

**PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
JANUARY 26, 2022**

Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of the Park District of Highland Park held on January 26, 2022. 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/>

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by President Ruttenberg.

ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioner Kaplan, Commissioner Freeman, Vice President Grossberg, President Ruttenberg

Absent: Commissioner Bernstein

Staff Present: Executive Director Romes; Director Smith; Director Voss; Director Peters; Director Gogola; Director Carr; Assistant Director Maliszewski; Assistant Director Murrin; General Manager/Superintendent of Golf Operations Ochs; Manager Johnson; Coordinator Hejnowski

Guest Speakers: Rafael Labrador, Parks Foundation President

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

None.

PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE 2022 BUDGET

A motion was made by Commissioner Kaplan and seconded by Vice President Grossberg to convene the proposed Budget and Appropriation Ordinance for the Fiscal Year beginning January 1, 2022, and ending December 31, 2022, for the Park District of Highland Park.

Roll Call:

Aye: Commissioner Freeman, Commissioner Kaplan, Vice President Grossberg, President Ruttenberg

Nay: None

Absent: Commissioner Bernstein

Abstain: None

Motion Carried

President Ruttenberg reported that the public hearing for the proposed Budget and Appropriation Ordinance for the Fiscal Year beginning January 1, 2022, and ending December 31, 2022, for the Park District of Highland Park is now in session.

As required by law, the budget was, with the Board's consensus, laid down for a period of 30 days. The document was available to be reviewed at Recreation Center of Highland Park, the Highland Park Library, and the district's website. Also, in accordance with the law, notification of tonight's hearing was posted in the Lake County News-Sun on Tuesday, January 18, 2022.

Anyone wishing to speak on the Public Hearing will need to use the "Raise Hand" function in Zoom to indicate that they would like to speak. The Board Secretary will call on registrants who have activated the "Raise Hand" feature in alphabetical order.

President Ruttenberg reported that let the record show that there were no members of the community or Board of Commissioners who have chosen to speak to this issue and Executive Director Romes did not receive any written communications relative to the proposed Budget and Appropriation Ordinance for the Fiscal Year beginning January 1, 2022, and ending December 31, 2022, for the Park District of Highland Park.

A motion was made by Commissioner Kaplan and seconded by Commissioner Freeman to close the public hearing.

Roll Call:

Aye: Commissioner Freeman, Commissioner Kaplan, Vice President Grossberg, President Ruttenberg

Nay: None

Absent: Commissioner Bernstein

Abstain: None

Motion Carried

President Ruttenberg requested if there are no objections from the Board of Commissioners, he requested moving Item A from New Business regarding an update from the Parks Foundation of Highland Park before Public Comment and moving Items B and C from Unfinished Business after Public Comment.

There were no objections from the Park Board of Commissioner's.

PARKS FOUNDATION UPDATE

The President of the Parks Foundation, Rafael Labrador, reported that one of the challenges of the Foundation was to help the community raise \$300,000 to help fund the construction of a new breakwater and boat ramp at the Park Avenue Boating Facility. As a result, power boaters and members of the North Shore Yacht Club worked with the Park Foundation and the Park District to help reach their target goal.

Mr. Labrador reported that the Foundation received overwhelming support for this project and has fully met the \$300,000 fundraising commitment as of a couple of days ago. Ultimately have raised over \$329,000 to date and there is another \$40,000 that is pledged. That was led by a generous \$150,000 donation from a single anonymous individual as a matching grant to inspire the community. 326 households have made individual donations and another 350 banded together to make a group donation, for a total of almost 600 households in Highland Park that showed support for this project. Most notable is that more than half of the funds come from families that are not boaters, do not own boats, or engage in boating-related activities. It's a lakefront issue and not just a boater issue. The citizens of Highland Park have spoken clearly that they see it as a broader interest than just the boating community.

