

**PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
NOVEMBER 15, 2023**

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m. President Grossberg

ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioner Ruttenberg, Vice President Freeman, President Grossberg

Absent: Commissioner Bernstein, Commissioner Kaplan

Staff Present: Executive Director Romes; Deputy Director Carr; Director Smith; Director Peters; Director Gogola; Director Hall; Assistant Director Acevedo; Assistant Director Reyes; Manager Ochs; Supervisor Gonzalez; Coordinator Hejnowski

Guest Speakers: None

Commissioner Bernstein joined the meeting at 6:16 p.m.

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

None.

PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

None.

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Ruttenberg requested that Item A. Minutes from the October 17, 2023 Finance Committee Meeting and Item B. Minutes October 18, 2023 Facility and Recreation Committee Meeting be removed from the consent agenda, since he did not attend either of those meetings.

A motion was made by Commissioner Ruttenberg, seconded by Vice President Freeman to remove Item A. October 17, 2023 Finance Committee Meeting and Item B. Minutes October 18, 2023 Facility and Recreation Committee Meeting be removed from the consent agenda.

Roll Call:

Aye: Commissioner Ruttenberg, Vice President Freeman, President Grossberg

Nay: None

Absent: Commissioner Bernstein, Commissioner Kaplan,

Abstain: None

Motion Carried

A motion was made by Commissioner Ruttenberg, seconded by Vice President Freeman to approve the Minutes October 25, 2023 Regular Meeting; the 2024 Board Meeting Calendar; 2024 IAPD/IPRA Credentials Certificate; Policy # 5.03.07 Household Credits Left on Account; the Site Design and Engineering Services Proposal from Lamar Johnson for the Sunset Woods Improvements project; the Independent Contractor Agreement with The Golf Practice for Golf Programs and Services; and the Bills and Payroll in the amount of \$1,693,772.76

Roll Call:

Aye: Commissioner Ruttenberg, Vice President Freeman, President Grossberg

Nay: None

Absent: Commissioner Bernstein, Commissioner Kaplan

Abstain: None

Motion Carried

FINANCIAL FORECASTS AND TREASURER’S REPORT

Operations (General and Recreation Funds) Budget vs. Actual

Director Peters shared the end-of-year projections and actual figures as of October 31, 2023. Projected Revenues are greater than budgeted by \$1.8 million and projected expenses are \$700,000 less than budgeted. Overall, staff are projecting a \$2.5 million surplus in operating funds as of December 31, 2023.

Conclusion

The following Park District programs and facilities are performing better than budget: interest income has a \$622,000 surplus, youth dance has a \$47,000 surplus, tennis has a \$140,000 surplus, Recreation Center memberships has a \$193,000 surplus and personal training has a \$34,000 surplus, and golf has a \$450,000 surplus. Also, there is a \$400,000 savings from payroll expenses.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Parks Foundation Update

Director Gogola reported the Parks Foundation met last night to review the 2024 plans including grants, fundraising campaigns, community outreach, and events. The most recent event, Dad Bod 3x3 Basketball Tournament, was a huge success. They would like it to become an annual event and include a youth tournament next year.

B. Board Committee Updates

Executive Director Romes reported at the November 14 Finance Committee Meeting staff reviewed the proposed 2024 Budget and the 2023 tax levy considerations.

The Finance Committee recommended the Park Board of Commissioners approve the Site Design and Engineering Services Agreement from Lamar Johnson Collaborative for the Sunset Woods

Improvements project, the independent contractor agreement with the Golf Practice for golf programs and services at the Highland Park Golf Learning Center, and the addition of policy 5.03.07: Household Credits Left on Account.

Staff provided a 2023 financial analysis report of Centennial Ice Arena, comparing year-to-date budgeted vs. actual revenues and expenses for programs and rentals.

C. End of Season Lakefront Report

Assistant Director Acevedo provided a 2023 summary of operations at Rosewood Beach. She provided a comparison of budgeted vs actual revenues and expenses at Rosewood Beach, this included daily pass, camp open swim, and parking revenue along with expenses from salaries and wages and pension contribution, contractual services, insurance, materials and supplies, utilizes. She reviewed the lakefront decal and parking meter utilization comparing 2022 to 2023. She provided a comparison of neighboring beach fronts and the rates they charge for use compared to Highland Park rates.

Manager Pierce reviewed rental revenues from 2022 to 2023. She is pleased to report revenues have increased in 2023 since the facility can be rented year-round.

Assistant Director Acevedo shared a list of staff recommendations for Rosewood Beach, highlights include possibly installing an access gate in the upper parking lot and introducing a \$5 to \$10 Resident Beach Access season pass.

