

**PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK  
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS  
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING  
FEBRUARY 23, 2021**

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners of the Park District of Highland Park was conducted remotely due to the Governor’s Declaration of Emergency as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Members of the public were able to view a live stream of the Regular Board Meeting.

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

**ROLL CALL**

**Present:** Commissioner Bernstein, Commissioner Grossberg, Commissioner Flores Weisskopf, Vice President Kaplan, President Ruttenberg

**Absent:** None

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

**ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA**

None

**PUBLIC HEARING ON THE 2021 BUDGET**

President Ruttenberg called a public hearing for the proposed Budget and Appropriation Ordinance for a twelve-month period ending December 31, 2021 for the Park District of Highland Park to order.

**Roll Call:**

**Aye:** Commissioner Bernstein, Commissioner Grossberg, Commissioner Flores Weisskopf, Vice President Kaplan, President Ruttenberg

**Nay:** None

**Absent:** None

**Abstain:** None

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 by the public at the Recreation Center of Highland Park and the Park District’s web site. Also, in accordance with the law, notification of the Public Hearing was posted in the Highland Park News on February 11, 2021.

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Executive Director Romes reported that no written comments were submitted, nor did any members of the community register to attend the virtual meeting.

President Ruttenberg called for a motion to adjourn the public hearing.

A motion was made by Vice President Kaplan to close the public hearing, seconded by Commissioner Grossberg.

**Roll Call:**

**Aye:** Commissioner Bernstein, Commissioner Grossberg, Commissioner Flores Weisskopf, Vice President Kaplan, President Ruttenberg

**Nay:** None

**Absent:** None

**Abstain:** None

**Motion Carried.**

**CONSENT AGENDA**

President Ruttenberg requested that Item B Resolution 2021-02 Granting Utility Easements be removed from the Consent Agenda so Commissioner Bernstein could recuse himself from the Meeting.

A motion was made by Vice President Kaplan and seconded by Commissioner Grossberg to approve Items A, C, and D the Minutes from January 12, 2021 Workshop Meeting; Bills and Payroll through January 21, 2021 in the amount of \$1,269,296.75; and Bills and Payroll through February 18, 2021 in the amount of \$1,339,793.38, from the Consent Agenda.

**Roll Call:**

**Aye:** Commissioner Bernstein, Commissioner Grossberg, Commissioner Flores Weisskopf, Vice President Kaplan, President Ruttenberg

**Nay:** None

**Absent:** None

**Abstain:** None

**Motion Carried.**

Commissioner Bernstein recused himself and left the meeting at 6:08 p.m.

A motion was made by Vice President Kaplan and seconded by Commissioner Grossberg to approve item B Approval of Resolution 2021-02 – Granting Utility Easements.

**Roll Call:**

**Aye:** Commissioner Grossberg, Commissioner Flores Weisskopf, Vice President Kaplan, President Ruttenberg

**Nay:** None

**Absent:** Commissioner Bernstein

**Abstain:** None

**Motion Carried.**

Commissioner Bernstein returned to the meeting at 6:10 p.m.

**TREASURERS REPORT**

Director Peters reported that as of 2021 staff combined the financial forecasts with treasurers reports so the monthly presentations will be slightly different from the 2020 discussions.

***Projected Cash Flow/Operations (Operations General and Recreation Fund)***

Director Peters presented the District's chart of 2021 operations which examines the General and Recreation Funds comparing the budgeted vs. projected cash on hand at the end of each month. She reminded the Park Board that the General and Recreation Funds have a 25% reserve policy, which based on the 2021 expenditures is about a \$4.1 million reserve balance. As of December 31, 2021, the Park District budgeted to have about \$12.2 million in cash on hand vs. projected which is currently at \$11.8 million.

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

Director Peters reported that staff budgeted for a \$2.2 million surplus as of December 31, 2021. However, the actual revenue and expenses for January were less than budgeted since programs and services were limited due to the mitigation measures enforced by the governor. The actual revenue vs. budgeted was \$100,000 less, which resulted in a \$200,000 savings in expenses. Even though there was a reduction in revenue, Director Peters is pleased to report that the Park District currently has a \$121,404 operating surplus due to reductions in payroll and similar expenses.

