

**PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK  
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS  
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING  
JULY 27, 2022**

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m. President Grossberg.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bernstein and seconded by Commissioner Ruttenberg to allow Vice President Freeman to participate in tonight's meeting by electronic means.

**Roll Call:**

**Aye:** Commissioner Bernstein, Commissioner Ruttenberg, President Grossberg

**Nay:** None

**Absent:** Commissioner Kaplan

**Abstain:** None

**Motion Carried**

**ROLL CALL**

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

**Absent:** Commissioner Kaplan

**Staff Present:** Executive Director Romes; Director Smith; Director Voss; Director Peters; Director Carr; Director Kopka; Assistant Director Maliszewski; Assistant Director Murrin; Manager Schwartz; Manager Sassorossi; Manager Johnson; Coordinator Hejnowski

**Guest Speakers:** Derek Price, Attorney with Ancel Glink

Commissioner Kaplan joined the meeting at 6:06 p.m.

**ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA**

None.

**PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

None.

President Grossberg read a statement pertaining to the Fourth of July Tragedy.

Before we begin with our meeting agenda, I wanted to take a moment to comment on the tragic events of July 4 that shook our community to its core. First and foremost, our thoughts and prayers continue to be with the families of the seven victims, those who were injured, and everyone who was impacted by this senseless act.

I want to thank the brave first responders who ran towards danger to render aid during this active shooter situation and the individuals who responded selflessly and put themselves at risk to care for others. I also want to thank Highland Park, state, federal, and neighboring law enforcement agencies who assisted in the apprehension of the suspect, as well as the Mayor and City for keeping our residents updated and supported during the immediate aftermath and over the last three weeks. We are also grateful for the support from the countless government partners, agencies, and hundreds of volunteers who continue to provide ongoing victim resources and services to the survivors impacted by the tragedy on July 4.

It is strong communities like ours that work together for our collective well-being.

As I sit here tonight, surrounded by my fellow Park Board Commissioners, I would be remiss in not mentioning how proud we all are of our park district staff, for their emergency response efforts on July 4th, and how they have contributed to the healing of our community following this horrific tragedy.

Along with so many of you, the Park District was there. As co-sponsors of the Parade, over one hundred of our employees, including our high school and college-aged camp counselors, full-time staff, my fellow board commissioners, and many of our family members, were lining up the parade floats, marching in the parade, and setting up for the Fourth Fest celebration planned at Sunset Woods Park.

In the short days that followed, trauma counseling and other therapeutic resources were provided to support our team members who were in the thick of things, allowing us to re-open our facilities, and restart our programs. Children are now back in camp making summer memories, and families are finding a much-needed respite in our parks, programs, playgrounds, and beaches.

Over the past three weeks, the Park District has continued to persevere in an effort to care for our staff and community by providing locations for community gatherings, volunteering for donation drives, providing scholarships and services for victim's families, and most importantly, providing essential park and recreation outlets to the community -- to aid in the healing process and gain back a sense of normalcy.

July is National Parks and Recreation Month. How fitting that this year's theme is "We Rise Up." That is exactly what our Park District is doing – Rising Up to help our community heal and bring back joy and hope. On behalf of my fellow Board members, I would like to thank all Park District staff for their compassionate hearts and your passion for serving and supporting our community.

Together, we are Highland Park Strong.

Commissioner Bernstein requested that the statement read this evening be placed on the Park District website. He commended Executive Director Romes reporting that he oversees a staff of heroes.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

A motion was made by Commissioner Bernstein, seconded by Commissioner Ruttenberg to approve the Minutes from the June 15, 2022 Workshop Meeting; the Minutes from the June 29, 2022 Regular Board Meeting; the 2022 Infrastructure Upgrade Project; the IGA with District 113 for Use of Park and School Property; 2022 Heller Nature Center Exhibition Fabrication and Installation Bid; and Bills and Payroll in the amount of \$1,649,741.69

**Roll Call:**

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

**Nay:** None

**Absent:** None

**Abstain:** None

**Motion Carried**

**FINANCIAL FORECASTS AND TREASURER’S REPORT**

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

Director Peters reported that as of June 30, 2022, actual revenues are exceeding budgeted revenue by about \$950,000 and actual expenses are \$1.5 million less than budgeted for a year-to-date net difference of about \$2.5 million surplus. When compared to the pre-COVID years (2017-2019), the District has about an \$800,000 surplus.