From the standpoint of the Foundation specifically, one thing we're excited about is the demonstration this shows the ability for us to partner with members of the community and the Park District to advance important projects. This is a model that we hope to grow. This is an important and highly visible demonstration project which we think can bring a lot of benefit to the community and a broad range of other initiatives. One of the important parts is making sure that we follow through with our commitment. For one example, the Foundation was very careful to communicate to prospective donors that money would be earmarked for this purpose specifically and reserved only for that purpose if it was donated specifically to the breakwater project which is important for people to know. On behalf of the Foundation, we really appreciate the opportunity to work with the Park District on this and are very excited about the progress that the community has made and are looking forward to celebrating the opening of this facility in 2023 should it see through all the milestones that we have to still get through to get to that point.

Lastly, Mr. Labrador reported he would like to schedule a date to present the Foundations Strategic Plan to the Park Board of Commissioners at a future public meeting.

President Ruttenberg requested that Director Gogola and Executive Director Romes work with the Foundation to schedule a date for Mr. Labrador to present the Foundations Strategic Plan at a future public meeting.

Commissioner Freeman is excited that there is a vehicle, path, and methodology to fill gaps wherever found.

PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

Carol Amendola D'Anca

935 Evergreen Wy, Highland Park

Her questions pertained to the Park Avenue Master Plan, so she was asked by President Ruttenberg to share her questions via email with Executive Director Romes, since the Park Avenue Master Plan is not on tonight's agenda.

Garrett Flynn

365 N. Deere Park Dr, Highland Park

Since the estimate for the temporary of the boat ramp that falls within the \$30,000 - \$35,000 range, he asked that the Park Board of Commissioner's approve the repair.

David Sogin

1092 Wade St, Highland Park

While the loyalty program membership sales have not been met, he requests that the Park Board of Commissioners approve the long-term repair for the breakwater and boat ramp repair along with the temporary repair for the boat ramp since the community surpassed the \$300,000 fundraising goal.

Councilwoman Lidawer

1707 St. Johns Ave, Highland Park

She commended everyone for their efforts related to the fundraising for the projects pertaining to Park Avenue.

President Ruttenberg requested if there are no objections from the Board of Commissioners, he requested moving the Approval of the Park Avenue Temporary Boat Ramp Repair Contract ahead of the 2022 Highland Park Strings Stipend Request since Commissioner Kaplan needs to leave the meeting early due to work conflicts.

There were no objections from the Park Board of Commissioners.

APPROVAL OF THE PARK AVENUE TEMPORARY BOAT RAMP REPAIR CONTRACT

Executive Director Romes reminded the Park Board of Commissioners that a bid solicitation for this repair work was released on January 4, 2022. On January 18, 2022, staff received seven responsive and responsible bids. The project scope includes three items plus an alternate.

Item 1: Mobilization and general conditions

Item 2: Casting a new concrete topping over the damaged portion of the submerged concrete ramp

Item 3: Filling a void below the upper portion of the concrete ramp

Alternate: Repairing damaged concrete at the top of ramp

The low bidder was Misfits Construction Company. References for this contractor are favorable. If approved, construction would begin in March with an estimated completion of early April so long as weather permits.

Director Carr provided a budget summary comparison report, examining impacts to the budget with and without the temporary repair. When looking at revenue impacts, Director Carr reported that staff budgeted \$268,507 in revenue, of which the temporary repair would have no impact. If the concrete launch remained closed for the 2022 season, revenue would decrease by \$100,000 since staff are assuming all motorized

boat launches and storage revenue would be lost, resulting in a reduction in parking pass sales, and deferring Loyalty Program revenue until 2023. As for expenses, staff budgeted \$260,751. If the Park Board of Commissioners approves the temporary repair expenses would surpass the budget by \$34,000. If the concrete launch remained closed for the 2022 season, expenses would significantly decrease since staff would defer the annual dredging project. Overall, Director Carr reported that staff would have a \$26,244 deficit with the repair vs. a \$64,104 deficit if the concrete launch remained closed for the 2022 season.