***General Fund***

Director Peters reported that the Park District budgeted a \$145,968 net surplus as of December 31, 2021. As for revenue and expenses, she reported that the actual revenue nearly mirrored the budgeted figure. However, the actual expenses were significantly less than budgeted, which is attributed to the payroll reductions as a result of the mitigation measures. Overall, the year to date actual vs. budgeted is a surplus of \$79,403.

***Special Recreation Fund***

As a reminder, the Park District budgeted a \$254,793 net deficit and recommended a flat tax levy since a significant amount of unused funds from 2020 were transferred into the 2021 budget. As a result, the Park District plans to spend a little over \$730,000 in 2021 and has reduced the budgeted revenue to \$480,000. Lastly, the Park District made a \$346,741 contribution to the Northern Suburban Special Recreation Association (NSSRA) for the development of a new facility.

***Recreation Fund***

The Park District is budgeting a surplus of a little over \$2 million as of December 31, 2021. Like the General Fund, the actual revenue was \$120,000 less than budgeted and the actual expenses were \$160,000 less than budgeted for January. Currently, the Park District has a surplus of \$42,001 in the Recreation Fund.

***Debt Service Fund***

The Park District strives to have a zero-balance at the end of the year since this fund is solely used to pay the Park District's debt. The first of two interest payments for those debts will be made in June. Additionally, staff expects to receive revenue from property taxes right around that time.

***Capital Fund***

Director Peters reported that the Park District budgeted a \$5.4 million deficit and has \$5.7 million in expenditures in 2021. She is pleased to report that the Park District received \$200,000 of the \$400,000 award from the OSLAD Grant to help cover some of those expenditures.

***Monthly Payroll Actual vs. Budget***

Director Peters reported that the Park District budgeted roughly \$10 million in payroll expenses for 2020, however, as for the 2021 budget, the Park District reduced payroll expenses by 10%. Additionally, she is pleased to report that the Park District budgeted \$470,000 in payroll expenses for January, but the reduction in services resulted in \$68,243 savings, so the actual expenses for January were \$402,593.

***Conclusion***

Director Peters reported that Lake County was in the tier mitigation measures of the Restore Illinois Plan throughout most of January which reduced, or temporarily restricted programming so the actual revenue vs. the budgeted revenue was reduced. However, the net operating income was \$192,000, which surpassed the budgeted income by \$121,000, and payroll expenses came in \$68,243 under budget. Overall, the Park District is starting the new year ahead of budget and programs are trending favorably.

Commissioner Bernstein reported that the Finance Committee liaisons spent a lot of time discussing these charts at the February 18 meeting, so he has no further questions. He appreciates the charts as it allows the liaisons to keep close tabs on the District's finances, and he is looking forward to looks forward to entering Phase 5 of the Restore Illinois Plan.

Commissioner Grossberg thanked would like to know if staff has plans for Phase 5 or further reductions within Phase 4 of the Restore Illinois Plan.

Executive Director Romes reported that the reason staff requested delayed approval of the 2021 budget as it helped to determine the most accurate predictions related to finances. The 2021 budget assumes our region of the country will remain in Phase 4 of the Restore Illinois Plan throughout the year. If things significantly change, and our region enters Phase 5 prior to 2022, staff may need to amend the budget.

Vice president Kaplan would like to know which programs and facilities are currently generating the most revenue for the Park District.

Executive Director Romes reported that the first two weeks in January programming was reduced to private lessons, so tennis and athletics generated the most revenue.

Vice President Kaplan thanked staff for tonight's discussion.

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

#### **A. Approval of the 2021 Budget and Ordinance 2021-01, 2021 Combined Budget and Appropriation Ordinance**

Director Peters reported that the 2021 proposed budget was presented to the Finance Committee on November 24, 2020, December 3, 2020, and December 17, 2020. After review and revisions, a final draft was presented to the Park Board at the January 12 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 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 Highland Park News on Thursday, February 11, 2021. The proposed budget for fiscal year 2021 includes operating revenues of \$19,205,570, additional revenues of \$1,976,881 and total estimated expenditures, district-wide, of \$26,173,009 resulting in an anticipated deficit, of \$4,990,557. This is a planned use of reserves for capital projects related to master planning. Staff recommends approval from the Park Board for the 2021 Budget and 2021 Budget and Appropriation Ordinance for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2021.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bernstein and seconded by Vice President Kaplan to approve the 2021 Budget and Appropriation Ordinance 2021-01 for the period beginning January 1, 2021 – December 31, 2021.