***Conclusion***

In June of 2022, Park District programs and facilities are performing better than budgeted, \$700,000 of the operating surplus is due to timing differences, however, \$200,000 of the \$700,000 was refunded for canceled programming due to the Fourth. \$70,000 from West Ridge Center, which is primarily due to early childhood programming revenues, \$78,000 from Centennial Ice Arena, since both gymnastics and ice programming surpassed budgeted enrollment figures by 100 participants each, and \$290,000 from Tennis, which is due to the 400 additional participants, \$37,000 from Aquatics, \$60,000 from Athletics, and \$157,000 from Sunset Valley Golf Club Recreation. Additionally, replacement taxes are \$140,000 greater than anticipated. Lastly, there is a \$740,000 savings in salaries and wages due to open positions, as well as correlating insurance and retirement. Overall, the Park District is in a very favorable position at the end of June.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to know how the community received the refund request.

Executive Director Romes reported that the District was proactive when issuing refunds from canceled programs due to the Fourth and the aftermath. Families could be refunded back to their original form of payment or donate their refund to the Highland Park Community Relief Fund.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to know if staff was compensated for the hours not worked due to the Fourth.

Executive Director Romes reported that staff was compensated for hours not worked due to the Fourth.

Commissioner Bernstein commended Executive Director Romes for being proactive and compensating staff for hours not worked as a result of the Fourth.

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

#### **A. Centennial Ice Arena Update**

Executive Director Romes reported that Wiss, Janney, Elstner and Associates Engineering (WJE) conducted an investigation as to what damage has occurred, why it occurred, and potential solutions that exist to repair the issues regarding the heaved ice-skating rink slab at Centennial Ice Arena.

Dunja Vla from Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates (WJE) presented the findings from the investigation of the heaved ice rink slab at the July 20 Facility and Recreation Committee Meeting and provided an opinion on a possible short-term repair so long as the existing heating system is operational.

After conducting a pressure test of the heating system under the ice rink at Centennial Ice Arena, it was determined that a large leak exists which cannot be repaired. Since the underfloor heating is not operational, the short-term repair option provided by WJE is no longer a viable option. Staff are exploring long-term repair options and will contact neighboring Districts to help the current hockey and figure skating user groups find ice time while Centennial is closed.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to know who is available for the proposed meeting on August 3 at 8:00 a.m. to further discuss this project.

Commissioner Kaplan, Commissioner Bernstein, and Vice President Freeman are available.

President Grossberg would like to know who the contract was who installed the underground heating system in 2004.

Director Smith reported that he will follow up with the Park Board.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

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

Director Gogola reported that the Parks Foundation approved another Director for a total of 8 members. The Foundation is working on a memorial tree donation for victims of the Fourth. The second Annual North Shore Pickleball Tournament is Saturday, August 6. All proceeds benefit the Parks Foundation of Highland Park SMILE grant-in-aid program. Lastly, 171 people are attending the VIP Private Beach Party on Monday, August 1 at Park Avenue Beach and Boating Facility. Most of the attendees are major donors, prospective donors, and local officials, including Senator Julie Morrison, Council members Andres Tapia & Annette Lidawer; Members of the Park Board, Members of the NSYC, and our Foundation Board Members. The event is being hosted by our Foundation and members of the Park Avenue Fundraising Committee. The goals of the Beach Party are to thank our previous donors, connect with those who are likely to support them, and inform them about the project and ways they can support it. As of today, the Park Avenue Fundraising Committee has raised over \$430,000.

**B. Board Committee Updates**

Executive Director Romes reported that at the July 20 Facility and Recreation Committee Meeting staff received consensus from the Facility and Recreation Committee to place the total base bid from Wilderness Graphics, Inc. for the 2022 Heller Nature Center Exhibition Fabrication and Installation Bid on the consent agenda at the July 27 Regular Board Meeting.

Dunja Vla from Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates (WJE) presented the findings from their investigation of the heaved ice rink slab at Centennial Ice Arena, and provided an opinion on a possible short-term repair so long as the existing heating system is operational.

Staff provided an update on the visioning, site selection and programming services from Holabird and Root for the West Ridge Park and Facility Project. This step is intended to confirm and validate the project approach prior to the design phase. Holabird and Root met with staff and the Park Board to understand program needs, reviewed the District's existing plans, and analyzed the site to understand efficient and buildable areas. Holabird and Root will present a Program Book to the Park Board in August to guide the design process. The program book will include site planning, program needs, spatial needs, and desired program adjacencies.

At the July 20 Lakefront, Parks, and Natural Areas Committee three repair concepts were developed by AECOM to address the damages along the southeast corner of the South Storage Lot at Park Avenue Boating Facility. Staff received consensus from the Lakefront, Parks, and Natural Areas Committee to continue engineering for the third repair concept: Steel Sheet Pile Wall with a phased approach.