Executive Director Romes reported that the bid opening was on January 18 and staff and the Finance Committee are recommending that the Park Board of Commissioners approve Items 1, 2, 3, and Alternate 1 from Misfits Construction Company for the 2022 Park Avenue Temporary Boat Ramp Repair Project and authorize the Executive Director to enter into an agreement in the amount of \$34,500. If approved construction would begin in mid-March with estimated completion in April.

A motion was made by Commissioner Kaplan and seconded by Commissioner Freeman approving Items 1, 2, 3, and Alternate 1 from Misfits Construction Company for the 2022 Park Avenue Temporary Boat Ramp Repair Project and authorize the Executive Director to enter into an agreement in the amount of \$34,500.

Commissioner Freeman, Commissioner Kaplan, and Vice President Grossberg support staff's recommendation and are excited to have a 2022 boating season.

Roll Call:

Aye: Commissioner Freeman, Commissioner Kaplan, Vice President Grossberg, President Ruttenberg

Nay: None

Absent: Commissioner Bernstein

Abstain: None

Motion Carried

2022 HIGHLAND PARK STRINGS STIPEND REQUEST

Director Carr reported that at the December 16, 2021 Park Board Regular Meeting the Board of Commissioners approved an Agreement with The Highland Park Strings per the District's Affiliate and Sponsored Group Policy. The agreement did not include a financial stipend as in years past.

At the request of the Park Board, The Highland Park Strings founder, Larry Block, attended the January 11 Park Board Workshop Meeting to provide a short presentation regarding the organization's history, impact in the community and request for a \$15,000 financial stipend from the Park District in support of providing services to the community.

He requested that the Park Board of Commissioners consider a Motion to amend the 2022 Highland Park Strings Agreement to include a financial stipend.

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Commissioner Freeman and Commissioner Kaplan are opposed to providing a stipend; however, they are willing to offer other services.

Vice President Grossberg would like to provide a \$10,000 financial stipend for one year and would like to revisit this conversation to see what other support could be offered.

President Ruttenberg supports Vice President Grossberg recommendation.

Since Commissioner Bernstein is absent, this item will be revisited at a future Workshop or Regular Board Meeting where a vote can be taken by all 5 members of the Park Board of Commissioners.

Commissioner Kaplan left the meeting at 6:33 p.m.

CONSENT AGENDA

A motion was made by Vice President Grossberg, seconded by Commissioner Freeman to approve the Minutes from the December 7, 2021 Workshop Meeting, the Minutes from the December 15, 2021 Special Meeting, the Minutes from the December 16, 2021 Regular Board Meeting, the Ricoh Copier Lease Buyout, the Renewal of the 2021 Landscape Services Bid, the Hidden Creek Aquapark Slide Structure Repairs Bid, the Renewal of the 2020 Routine Grounds Maintenance Services Bid, the 2022 Sunset Valley Golf Club Cart Path Bridge Replacement and Removal Bid, Ordinance #2022-02 Authorizing and Providing for the Conveyance or Sale of Surplus Personal Property, Authorization for Park District of Highland Park to enroll in and Purchase from Joint Purchasing Program HGACBuy, and Bills and Payroll in the amount of \$1,783,644.17

Roll Call:

Aye: Commissioner Freeman, Vice President Grossberg, President Ruttenberg

Nay: None

Absent: Commissioner Bernstein, Commissioner Kaplan

Abstain: None

Motion Carried

FINANCIAL FORECASTS AND TREASURER'S REPORT

Director Peters showed 2021 Financial Forecasts and Treasurer's Report for the year ended December 31, 2021.

Operations (General and Recreation Funds) Budget vs. Actual

Director Peters reported that actual revenue surpassed the budgeted amount by \$2.1 million. Concurrently, actual expenses were \$1.8 million less than budgeted. Overall, the Park District had a \$3.9 million surplus for the end of the year. When compared to the three-year average, the Park District has a \$2.6 million surplus.

Director Peters reported that there are \$500,000 worth of items not included in the District's in tonight's report, this includes a \$400,000 check from the City of Highland Park for impact fees and a \$100,000 from the final property tax installment. As for expenses there is a little over \$300,000 of expenses not included in tonight's report. Overall, the District has a year-to-date surplus of \$3.9 million, and are projecting that number to slightly increase.