#### **Roll Call:**

**Aye:** Commissioner Bernstein, Commissioner Grossberg, Commissioner Flores Weisskopf, Vice President Kaplan, President Ruttenberg

**Nay:** None

**Absent:** None

**Abstain:** None

**Motion Carried.**

**B. Sunset Woods Park Playground Renovation Final Design Contract**

On February 9, staff presented the final preliminary design and concept plan for the playground renovation and the master plan. This evening, staff are only focusing on the playground renovation and reviewed the five-phases of the project.

- **Phase 1: Design Development**

Managers Schwartz reported that staff are currently in this phase, as they are working with Hitchcock Design Group to refine the playground design details and design developmental plans.

- **Phase 2: Construction Documentation**

Once designs plans are finalized, staff and Hitchcock Design Group will prepare construction documents.

- **Phase 3: Permitting**

Hitchcock Design Group will prepare and submit permit documents.

- **Phase 4: Bid/Award**

Park District staff will manage the bidding process; however, Hitchcock Design Group will be responsible for recommending contractors, attending pre-bid meetings, be available to answer questions as they arise, and issue addendums if needed.

- **Phase 5: Construction Services**

Once a contractor is determined, Hitchcock Design Group will only provide services as needed for an hourly fee. The hourly fee will not exceed the figure written in the proposal. These services could include construction administration, answering any questions that the contractor may have, assisting with change orders, reviewing payouts, and occasional construction observation.

Manager Schwartz reported that the playground final design and construction services proposal aligns with staffs estimated expenses, which is \$82,100 for final design services, \$26,200 for construction-based services, plus additional services for \$14,100, which includes reimbursable expenses, 3D graphics and renderings, and structural engineering, totaling \$122,400. Staff also requested Hitchcock

Design Group provide an alternate proposal which includes the play area plaza with the playground final design and construction services. Staff are pleased to report that the original design estimate provided by Hitchcock Design group was \$130,000 and the alternate proposal which includes the play area plaza is \$129,600, so both proposals came in under budget. Manager Schwartz reported that staff feels there is a benefit to including the play area plaza with the design of the playground since there is cohesion between the areas. If the alternate proposal is approved, staff could bid out the play area plaza, and depending on quotes, the Park District may have the opportunity to include the construction of the play area plaza with the playground renovation vs. waiting until funds become available for the site master plan.

President Ruttenberg would like confirmation regarding what is being requested from the Park Board of Commissioners.

Executive Director Romes reported that staff are recommending approval from the Park Board of Commissioners authorizing staff to enter into an agreement that will not exceed \$130,00.

Commissioner Bernstein reported that the Finance Committee liaisons discussed this project, and it is recommended by the Finance Committee that the Park Board of Commissioners authorizes staff to enter into an agreement that will not exceed \$130,000.

Commissioner Grossberg reported that the Sunset Woods Park liaisons discussed this project at length, so he supports staff entering into an agreement that will not exceed \$130,000.

Commissioner Flores Weisskopf reported that staff understands the goal is to keep this area organic, so she supports staff entering into an agreement that will not exceed \$130,000.

Vice President Kaplan supports staff entering into an agreement that will not exceed \$130,000, so long as the design of the gathering area provided by Hitchcock Design Group does not exceed the construction budget \$182,000.

Manager Schwartz reported that the first step of the final design is to explore design and finalize a budget that the Park Board of Commissioners and staff are comfortable with. Additionally, staff has presented alternatives to understand what the area could look like at lower price points. Staff are not recommending Hitchcock Design Group to create a design in which construction would meet or exceed the budgeted amount.

Vice President Kaplan supports staff entering into an agreement that will not exceed \$130,000.

A motion was made by Vice President Kaplan and seconded by Commissioner Grossberg to accept the negotiated fee with Hitchcock Design Group and authorize the Executive Director to enter into an agreement in the total amount of \$129,600, which is the total of \$122,400 for playground renovation final design and construction administration and \$7,200 for the playground plaza final design and construction administration.

