

**PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK  
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS  
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING  
OCTOBER 25 2023**

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 p.m. President Grossberg

A motion was made by Commissioner Ruttenberg, seconded by Vice President Freeman to allow Commissioner Kaplan to participate by electronic means.

**Roll Call:**

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

**Nay:** None

**Absent:** None

**Abstain:** None

**Motion Carried**

**ROLL CALL**

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

**Absent:** Commissioner Bernstein

**Staff Present:** Executive Director Romes; Deputy Director Carr; Director Smith; Director Peters; Director Gogola; Director Voss; Director Hall; Assistant Director Acevedo; Assistant Director Reyes; Manager Ochs; Manager Deptula; Supervisor Mephram; 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 Ruttenberg, seconded by Vice President Freeman to approve the Minutes September 13, 2023 Workshop Meeting, the Minutes September 19, 2023 Finance Committee Meeting, the Minutes September 27, 2023 Regular Meeting, and Bills and Payroll in the amount of \$2,024,422.25

**Roll Call:**

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

**Nay:** None

**Absent:** Commissioner Bernstein

**Abstain:** None

**Motion Carried**

**FINANCIAL FORECASTS AND TREASURER’S REPORT**

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

Director Peters reported that as of September 30, 2023, actual revenues are exceeding budgeted revenue by about \$361,000 and actual expenses are \$1.5 million less than budgeted, for a year-to-date surplus of \$1.8 million.

***Conclusion***

The following Park District programs and facilities are performing better than budget: interest income has a \$537,000 surplus, youth dance has a \$44,000 surplus, tennis has a \$166,000 surplus, sponsorship revenue has a \$66,000 surplus, Recreation Center memberships has a \$172,000 surplus and personal training has a \$36,000 surplus, and golf has a \$425,000 surplus. Also, there is a \$400,000 savings from payroll expenses.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**A. Consideration to Approve Ordinance 2023-08 Renaming Cloverdale Park to Fontana-Pasquesi Park**

Director Gogola reported that according to Park District policy, Park Property may be named after individuals or groups who have made substantial philanthropic donations toward the development of Park Property. The threshold for considering the naming of a park, building or facility includes contribution of an agreed upon dollar amount to fund all or part of the scheduled maintenance, repair and replacement of a baseball backstop, playground, tennis courts, basketball courts and appurtenant improvements located at the park. Provisions of a naming rights agreement include an agreed upon term to fund an endowment for the continued maintenance of the park. To this end, Staff has been in discussions Laurence Pasquesi regarding renaming rights agreement in exchange for a generous donation for Cloverdale Park.

Per the terms of the agreement, the Pasquesi family donated \$250,000 to the Parks Foundation of Highland Park to rename Cloverdale Park to Fontana-Pasquesi Park. The donation funds will be used

to fund all or part of the scheduled maintenance, repair and replacement of a baseball backstop, playground, tennis courts, basketball courts and appurtenant improvements located at the park. The naming rights agreement was presented and approved by the Park Board of Commissioners at the August 23, 2023, Regular Board Meeting. The name has sat for a period of 60 days for public review.

A motion was made by Commissioner Ruttenberg, seconded by Vice President Freeman to approve Ordinance 2023-08 Re-naming Cloverdale Park to Fontana-Pasquesi Park.

**Roll Call:**

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

**Nay:** None

**Absent:** Commissioner Bernstein

**Abstain:** None

**Motion Carried**

Director Gogola reported that a small dedication ceremony will be held on Wednesday, November 1, 2023, at 4:00 p.m. for the Fontana-Pasquesi family.

**B. Consideration to Approve the Design Services Agreement from Lamar Johnson for the Sunset Woods Improvements**

Director Smith reported staff are still negotiating a fee with Lamar Johnson for design services for the Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) Grant Project to implement Phase 1 of the Sunset Woods Master Plan which includes new multi-use basketball court, new skate park, new wheel friendly plaza, new game court, native planting, and interpretation area. The scope also includes design services for related Capital Projects for replacement of athletic field and tennis lighting, assessment of existing tennis courts and associated drainage improvements. Staff hope to have a final recommendation and request approval of a Design Services Agreement in November.