Vice President Grossberg would like to know why the District has such a significant surplus.

Director Peters reported that the budget assumed the Park District would be in Phase 4 of the Illinois Recovery Plan, which included limited capacities. Since the state entered Phase 5 those capacities were lifted so programming participation significantly increased. Additionally, over \$1 million of the savings is due to vacant positions, so much of the budgeted salary and wages was not spent. Lastly, these year-end figures are before transfers which supports capital projects.

Commissioner Freeman would like to know if the District is still short-staffed.

Executive Director Romes reported that the District has been operating at a 25% reduction across all areas, without impacting programs, which has been very challenging for staff. The District needs to address the staffing shortages, recruitment, and retention issues so the Park District can operate at a comfortable level.

Conclusion

Director Peters reported in January 2021, Park District programs and facilities were either partially closed or canceled due to COVID mitigation and since then the Park District was able to significantly adjust expenses, especially payroll at \$598,743 below budget resulting in \$3.9 million above budgeted net revenue for the year end.

For the period ended December 31, 2021, athletics had a surplus of \$180,363, camp had a \$113,113 surplus, tennis had a \$266,198 surplus, golf had a \$753,014 surplus, recreation had a \$222,715 surplus, West Ridge Center had a \$169,400 surplus, and Centennial Ice Arena had a \$153,549 surplus. All cost centers except for two are operating at a surplus at year end which places the Park District at a very favorable financial position at the end of 2021.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Approval of Ordinance 2022-01: Combined Budget and Appropriation Beginning January 1, 2022 through December 31, 2022

Director Peters reported that the 2022 proposed budget was presented to the Finance Committee on November 18, 2021, and December 8, 2021. After review and revisions, a final draft was presented to the Park Board at the December 16 Workshop Meeting. At that time, the Park Board provided consensus to make the draft budget document available for public inspection for thirty days. The budget was made available for public review at the Recreation Center of Highland Park, the Highland Park Public Library, and on the District's website during this timeframe. No comments from the public have been received by the District. In accordance with the Park District

Code, tonight's public hearing regarding the budget was posted in the Lake County News-Sun on Tuesday, January 18, 2022.

The proposed budget for fiscal year 2022 includes operating revenues of \$22,902,734, additional revenues of \$2,390,660 and total estimated expenditures (district-wide) of \$35,210,663 resulting in an anticipated deficit of \$9,917,269. This is a planned use of reserves for capital projects related to master planning.

Director Peters reported that staff recommends approval from the Park Board of Commissioners for the 2022 Budget and 2022 Budget and Appropriation Ordinance (2022-01) for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2022.

A motion was made by President Ruttenberg, seconded by Commissioner Freeman to approve the 2022 Budget and 2022 Budget and Appropriation Ordinance (2022-01) for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2022.

Roll Call:

Aye: Commissioner Freeman, Vice President Grossberg, President Ruttenberg

Nay: None

Absent: Commissioner Bernstein, Commissioner Kaplan

Abstain: None

Motion Carried

NEW BUSINESS

A. Director's Report

Executive Director Romes highlighted available outdoor activities, which includes cross country skiing at Heller Nature Center, ice skating at Sunset Woods Park, and sledding at Danny Cuniff Park. He is also excited to announce that the Park District will be releasing a new website and app in February.

Executive Director Romes shared the upcoming public meetings, Wednesday February 9 at 5:00 p.m. there will be a Facility & Recreation Committee. Workshop Meeting will immediately follow. On Wednesday, February 16 at 5:00 p.m. there will be a Lakefront, Parks & Natural Areas Committee Meeting. Finance Committee Meeting will immediately follow. On Wednesday, February 23 at 5:00 p.m. there will be a Policy Committee Meeting. The Regular Board Meeting will immediately follow.