**Roll Call:**

**Aye:** Commissioner Bernstein, Commissioner Grossberg, Commissioner Flores Weisskopf, Vice President Kaplan, President Ruttenberg

**Nay:** None

**Absent:** None

**Abstain:** None

**Motion Carried.**

**C. Rory David Deutsch Tot Lot Update**

Director Smith reported that the Rory David Deutsch Tot Lot was constructed in 2001 with the support of a donation from the Deutsch family. The property is owned by the Highland Lakes Property Owners Association, which is the neighborhood in which the tot lot is located. The Park District maintains the site per an agreement between the Park District, the Property Owners Association, and the City of Highland Park. The City is responsible for providing access through the tot lot to the adjacent body of water. The twenty-year term of the agreement will end on July 9, 2021. If not terminated, the agreement will renew for a twelve-month term.

The tot lot is reaching its useful life, so Park District staff have been looking at funding opportunities to support the replacement costs. However, staff have determined that there are no outside funds available. Therefore, staff considered the option of terminating the agreement with the Property Owners Association and not replacing the playground equipment. In the instance that the Park District terminates the agreement the Park District is required to remove all the playground equipment and other structures on the property, as well as restore the site to its original condition prior to construction of the tot lot. This would require parks staff to remove the play equipment, water fountain, gazebo, and patio area while re-grading the site. Staff has yet to determine what the cost would be to restore the site to its original condition and instead met with Property Owners Association to discuss the termination of the agreement, which the Property Owners Association proposed the Park District remove play equipment that poses safety issues and provide small improvements vs. restoring the site to its original condition. Currently, staff are working with the Property Owners Association to determine what condition the Park District will leave the site in so that the Property Owners Association could maintain and manage

it moving forward. Additionally, the Property Owner Association requested extending the current agreement twelve-months so both parties can determine an appropriate plan.

Director Smith reported that staff recommends consensus from the Park Board of Commissioners to allow a twelve-month renewal of the Highland Lakes Playground Agreement to provide for adequate time for planning and negotiation regarding the future of the site.

Commissioner Bernstein appreciated the level of care staff has exercised and supports extending the agreement twelve-months to provide for adequate time for planning and negotiation regarding the future of the site.

Vice President Kaplan would like to know the current state of the property and the play equipment.

Director Smith reported that Property Owners Association removing play equipment over the next twelve months if the equipment poses a safety issue. Currently, there are a couple of swings that may need to be removed over the twelve months.

President Ruttenberg requested that staff share the removal and restoration costs once determined, and in the meantime supports extending the agreement twelve-months to provide for adequate time for planning and negotiation regarding the future of the site.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

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

Commissioner Grossberg reported that the Parks Foundation is trying to coordinate sponsorship for the Youth Golf Development Center to address the current shortcomings. Likewise, The Parks Foundation is exploring partnerships to support the playground renovation for Sunset Woods Park around the play area plaza and the northeast corner. He is pleased to report a new board member is heading up the development of the FYI Program. Currently, five Highwood families have requested camp scholarships, so the Foundation is dividing the FYI dollars amongst those families. Lastly, the Parks Foundation President has founded the Kids helping Kid's proposal, in which local high school students would be involved with fundraising efforts.

### **B. Communications and Marketing Update**

Executive Director Romes reported that the Park District is continuing to deliver essential programs and services which are keeping the community safe, healthy, and enriched. While staff are making tremendous impacts on the community through programs and services, he wanted to remind the Park Board that an important aspect of providing these services and programs is due to the to the work of the marketing and communications department.

Director Gogola provided an overview of the initiatives and projects which the marketing and communications team has been working on over the last several months to keep the community

informed of changes related to programming, services, facilities, parks, and beaches related to COVID-19. Staff has also been working closely with the City of Highland Park to share information across multiple channels. Staff has found that email has been an essential channel during the pandemic, along with social media and website updates. Additionally, staff has utilized videos to effectively communicate to the Park Districts safety measures and program expectations.

Director Gogola is pleased to report that the Park District's Facebook and Instagram followers have increased by 25%. Website visits have increased by 20%, which is a total of 250,000 visits over the past twelve months. Email marketing is averaging 12 – 18 newsletters per month. Lastly, staff printed over 350 banners in the last twelve-months specific to COVID impacts.