President Grossberg and Commissioner Ruttenberg would like to know if it's possible to expand the Rosewood Interpretive Center since it's such a sought-after facility for rentals. Commissioner Bernstein reported this is a tier 6, unfunded capital project item, and would be extremely costly, if at all possible. He recommends discussing this at a Committee Meeting.

President Grossberg and Commissioner Ruttenberg are opposed to charging residents to access the beach.

Executive Director Romes recommends having a deeper discussion regarding charging residents to access the beach at a future Finance Committee Meeting.

Assistant Director Acevedo provided a 2023 summary of operations at Park Avenue Beach and Boating Facility. Manager Pierce compared the 2023 actual utilizations and revenues vs. budgeted for storage, launch, and parking pass sales. Assistant Director Acevedo reported that PABF is projected to generate \$258,247 in revenue by December 31, 2023.

D. Directors Report

Executive Director Romes shared upcoming events, including Snacks with Santa on Thu. Nov. 30 from 5:00 – 6:15 p.m. at West Ridge Center. This heartwarming event is tailored to children aged 3 to 8 so they can share their holiday wishes, snap photos, and indulge in a variety of yummy snacks and treats; Grinchmas on Sat. Dec. 2 from 10:00 – 11:30 a.m. at the Highland Park Country Club. This one-of-a-kind interactive event will include breakfast, a themed craft, photo opportunities, games and more. The Great Ornament Hunt on Sat. Dec. 2 from 2:00 – 3:30 p.m. at Heller Nature Center. Follow our trails as we search for ornaments dazzling the trees and make some of your own to put on your own trees at

home; Shine Bright: A Hanukkah Workshop on Mon. Dec. 4 from 4:00 – 5:00 p.m. at West Ridge Center. Enjoy a Hanukkah themed story, read by the published author herself, along with some fun crafting, music, and tasty treats; BYOB Paint & Sip on Thu. Dec. 7 from 5:00 – 7:30 p.m. at Rosewood Interpretive Center. Bring your favorite beverage and we will supply you with step-by-step instructions and all supplies necessary to create a display-worthy masterpiece. Light refreshments will be served; Gingerbread House Workshop on Thu. Dec. 14 from 5:00 – 8:00 p.m. at West Ridge Center. Start with a box house and cover with our handmade frosting. Embellish with candy, cookies and goodies. 2 sessions (5pm start & 6:45pm start). Winter Solstice on Sat. Dec. 16 from 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. at Heller Nature Center. Celebrate the beginning of winter and sunlight’s return. Create a solstice lantern to use on our guided night hike through the forest, learn about winter solstice traditions and end with a warm campfire celebration.

E. Board Comments

None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Approval of Item A. Minutes from the October 17, 2023 Finance Committee Meeting and Item B. Minutes October 18, 2023 Facility and Recreation Committee Meeting.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bernstein, seconded by Vice President Freeman to approve Item A. October 17, 2023 Finance Committee Meeting and Item B. Minutes October 18, 2023 Facility and Recreation Committee Meeting be removed from the consent agenda.

Roll Call:

Aye: Commissioner Bernstein, President Freeman, President Grossberg

Nay: None

Absent: Commissioner Kaplan

Abstain: Commissioner Ruttenberg

Motion Carried

B. Approval of the Truth in Taxation Resolution #2023-08

Director Peters reported that Under Illinois law, if a District is considering extending an aggregate property tax levy of more than 5% greater than the preceding year’s levy, it must publicly disclose its intention and hold a public hearing. Aggregate levy is defined as real estate taxes, exclusive of the election costs and debt service. Also, the District must determine the amount to be levied at least 20 days prior to adopting the levy ordinance.

Director Peters reviewed the tax levy timeline.

She reminded the Park Board of Commissioners that the District relies on 50/50 split between revenues from property taxes and operating funds.

She provided a tax levy refresher, noting the purpose of a tax levy which captures funds to support mission critical community assets and services:

- **Capital Repair and Replacement** – Tiers 1-3 Capital Projects (\$37M in 5-Year Capital Plan)
- **Capital Improvements** – Tiers 4-6 Capital Projects (\$30M) of which \$28M is currently unfunded (Tier 6)
- **Operational Maintenance** - 44 parks, 4 Lakefront properties, nearly 800 acres of open space, and 11 facilities

She reviewed the tax levy consideration which includes increasing the levy by the **CPI and New Growth** avoids a negative impact on future levies and long-term funding for capital repair, replacement, improvements, and operational maintenance. Overall, the CPI (6.5%) is greater than Tax Levy Cap (5%) and Operational Expenses are projected to increase, includes part-time and seasonal wages including minimum wage increase to \$15/hr. (19%), Materials and Supplies (7.3%), Utilities (9.9%), Health Insurance Premiums (PPO 7.9%, HMO 7.7%, Dental 3.0%, Vision 22.2%), and Building Safety and Security, IT and Cyber Security. Additionally, Capital Project Construction, Architecture and Management Costs continue to increase consistent with CPI and over the next 5 years are projected to be more than \$28 million. The proposed levy allows Grant in Aid Scholarships funds to increase from \$100,000 - \$150,000 and the Park District of Highland Park to sustain operations, capital repair, replacement, and improvements.