B. Board Comments

None.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE BOARD

Michael West

1342 Ferndale, Highland Park

Executive Director Romes read the email from Michael West reporting that, as a 45+ year resident, taxpayer, voter, and avid user of the Park Avenue Boating Facility, I respectfully urge the Board to proceed with temporary repairs to concrete ramp.

Margaret Winker Cook

320 Whistler Rd, Highland Park

Executive Director Romes read the email from Margaret Winker Cook reporting that, I am writing regarding the Park Ave Beach proposal. I am unable to attend tonight's meeting but would appreciate if you could read my letter aloud and make it part of the record.

I am a member of NSYC and I donated to the \$300,000 community fund to help the plan go forward. I am strongly in favor of:

1. The boat launch, which is essential for community safety to enable rescue boats to launch and for sailing and other programs to safely take place.
2. Replacing the barge, which is essential to ensure safe navigation off the beach, as well as address an eyesore that is contaminating one of Highland Park's greatest gems.

Some of the other plans that were in the Park District proposal have not received full community input and were raised at the last community meeting yet have not been addressed. Before finalizing these plans the Park District should fully ascertain community priorities and what steps should be taken to make the area more desirable. Recent NextDoor posts regarding funding raised these issues as well.

For example, the plan should address:

- a. Availability of the beach for swimming, even if it does not include a lifeguard and is swim at your own risk.
- b. Being able to launch a kayak, SUP, or sailboat from a vehicle if one does not have the most expensive parking sticker -- as of last season that wasn't possible except for off-hours, since the gate prevented access and launching was not permitted from the beach off the main parking lot.

Issues with the current proposal:

- a. Plans for development of a part of the bluff that would contribute to erosion -- all development should be carefully evaluated for environmental impact.
- b. "Renovation" of the clubhouse without sufficient input from the NSYC regarding needs and uses.
- c. Lack of easy-access kayak storage for NSYC. The plan called for 3-tiered racks that would require very strong people to remove and replace kayaks. Currently the kayak beach storage permits anyone with a partner to be able to move kayaks down to and back from the water's edge.

- d. Investment in redoing the parking lot and adding landscaping, when these additions would do nothing to improve beach access and use, but simply make it appear that HP cares about appearances, while use of the beach and lake apparently is a lower priority. If we don't have money to use the resources we have, why invest in appearances?

CLOSED SESSION

A motion was made by Commissioner Freeman, seconded by Vice President Grossberg to adjourn into Closed Session for discussion of Section 2(c) 21 – the discussion of minutes lawfully closed under the Act, whether for the purposes of approval of said minutes or for conducting the semi-annual review of the minutes as set forth in section 2.06 of the Act.

Roll Call:

Aye: Commissioner Freeman, Vice President Grossberg, President Ruttenberg

Nay: None

Absent: Commissioner Bernstein, Commissioner Kaplan

Abstain: None

Motion Carried

Meeting was adjourned into closed session at 6:55 p.m.

Meeting was reconvened into open session at 7:03 p.m.

ACTION FROM CLOSED SESSION IF ANY

President Ruttenberg reported that the Board met in Closed Session under Section 2(c) 21 – the discussion of minutes lawfully closed under the Act, whether for the purposes of approval of said minutes or for conducting the semi-annual review of the minutes as set forth in section 2.06 of the Act.

A motion was made by Commissioner Freeman, seconded by Vice President Grossberg that the Closed Session minutes from July 13 – December 15, 2021, would be withheld for public inspection as well as those closed session minutes that were reviewed and withheld in the past, except for the portion of July 27, 2021, regarding the review of closed session minutes from February 23, 2021 – June 24, 2021, for public inspection.

Roll Call:

Aye: Commissioner Freeman, Vice President Grossberg, President Ruttenberg

Nay: None

Absent: Commissioner Bernstein, Commissioner Kaplan

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Abstain: None

Motion Carried

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Commissioner Freeman and seconded by President Ruttenberg and approved by a unanimous vote. The Board Meeting adjourned at 7:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Roxanne Hejnowski

Roxanne Hejnowski, Assistant Secretary