policy is in place to promote that the Park District is a safe place for children. Furthermore, he would like to schedule a Special Meeting before the end of the month to get the policy approved.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Executive Director Romes reminded the Policy Committee liaisons that a stated goal in the 2021 Annual Work Plan is to integrate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusions (DEI) into our core values and develop an action plan for auditing and recommending improved policies and practices related to DEI. To which the Park District developed a staff Climate Task Force to review and recommend evolving policy improvements and best practices regarding DEI and he shared a list of the most recent items which the task force has been working on.

As of July 21, thirty full-time employees attended a virtual LatinX Safe Zone Conversation, facilitated by IAPD. This was a great opportunity for staff to safely discuss topics that can be deemed sensitive, uncomfortable, or complex in nature, regarding the Latino/a demographic and the challenges they are facing professionally and personally related to racism and inequality. future conversations will be scheduled in the fall and winter to discuss racism, LGBTQ, and LatinX.

On July 23, The Community DEI Experience Form was launched at Rosewood Beach. Currently, the Park District received five (5) submissions, three (3) of which pertained to DEI. The goal is to gather data that can help the Climate Task Force shape new policies and procedures which will make our parks and facilities more inclusive.

At the July 27 Regular Board Meeting, the Park Board of Commissioners adopted a value statement and supporting pledge for inclusion.

On August 11, the task force reviewed the responses from the 2021 Employee Perception Survey and are working to develop and implement new practices and procedures to address identified weaknesses.

Lastly, the National Park and Recreation Association (NRPA) developed a DEI Framework, which embodies a BOTH/AND approach to understanding how you as an individual, you and others, us as an organization, and us as an organization and the community can implement change to better support DEI. On September 10, the task force took that template to develop quadrants better suited to our needs.

Quadrant 1: You (Individual-Internal)

Develop self-awareness of DEI through educational resources and trainings.

Quadrant 2: US (Organizational-Internal)

Develop a workplace culture where policies, procedures and organizational practices support DEI.

Quadrant 3: You and Others (Individual-External)

Building allyship and relationships with the community.

Quadrant 4: Us and the Community (Organizational-External)

Provide programs, services, facilities, and communications that create equitable and inclusive experiences for people.

The task force plans to meet later this month to integrate responses, feedback, weaknesses, and plans of action from the 2021 Employee Perception Survey into the PDHP DEI Framework.

Vice President Grossberg would like to know if the Park District will hire consultants to review and audit the District's current practices.

Executive Director Romes reported that the 2022 budget includes costs for consulting services.

President Rutenberg would like to know if any of the policy changes will benefit Highwood children.

Executive Director Romes reported that there has not been a discussion of implementing a policy change that would permit Highwood students to receive resident rates, however, staff can draft such a policy which can be reviewed at a future Policy Committee Meeting. Any policy changes would need to be presented and approved by the Park Board of Commissioners.

President Ruttenberg would like to know what the revenue potential would be if Highwood students received resident rates.

Executive Director Romes reported that he could share the revenue loss and could provide an estimate of revenue brought in by eliminating non-resident fees for Highwood students. However, the Parks Foundation developed the FYI Scholarship Program to assist Highwood families.

Commissioner Freeman indicated that there are private organizations in Highwood offering similar services. She would like staff to examine the splinter vs. consolidated programs and share their findings with the Recreation Committee Meeting.

Executive Director Romes reported that staff can put together recommendations based on the PDHP DEI framework and discuss them at the November Policy Committee Meeting.

Other

President Ruttenberg requested that all meetings shift back to virtual.

Commissioner Freeman and Vice President Grossberg would like to discuss the possibility of shifting back to virtual meetings at the September 28 Regular Board Meeting, so that the entire Park Board can vote on it.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:11 p.m.