She reviewed the tax levy factors for the general and recreation funds.

- CPI for 2023 is 6.5%, tax levy cap is 5%.
- New Growth accounts for new property which cannot be accessed in future years. As of September 18, 2023, new growth is estimated at \$10 Million, so staff are recommending \$20 Million.
- EAV (Equalized Assessed Valuation) is 8.83% per Lake County Assessor/Clerk as of September 18, 2023, so 8.83% is recommended.
- Special Recreation Fund is .04% of EAV.

The resolution estimates a 6.96% increase over the prior year's extension. This represents an increase of \$905,710. This is essentially a cost-of-living increase based upon the lesser of CPI or 5% while trying to capture new growth. Additionally, it includes a full levy in the Special Recreation Fund of .04% for programs, services, and projects that support persons with disabilities. As such, a public hearing will be required at the December 14 Regular Meeting.

Adoption of the levy ordinance is scheduled for the December 13 Regular Meeting. The Levy Request does not guarantee that these funds will be received. In the Spring when property values

and tax cap limits are finalized, the Park District tax extension number is calculated. This is the total property tax amount that is billed to residents.

She reviewed the surrounding truth in taxation rates of other Highland Park government bodies.

She reviewed tax levy calculations. Noting the general fund, which is tax capped, would see a 6.45% change, the recreation fund, which is tax capped, would see a 6.93% change, the special recreation fund would see a 10.34% change, for an overall increase of 6.96%. She reviewed the historical rates that the district levied. The key considerations for the proposed tax levy include:

- The District's Tax Levy increase will be less than the 6.5% CPI.
- A 5% levy, plus new growth will provide the District with revenue to sustain its operations and address increases in Part-time & Seasonal Wages, Construction, Materials and Supplies, Utilities, Health Insurance, Security, and IT.
- The District has more than \$28 million in unfunded capital expenditures.
- The District will continue to focus on equity, alternative revenue sources and grant-in-aid scholarships.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to know why the growth percentages differentiate amongst the Park District of Highland Park, North Shore School District 112, and Township High School District 113.

Director Peters reported that the growth percentages and determined by Lake County.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bernstein, seconded by Vice President Freeman to approve the Truth in Taxation Resolution #2023-08, where the estimated percentage increase in the proposed 2024 aggregate levy over the amount of real estate taxes extended upon the final 2023 aggregate levy based on 5% tax cap and anticipated growth is 6.96%.

Commissioner Bernstein reported that a lot of discussion went into that number and justification to support programs and services. He thanked staff for their hard work in developing the proposed levy.

Roll Call:

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

Nay: None

Absent: Commissioner Kaplan

Abstain: None

Motion Carried

C. Consideration to Approve a Restricted Donor Agreement with Ron Saslow for the Enterprise Property Improvement Plan at 2205 Skokie Valley Road (Lot 3)

Executive Director Romes reported staff are not requesting approval of the Restricted Donor Agreement since it is still being reviewed by the Park District's legal counsel. Instead, he is here this evening to provide an update on the agreement.

As a reminder, a Request for Proposals was released on September 30, 2023, for an Agreement for Recreational Services of an Enterprise Facility at 2205 Skokie Valley Road, Highland Park, in consideration for payment to the Park District of Highland Park. The Park District received three RFP submittals: Ron Saslow Pickleball Dome, 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.

A committee of Park District staff and Park Board liaisons interviewed all three firms. Qualifications and criteria consistent with the RFQ were considered, and then reviewed and discussed at the Finance Committee Meeting on October 17, the Facility and Recreation Committee Meeting on October 18, and the Regular Park Board Meeting on October 25. The Park Board provided consensus to negotiate a Donor Agreement with Ron Saslow, which includes the donation of a new Four-Season Air Supported Dome structure with Pickleball and Padel courts with certain restrictions and the Park District operating the facility upon completion. The new Dome will include a reception area, and pro shop.

Executive Director Romes requested a Park Board representative to help with the negotiations before the final agreement is presented in December for approval.

Commissioner Ruttenberg was appointed the Park Board representative.

OTHER BUSINESS

None.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE BOARD

None.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Commissioner Ruttenberg and seconded by Commissioner Bernstein and approved by a unanimous vote. The Board Meeting adjourned at 7:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Regular Meeting Minutes
November 15, 2023

Roxanne Hejnowski

Roxanne Hejnowski, Assistant Secretary