**C. Consideration to Approve Two Proposals for Recreational Services of an Enterprise Facility at 2205 Skokie Valley Road**

Manager Ochs reported that the District received three RFP submittals for this project: Ron Saslow Pickleball Dome Proposal, Golf Development Strategies and The Golf Practice, and The Golf Practice Partnership with The Highland Park Golf Learning Center. Submittals were required to present a plan for the following scope of work: the operation and management of an enterprise facility, with consideration given to a proposed design, construction, and financing at 2205 Skokie Valley Road. Proposals could be for all, or portions of the entire property.

- a. **Ron Saslow Pickleball Dome** proposed building a new Four-Season Dome structure with Pickleball courts and Padel courts and donate the Dome to the Park District upon completion. The new Dome will also feature a reception area, café, locker rooms and a pro shop. The Park District will operate the facility upon completion. The Park District is responsible for developing a Proforma.
- b. **Golf Development Strategies and The Golf Practice** proposed reimagining the driving range, reconfiguring the putting green and short game area, operating the dome “as is” in the short term with future long term improvement considerations, and expanding the food and beverage area. Golf Development Strategies and The Golf Practice will offer \$100,000 payment per year for rental of the space where the current dome is located, and a \$20,000 payment per year for the management fee of the Highland Park Golf Learning Center site. Golf Development Strategies would assume all operational responsibilities and associated expenses for the entire site.
- c. **The Golf Practice Partnership with The Highland Park Golf Learning Center** proposed operational services. The Golf Practice will provide a \$20,000 yearly payment to the Park District for exclusive use of four grass hitting bays for Golf Practice coaches to provide instruction. Additionally, The Golf Practice will provide a revenue share agreement with the Park District for all golf programming (excluding private lessons). The Golf Practice will retain 75% of the gross revenue and share 25% of the gross revenue with the Park District of Highland Park.

Staff received consensus from the Park Board of Commissioners for staff to work with Park District Legal Counsel to further negotiate terms and develop a donor agreement with Ron Saslow and a license agreement with The Golf Practice. Agreements are anticipated to be considered for approval by the Park Board of Commissioners at the November Regular Board Meeting. Staff also received consensus to continue negotiations directly with Golf Development Strategies on an agreement for future consideration.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

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

Vice President Freeman reported the Parks Foundation met last night to review the 2023 fundraising campaigns, estimate total funds per campaign by December 31, 2023. Additionally, the Park Foundation is working on 2024 initiatives including the scholarship fundraising report, community outreach opportunities, grant opportunities, and the Gala.

### **B. Board Committee Updates**

Executive Director Romes reported at the October 17 Finance Committee Meeting staff reviewed the third quarter financials for the Recreation Center of Highland Park; PMA Securities LLC reviewed the proposed debt issuance for the 2024 fiscal year; staff reviewed the tax levy timeline and the key considerations for the 2023 tax levy considerations, and its impacts to the 2024 budget; staff reviewed the three Request for Qualifications (RFQs) for the Sunset Woods Improvements Design Service and received consensus from the Finance Committee to proceed with negotiating a fee with the top-ranked firm, Lamar Johnson; lastly, staff reviewed the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Recreational Services of an Enterprise Facility at 2205 Skokie Valley Road.

At the October 18 Facility and Recreation Committee Meeting staff provided construction project updates for the Hidden Creek AquaPark Deck Replacement and Shades Structure project, the Larry Fink Memorial Park Baseball Field Improvements project, the Park Avenue North Beach project; staff reviewed the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Recreational Services of an Enterprise Facility at 2205 Skokie Valley Road; and staff reviewed the program reconciliation developed by Architects Holabird and Root for the New Community Center at West Ridge Park.

### **C. Scholarship Presentation**

Manager Deptula reviewed the scholarship process, and provided a five-year trend analysis of grant-in-aid, SMILE, and FYI scholarship utilization.

SMILE (Scholarships Mean Involvement in Leisure for Everyone) Grant-in-Aid Program gives families in need of financial assistance the opportunity to participate in Park District programs. Founded in 1992, SMILE has provided thousands of Highland Park residents facing economic difficulty with access to classes, camps, sports leagues, fitness activities, lessons, and events that promote healthy lifestyles. A little over \$107,000 in SMILE funds was awarded in 2021, \$130,000 in 2022, and \$182,000 this year providing Highland Park families access to all Park District programs.

In 2022, the FYI (Foundation Youth Initiative) Grant-in-Aid Program was developed for qualifying Highwood families to help cover up to 50% of camp fees. A little over \$2,500 was awarded to Highwood families. This year, the program was expanded to all Park District programs. A little less than \$2,000 has been awarded thus far.