Director Gogola reported that with our region being in Phase 4 and hopefully entering Phase 5 or the Restore Illinois Plan, the marketing team can focus on key programming areas and facilities.

**a) *Summer Camp***

This is a five-phase plan, which the team is currently in the second phase promoting camp registration and encouraging the early bird discount.

**b) *Sunset Valley Golf Club***

This is a very detailed plan since the golf course attracts a regional audience from the north side of Chicago to northern Lake County. As a result, staff has developed targeted tv, radio, and social media advertising, along with an advertising package through the CDGA. TV and streaming advertising will also be aired at PGA events, on Golf TV, ESPN, Marquee TV, CNN, MSNBC, and NBC Sports.

**c) *Fitness of the Go***

Staff built the website, developed the app, and branding for the digital alternative to fitness.

**d) *Upcoming Grand Openings Ceremonies***

Staff are working on the marketing materials and sponsorship opportunities for the grand opening of the Youth Golf Development Center, Sunset Woods Playgrounds, and the Preserve of Highland Park.

As for sponsorship, Director Gogola reported that the Park District sold \$35,000 in sponsorship and advertising in 2019, however, staff are anticipating selling about \$117,000 in sponsorship and advertising this year. Currently, the Park District has over 300 companies on their prospect list and has sold \$45,595 of sponsorship which is 39% of that goal.

Regarding upcoming projects, Director Gogola reported that the team is working on a customer-centric technology master plan to better identify gaps and opportunities which will improve customers' digital experience when navigating through our website and registration software. The plan should be

completed within the next month. The team is also looking to improve relationships with state and federal legislators and launch a podcast series to highlight programs, events, parks, facilities, staff, and board members.

President Ruttenberg was very impressed by Director Gogola's presentation as it was very informative.

Commissioner Grossberg is eager to see the TV advertisements.

Commissioner Flores Weisskopf appreciated the presentation so she could better understand how the marketing team's efforts have helped the Park District throughout these challenging times.

Vice President Kaplan applauded Director Gogola for her presentation and the development of Fitness on the Go, as he visits the fitness center and utilizes the app.

Commissioner Flores Weisskopf would like to know what the goal behind the golf commercials is as she feels tee-times are already limited.

Director Gogola reported that the golf course was in high demand last summer, however, this summer and moving forward the course will be competing with other family activities and courses so the Park District wants to maintain the market share and the relationships built.

#### **C. Director's Report**

Executive Director Rome reported that while the ice shelves along the lakefront properties may be beautiful, they are extremely dangerous, so staff has placed warning signs along all the lakefront properties and shared digital communications regarding the dangers. He urged the community to stay away from the water and reported that staff are checking the sites to prevent incidents from occurring.

#### **D. Board Comments**

None.

#### **CLOSED SESSION**

A motion was made by Vice President Kaplan, seconded by Commissioner 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 - for discussions between internal or external auditors and the Board.

#### **Roll Call:**

**Aye:** Commissioner Bernstein, Commissioner Grossberg, Commissioner Flores Weisskopf, Vice President Kaplan, President Ruttenberg

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**Nay:** None

**Absent:** None

**Abstain:** None

**Motion Carried**

The meeting adjourned into Closed Session at 7:18 p.m.

The meeting reconvened into Open Session at 7:21 p.m.

**ACTION FROM CLOSED SESSION IF ANY**

A motion was made by Commissioner Bernstein and seconded by Vice President Kaplan President that the Closed Session Minutes from August 5, 2020, August 25, 2020, October 13, 2020, October 27, 2020, November 17, 2020 along with Closed Session Minutes which we are reviewed and withheld in the past, not be released for public inspection.

**Roll Call:**

**Aye:** Commissioner Bernstein, Commissioner Grossberg, Commissioner Flores  
Weisskopf, Vice President Kaplan, President Ruttenberg

**Nay:** None

**Absent:** None

**Abstain:** None

**Motion Carried**

**ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made by Commissioner Grossberg and seconded by Vice President Kaplan and approved by a unanimous vote. The Board Meeting adjourned at 7:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Brian Romes, Secretary