The Park District was recently awarded an Open Space Land Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) grant in the amount of \$400,000 for Phase One of the Park Avenue Boating Facility Site Master Plan Improvement Project. Staff discussed potential projects for the upcoming OSLAD grant cycle.

The Park District had a bid opening on July 14 for the Millard Bluff Grading and Tree Removal Project. The Park District received one bid that was \$150,500 over budget. Staff received consensus from the Lakefront, Parks, and Natural Areas Committee to rebid the tree removal and bluff grading as two separate projects.

**C. Annual Shut Down of the Recreation Center of Highland Park and the Indoor Pool**

Assistant Director Murrin reported that the Recreation Center of Highland Park will be shut down for annual cleaning and regular maintenance beginning August 15 – 19. Conversely, the indoor pool at the RCHP will be shut down from August 15 – 28. Members can utilize Hidden Creek AquaPark while the indoor pool is being cleaned and repaired. She reached out to the neighboring Park Districts to see if members could utilize their fitness centers during the annual shutdown.

**D. Director's Report**

Executive Director Romes reported that several other events occurring this Summer aside from the VIP Beach Event and the Annual North Shore Pickleball Tournament including National Night Out on Tuesday, August 2, from 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. The City of Highland Park Police Department will be hosting National Night Out. The event will be on the lawn in front of City Hall. Kids' games and activities, giveaways, demonstrations, music, and a chance to get to know your officers will be the

highlights of this FREE family fun event. There is a Back to School Bash on Saturday, August 13 from 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. at Hidden Creek AquaPark. Students ages 12 and up can enjoy a night of fun before heading back to school. Hang out with friends, participate in contests and dance the night away. The event is FREE for season pass holders. Regular daily rates apply for non-members. There is a Drive-in Movie: Highschool Musical on Thursday, August 18 from 7:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m. Hop in the car and cruise over the Recreation Center of Highland Park for our Drive-In Movie series! Tickets must be purchased in advance. View the movie inside your car or bring lawn chairs to sit outside your car. Sound played via loudspeaker, no transmitter.

Executive Director Romes thanked the Park Board of Commissioners for their support along with the community based on decisions made after the Fourth of July Tragedy.

**E. Board Comments**

None.

**OPEN TO THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE BOARD**

None.

**CLOSED SESSION**

A motion was made by Commissioner Kaplan and seconded by Commissioner Bernstein to go into Closed Session pursuant to Section 2(c)8 – security procedures and the use of personnel and equipment to respond to an actual, a threatened, or a reasonably potential danger to the safety of employees, students, staff, the public, or public property; Section 2(c) 11 – litigation against or on behalf of the District or where the District finds that an action is probable or imminent; 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 Bernstein, Commissioner Kaplan, Commissioner Ruttenberg,  
Vice President Freeman, President Grossberg

**Nay:** None

**Absent:** None

**Abstain:** None

**Motion Carried**

Meeting was adjourned into closed session at 6:44 p.m.

Meeting was reconvened into open session at 7:58 p.m.

**ACTION FROM CLOSED SESSION IF ANY**

President Grossberg reported that the Park Board met in Closed Session under Section 2(c)8 – security procedures and the use of personnel and equipment to respond to an actual, a threatened, or a reasonably potential danger to the safety of employees, students, staff, the public, or public property; Section 2(c) 11 – litigation against or on behalf of the District or where the District finds that an action is probable or imminent; 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 Kaplan and seconded by Commissioner Ruttenberg that the Closed Session minutes from the January 26, 2022 Regular Meeting and the June 22, 2022 Finance Committee Meeting be released for public inspection as it is the advice of legal counsel that these Closed Session minutes no longer require confidential treatment. Conversely, the Closed Session minutes from the January, 11, 2022, Workshop Meeting, the January 20, 2022 Finance Committee Meeting, the February 16, 2022 Finance Committee Meeting, the February 23, 2022 Policy Committee Meeting, the February 23, 2022 Regular Meeting, the March 9, 2022 Workshop Meeting, the March 16, 2022 Finance Committee Meeting, the March 30, 2022 Regular Meeting, the May 18, 2022 Workshop Meeting, and the June 29, 2022 Regular Meeting not be released for public inspection as it is the advice of the District’s legal counsel that a need for confidentiality still exists as to all or part of those minutes.

On June 22, 2022, the Park Board of Commissioners met in closed session to evaluate the performance of Park District auditors, Sikich LLP.

**ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made by Commissioner Kaplan and seconded by Commissioner Ruttenberg and approved by a unanimous vote. The Board Meeting adjourned at 7:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Roxanne Hejnowski*

Roxanne Hejnowski, Assistant Secretary