

**PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
SEPTEMBER 28, 2022**

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. President Grossberg.

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

Commissioner Ruttenberg left the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

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 Gogola; Director Kopka; Assistant Director Maliszewski; Assistant Director Murrin; Manager Schwartz; Manager Zullo; Manager Johnson; Tennis Professional Visconti; Coordinator Hejnowski

Guest Speakers: None

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

None.

PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

None.

CONSENT AGENDA

A motion was made by Commissioner Bernstein, seconded by Commissioner Ruttenberg to approve the Minutes from the August 10, 2022 Finance Committee Meeting, the Minutes from the August 10, 2022 Workshop Meeting, the Minutes from the August 17, 2022 Facility/Recreation Committee Meeting, the Minutes from the August 18, 2022 Finance Committee Meeting, the Minutes from the August 24, 2022 Regular Board Meeting, the Minutes from the August 31, 2022 Special Meeting; and Bills and Payroll in the amount of \$2,160,269.96

Roll Call:

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

Nay: None

Absent: Commissioner Kaplan

Abstain: None

Motion Carried

FINANCIAL FORECASTS AND TREASURER'S REPORT

Operations (General and Recreation Funds) Budget vs. Actual

Director Peters reported that as of August 31, 2022, actual revenues are exceeding budgeted revenue by about \$916,000 and actual expenses are \$1.8 million less than budgeted for a year-to-date net difference of about \$2.7 million surplus. When compared to the pre-COVID years (2017-2019), the District has about a \$2 million surplus.

Conclusion

As of August 31, Park District programs and facilities are performing better than budget, \$980,000 of the operating surplus is due to timing differences, \$90,000 surplus from West Ridge Center which is primarily due to early childhood programming revenues, \$300,000 surplus from tennis which is due to hundreds of additional participants, \$20,000 surplus from aquatics, \$60,000 surplus from athletics, and \$150,000, surplus from Sunset Valley Golf Club. Additionally, replacement takes are \$350,000 greater than anticipated. Conversely, there is a \$177,000 surplus from property taxes and a \$50,000 surplus from interest revenue. Lastly, there is a savings of \$806,000 from salaries and wages due to open positions. Overall, the Park District is in a very favorable position at the end of August.

Commissioner Rutenberg would like to know the performance of the Recreation Center of Highland Park.

Director Peters reported that the Recreation Center is not performing as anticipated. The Fitness component is \$150,000 less than budgeted as of August 31, however, aquatics has a \$20,000 surplus.

Commissioner Kaplan would like to know what the District is doing to increase membership sales.

Commissioner Bernstein would like the Recreation Center staff to provide an update on their efforts and recommendations at a November Facility and Recreation Committee. Furthermore, he would like to allocate time at a Finance Committee to review the financials of each facility, examining current revenue/expenses vs. projections.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Approval of the Athletic Fields Capital Campaign Project Change Order Agreement

Assistant Director Maliszewski reported that the Non-Profit Coach has been a significant contributor to helping staff raise funds for the Fink Park Athletic Field Development project, which includes converting the infield to turf, keeping the natural grass outfield with updated underdrains and irrigation, a portable outfield fence, enhanced warning track, and bleachers, an event space, spectator area, and covered dugout.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to know if there are funds in the budget to cover the costs.

Executive Director Romes reported that there are funds available.

President Grossberg would like to know the need for future projects.

Assistant Director Maliszewski reported that a committee is always needed, the Non-Profit Coach cannot tackle initiatives on their own. They provide strategy and resources; however, they need footwork from a Committee like the Athletic Booster Club.

President Grossberg would like to know if there are any campaigns being considered in the future.

Executive Director Romes reported possibly a pickleball fundraising campaign.

Vice President Freeman reported that the Parks Foundation is expanding and forming sub-committees for fundraising campaigns. Bob Bernstein is leading these efforts.

A motion was made by Commissioner Ruttenberg and seconded by Commissioner Bernstein to approve the Athletic Fields Capital Campaign Project Change Order Agreement making Elizabeth Finlayson the sole proprietor of consulting services.

Roll Call:

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

Nay: None

Absent: None

Abstain: None

Motion Carried

B. Approval of the 2022-2023 Millard Bluff Grading and Tree Removal Bid

Director Voss reported that Millard Park and Beach is one of four lakefront properties maintained by the Park District. In recent years, storm and wave damage exacerbated by high lake levels have led to failures of the slope at the toe of the bluff. Based on a recommendation from the Beach Management Plan completed by SmithGroup, staff contracted V3 Companies to conduct a Slope Stability Analysis and provide recommended strategies for ensuring safety and long-term preservation of the bluff in keeping with its natural character and use as a passive park and beach.

At the August 24, 2021 Regular Board Meeting, a representative from V3 Companies provided an overview of their analysis including several site recommendations with probable costs (summary below). According to the V3 report, given the existing bluff conditions and cyclical fluctuations of Lake Michigan water levels, there are several solutions appropriate for the Park District to consider as a means to address existing bluff failures and minimize the potential for future failures or loss of land at the top of the bluff.