The FYI Learn-to-Swim programs are available for qualifying Highwood families and cover 100% of the fees. A little over \$2,000 in FYI Swim was awarded in 2018, a little over \$6,000 in 2022, and close to \$6,000 was awarded this year.

Lastly, the Goldman Golf scholarship provides Highland Park and Highwood students ages 12-18 who have an interest in learning to play golf and demonstrate need are eligible. Applications are available and will be accepted throughout the year. Each participant will receive approximately eight private lessons plus practice time and the chance to develop a personal relationship with a caring golf pro and member of the Park District of Highland Park staff. Lessons and equipment were provided for 10 golfers in 2020 and 2021, and 6 golfers this year.

### **D. Hidden Creek AquaPark End of Season Report**

Assistant Director Acevedo and Manager Mephram reviewed the 2023 pre-season and regular season hours of operation, this included lap swim, aquafit, swim lessons, open swim, and splash pad play. Groups could reserve the aquapark on Saturdays and Sundays from 10:00 a.m. – noon and 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. To ensure safe operations, the Park District employed 175 seasonal staff for the aquapark. Lifeguards and building attendants were on duty daily from 5:30 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. Lifeguards received pre-season trainings, internal/external audits with live action drills, and weekly mandatory in-services.

Assistant Director Acevedo is pleased to report that the aquapark exceeded several of their operational goals, including surpassed staffing goal by 10 employees (goal of 165 employees), camp visits by 736 (goal 5,000 visits), and membership sales by \$13,208 (goal \$164,882 sales).

Summer of 2023, staff hosted 100 days of summer activities throughout the regular season at Hidden Creek AquaPark. Staff received wonderful feedback from members, so staff are planning for summer 2024 activities.

Assistant Director Acevedo reviewed the revenue and expenses over the last five seasons. Revenue includes fees and charges, membership sales, and rentals. Expenses include salaries and wages, contractual services, insurance, materials and supplies, landscaping, utilities, and pension. Overall, Hidden Creek AquaPark continues to operate at a deficit. While the deficit is continuing to decrease, staff are working to break even and hopefully generate revenue in future years.

Assistant Director Acevedo reviewed the 2024 scheduled improvements, recruitment efforts, and operational plans.

**E. Directors Report**

Executive Director Romes shared upcoming events, including Jack-O-Latern Geocache this Friday, October 27, from 6:00 – 7:30 p.m. at Heller Nature Center and Scary Skate from 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. at Centennial Ice Arena; Scary Halloween Miniature Golf this Saturday, October 28 and Sunday, October 29 at Rivers Edge Mini Golf; The Great Pumpkin Smash on November 3 from 4:00 – 6:00 p.m. at the Preserve of Highland Park. This free event includes pumpkin-smashing, target-throwing, composting event as we bid farewell to the fall season in style; and Dia De Los Muertos on November 4 from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. at the Recreation Center of Highland Park. This free event Honors Our Past, Celebrating Our Future and Bridging Our Communities! Join us for a day of dance, music, art projects, and face painting.

**F. Board Comments**

None.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

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

None.

**CLOSED SESSION**

A motion was made by Commissioner Ruttenberg, seconded by Vice President Freeman to adjourn into Closed Session for discussion of Section 2(c)1: The employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees, specific individuals who serve as independent contractors in a park, recreational, or educational setting, or specific volunteers of the public body or legal counsel for the public body; Section 2(c)6 – the setting of a price for sale or lease of property owned by the District; Section 2(c) 11 – litigation against or on behalf of the District or where the District finds that an action is probable or imminent;

**Roll Call:**

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

**Nay:** None

**Absent:** Commissioner Bernstein

**Abstain:** None

**Motion Carried**

The meeting adjourned into Closed Session at 6:57 p.m.

The meeting reconvened into Open Session at 7:19 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)1: The employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees, specific individuals who serve as independent contractors in a park, recreational, or educational setting, or specific volunteers of the public body or legal counsel for the public body; Section 2(c)6 – the setting of a price for sale or lease of property owned by the District; Section 2(c) 11 – litigation against or on behalf of the District or where the District finds that an action is probable or imminent;

No action was taken.

**ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made by Commissioner Ruttenberg and seconded by Vice President Freeman and approved by a unanimous vote. The Board Meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Roxanne Hejnowski*

Roxanne Hejnowski, Assistant Secretary