Staff worked with V3 Companies to develop grading plans for the areas at the top of the bluff (item #2) and plans for the planting of seeds and live plugs in exposed bare soil locations (item #4) identified in their report. These plans were packaged in a single bid along with tree removal plans (item #1) previously discussed at the January 11, 2022 Lakefront, Parks and Natural Areas Committee Meeting.

Regular Board Meeting Minutes
September 28, 2022

Staff released a bid in June, included a mandatory, on-site pre-bid meeting, and received one bid on July 14, 2022. The lone bid was \$155,500 over budget and recommended by Staff to be rejected during the July 20, 2022 Lakefront, Parks and Natural Areas Committee Meeting.

Staff rereleased another bid on August 29 with an extended schedule to provide a larger timeframe for completion. Three bids were received on September 13, 2022. The total available budgeted funds for the Millard Bluff Grading and Tree Removal is \$220,000. The lowest bid was \$319,300 which exceeds the budget by \$99,300.

Director Voss shared a Slope Stability Analysis and drone images collected from V3 Companies which was presented to the Lakefront, Parks, and Natural Areas Committee on February 16, 2022. V3 Companies identified the top of the bluff as the primary concern since there is a steep 10ft drop before reaching the center of the bluff. As a result, they identified five sections for selective grading to address these steep slopes, preserve mature oak trees, and restore a 2:1 grade. The work involved would be the removal of material at the top of the bluff, eliminating the almost vertical zones, and reducing the weight of material that could slump down, which could create pockets for the collection of water and increase opportunities for future bluff erosion and failure.

The final result will push the top of the bluff back approximately 20 feet, requiring benches and the north path to be relocated.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to know how the deficit will be paid and if it will negatively impact other capital projects.

Executive Director Romes reported that the costs will come from the Capital Fund. Tier 1-3 capital projects will not be impacted if this project is approved, so it is staff's recommendation to approve this project.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bernstein and seconded by Commissioner Kaplan to approve the acceptance of the base bid proposal and alternates 1 and 2 from RES Environmental Operating Company, LLC in the amount of \$319,300 for the 2022-2023 Millard Bluff Grading and Tree Removal project.

Roll Call:

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

Nay: None

Absent: None

Abstain: None

Motion Carried

C. Approval of the OSLAD Grant Resolution of Authorization

Manager Schwartz reported that the Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) grant program is administered by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and is typically offered annually. The competitive grant program provides up to 50% funding support to develop public outdoor recreation areas. This year \$56 million is available through the grant program and the maximum individual award is \$600,000. The application is due on September 30, 2022, and awards are typically announced 6-8 months after the application period closes. If awarded, the Park District would have two years to complete the awarded project.

The grant application requires that the Park Board of Commissioners approve the proposed project and commit funds for the project if awarded.

Staff is considering elements from the approved Sunset Woods Master Plan for the proposed project OSLAD application. Manager Schwartz reported that staff is recommending replacing, relocating, and improving the existing basketball court, adding new elements including a regulation-size basketball court and multi-sport functions such as soccer, volleyball, and more, and improving the skate park with the addition of a wheel-friendly plaza containing features for scooters, bikes, roller blades, and other wheeled activities in the OSLAD Grant Application.

These amenities are aging, some cannot be repaired and would need to be replaced. She shared images of the skate park and basketball courts and compared them with conceptual renderings for the proposed elements and enhancements, showcasing how the new elements permit versatile use. i.e., concrete raised features in the skate park could also be used as a stage for concerts.

Vice President Freeman feels the skate park and wheel-friendly plaza should cater to pre-teens and teenagers since the rest of the park has elements that cater to young children and adults.

Executive Director Romes reported that the Grant Application includes a narrative. If awarded staff will gather more community feedback to enhance the area, so long as the elements do not change.

Vice President Freeman is excited and supports improving the skate park and the addition of a wheel-friendly plaza containing features for scooters, bikes, rollerblades, and other wheeled activities.

President Grossberg would like to know when staff selected Sunset Woods Park for the OSLAD Grant.

Manager Schwartz reported that staff began developing a master plan for Sunset Woods Park in 2020. Since then, the OSLAD Grant was always a consideration to fund elements in the master plan.

President Grossberg would like to know if the Park Board feels the skate park is an important element since the District has little money earmarked in the capital fund to repair and replace the items currently in the skate park.

Commissioner Ruttenberg is neutral, he doesn't know if there is a community need. He would like to review the survey data from the community that supports the skate plaza.

Commission Kaplan would like the pavilion included in the Grant Application.

Manager Schwartz reported that the District needs to be strategic in what was applying for. If approved these items need to be enhanced. If the District spends less, then IDNR matches less.

Director Smith reported that the District is required to include a line item budget in the application. If the difference is more than 10% of the line item, we need to have a conversation with IDNR and get their approval.

President Grossberg would like to know if other things can be added to the application.

Manager Schwartz reported that staff does not have enough time to make changes to the proposed list due to the application deadline.

Commissioner Kaplan would like to know how many people from the community voted in favor of a skate plaza from the community survey.

Manager Schwartz reported that around 300 community members participated in the survey and 150 were in favor of a skate plaza.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to know if the emphasis could be on plaza elements and feature gathering spaces vs. emphasizing elements for extreme sports.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bernstein and seconded by Vice President Freeman to approve the OSLAD Grant Resolution Authorization, allowing the Park District of Highland Park to apply for funding assistance to implement the Sunset Woods Master Plan.

Roll Call:

Aye: Commissioner Bernstein, Vice President Freeman, President Grossberg

Nay: Commissioner Kaplan

Absent: Commissioner Ruttenberg

Abstain: None

Motion Carried

NEW BUSINESS

A. Parks Foundation

Vice President Freeman reported that the Parks Foundation is looking forward to helping raise funds for Park Avenue projects and the Fink Park Athletic Field Development Project. Bob Bernstein the former Parks Foundation president has been a wonderful contribution to marketing team and is working with he Parks Foundation on all fundraising campaigns.

B. Director's Report

Manager Zullo and Head Tennis Professional Visconti are here this evening to provide an update on pickleball operations. She is pleased to report the District is offering 17 pickleball leagues and drills. Conversely, the District hosted three large pickleball rentals/tours this past summer. Staff has been exploring outdoor opportunities for pickleball, this includes:

1. Convert the four clay courts and Sunset Woods Park into hard courts and add eight pickleball courts. The revenue stream from clay courts is minimal and several customers have voiced they prefer hard courts. Furthermore, the clay courts are sloped, allowing moss and algae to grow, so it's a challenge for staff to maintain. There is a significant reduction in material, maintenance, and staffing expenses by removing the converting the clay courts.
2. Add twelve pickleball courts at Danny Cunniff Park.
3. Combination, of the two opportunities.

Executive Director Romes reported that there is no ask from the Park Board.

Commissioner Bernstein encourages staff and the Park Board to pursue the recommendations from Manager Zullo and Head Tennis Professional Visconti, however, sound is a concern at Sunset Woods Park. He would like to know if there is a way to add courts at Sunset Woods while addressing noise. He fully supports the recommendation for Danny Cunniff. He would also like staff to explore options at District 12 schools. He is encouraging staff to think outside of the box to address the need sooner rather than later. He would like a proposal brought to the Park Board for the recommendations at Danny Cunniff Park.

President Grossberg would like to know the levels for pickleball.

Head Tennis Professional Visconti reported that the District has entry through 5.0.

President Grossberg would like to know if viewing stands are being considered.

Assistant Director Murrin reported that staff will explore seating/stands.

Executive Director Romes shared a list of upcoming events including an event the Park District has been assisting in the coordination and promotion of a fundraising event for the Highland Park Community Foundation's July 4th Response Fund. Michael Peysakhovich is running the fundraiser and is a good friend of Parks Foundation Board Member Rob Stepen, and a native of Highland Park. The event is being held this ***Friday, September 30 from 6:00 - 9:00 p.m. at the 28 Mile Distillery in Highwood***. Guests will enjoy cocktails, live music by Soul Chasers, appetizers, and a silent auction (some of which were provided by PDHP). Assistant Director Chris Maliszewski will be the MC for portions of the event. All proceeds go to the HP Community Foundation fund. The Grand Opening Sunset Woods Playgrounds / Touch-A-Truck is this Saturday, October 1, from 9:30 – 12:00 p.m. On Friday, October 14 Heller Nature

Center is hosting an Axe, Brew, and Bonfire event from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. Lastly, on November 5 the District is hosting a Dia De Los Muertos Celebration on Saturday, November 5, from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. at the Preserve of Highland Park. The event includes live music from Mariachi Monumental De Mexico and dance performances from Ballet Folklorico Tayahua. The Highwood Library, Highland Park Library, The Highland Park Art Center, and Oak Terrance have all agreed to be a part of the event, either having an activity or craft. Together for Childhood Network will help with running the Loteria (bingo) game in between the performances. There will also be a community ofrenda/altar. Food will be available for purchase.

C. Board Comments

None.

OTHER BUSINESS

None.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE BOARD

Lauren Cherny

1858 Holly Rd, Highland Park

Pickleball players would like access to outdoor restrooms at Danny Cunniff Park.

CLOSED SESSION

A motion was made by Commissioner Kaplan, seconded by Vice President Freeman, to adjourn into Closed Session for discussion of Section 2(c)5 – the purchase or lease of real estate including discussion on whether a certain parcel of property should be acquired; Section 2(c)6 – the setting of a price for sale or lease of property owned by the District.

Roll Call:

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

Nay: None

Absent: Commissioner Ruttenberg

Abstain: None

Motion Carried

The meeting adjourned into Closed Session at 7:52 p.m.

The meeting reconvened into Open Session at 8:28 p.m.

Action From Closed Session If Any

President Grossberg reported that the Park Board of Commissioners met in Closed Session under Section 2(c)5 – the purchase or lease of real estate including discussion on whether a certain parcel of property should be acquired; Section 2(c)6 – the setting of a price for sale or lease of property owned by the District.

No action was taken.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Commissioner Kaplan and seconded by Commissioner Bernstein and approved by a unanimous vote. The Board Meeting adjourned at 8:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Roxanne Hejnowski

Roxanne Hejnowski, Assistant Secretary