

**PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
DECEMBER 13, 2023**

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

ROLL CALL

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

Absent: Commissioner Kaplan

Staff Present: Executive Director Romes; Deputy Director Carr; Director Smith; Director Peters; Director Voss; Director Gogola; Director Hall; Director Baird; Assistant Director Acevedo; Superintendent/Manager Ochs; Manager Sangern; Coordinator Hejnowski

Guest Speakers: None

Commissioner Kaplan joined the meeting at 6:05 p.m.

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

None.

PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE TAX LEVY ORDINANCE

A motion was made by Commissioner Ruttenberg and seconded by Vice President Freeman to convene the public hearing for the Tax Levy Ordinance for 2023, representing the District's request for property taxes to be received in 2024 is now in session. The amount of the levy is \$13,915,000 (thirteen million, nine hundred fifteen thousand dollars), exclusive of debt service.

Roll Call:

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

Nay: None

Absent: Commissioner Kaplan,

Abstain: None

Motion Carried

President Grossberg reported that the public hearing for the Tax Levy Ordinance is now in session.

Regular Meeting Minutes
December 13, 2023

As required by law, notification of tonight’s hearing was posted in the Highland Park News.

No members from the public or members from the Park Board of Commissioner’s wished to speak on the public hearing and Executive Director Romes did not receive any written communications relative to the Tax Levy Ordinance.

A motion was made by Commissioner Ruttenberg and seconded by Commissioner Bernstein to close the public hearing.

Roll Call:

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

Nay: None

Absent: Commissioner Kaplan,

Abstain: None

Motion Carried

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 November 8, 2023 Workshop Meeting; Minutes November 14, 2023, Finance Committee Meeting; Minutes November 14, 2023 Regular Meeting; Ordinance 2023-03 Naming the Baseball Field at Larry Fink Park the Jeff Fox Baseball Field; Ordinance #2023-09 - Tax Levy for 2023; Ordinance #2023-10 An Ordinance Amending the Appropriation Ordinance for the Fiscal Year Beginning January 1, 2023 and Ending on December 31, 2023; the Deer Creek Racquet Club Parking Lot Engineering Proposal; the Hidden Creek AquaPark Concrete Deck Replacement Change Order; the 2024 Larry Fink Memorial Park Baseball Field Improvements Bid; the 2024 Hidden Creek Aqua Park Pool Shell Maintenance Project Bid; the 2024 Park Avenue Boating Facility South Parking Lot Restoration Bid; the 2024 Highland Park Pops Affiliate Organization Agreement; the 2024 Highland Park Players Affiliate Organization Agreement; the 2024 American Youth Soccer Organization Affiliate Agreement; the 2024 Uptown Music Theater of Highland Park Affiliate Organization Agreement; 2024 License Agreement between the Park District of Highland Park and the North Shore Yacht Club; and Bills and Payroll in the amount of \$5,597,647.15

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 shared the end-of-year projections and actual figures as of November 30, 2023. Projected Revenues are greater than budgeted by \$2.6 million and projected expenses are less than budgeted. Overall, staff are projecting a \$3.7 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 \$700,000 surplus, youth dance has a \$56,000 surplus, tennis has a \$150,000 surplus, Recreation Center memberships has a \$218,000 surplus and personal training has a \$36,000 surplus, golf has a \$480,000 surplus. Also, there is a \$400,000 savings from payroll expenses.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. 2024 PROPOSED BUDGET AND THE BUDGET AND APPROPRIATION ORDINANCE

Director Peters reported that staff are pleased to present the proposed 2024 Park District of Highland Park Budget for consideration by the Board of Park Commissioners. This budget represents the calendar year January 1, 2024, through December 31, 2024. The Finance Committee reviewed the proposed budget in detail at the Finance Committee meetings held on November 14, 2023, and December 7, 2023.

Per park district code “The governing body of each park district shall, within or before, the first quarter of each fiscal year, adopt a combined annual budget an appropriation ordinance.” The purpose of today’s presentation is to gain consensus from board members to move forward and lay the budget down for a period of thirty days so that the public may review it.

After that period has expired, there will be a hearing for the public on January 31. Later that evening, the Budget will be presented to the Board for approval of the Budget, and the Budget and Appropriations Ordinance. Upon approval, the budget will be certified by the county.

Budget Overview

Highlights include the General, Special Recreation and Recreation Funds anticipate a combined operating surplus, before transfers, of \$3,310,705. Of that surplus, \$3,600,000 will be transferred to the Capital Projects Fund and an additional \$1,674,800 to Debt Service. Capital expenditures are approximately \$11.8 million, operating expenditures are approximately \$22.7 million, consolidated expenditures, including operations, debt, and capital, are approximately \$37.9 million, and tax support for the 2024 fiscal year represents approximately 53% of total revenues.

New for 2024

in an effort to remain both fiscally responsible and strategic in the delivery of services to the community, staff anticipates continued development and implementation of a Values Driven Strategic Plan, working toward submission for the Distinguished Accreditation award in 2025, developing an HR performance management system, implementing an HR intranet system, and conducting a comprehensive employee engagement survey. The District will continue to collaborate with the Parks Foundation and a fundraising consultant to support Capital Campaign Fundraising.

Projects in Progress

- ***Planning and Design for Construction of Multi-Purpose Facility*** (addressing West Ridge Center Sports Field Master Plan (Synthetic Turf Field Construction).
- ***Land Management Plan*** – *the* plan covers 9 major topics: Park Maintenance, Stormwater Management, Lakefront Maintenance, Natural Areas, Park Inventory, Real Estate, Park Amenities, Connectivity, and Cultural Resources.
- ***Park Site Plans*** - The Park Site Plan initiative is in response to goals and objectives established in GreenPrint 2024 and the Land Management Plan. The plan will evaluate the Park District’s outdoor parks based on Park District standards to then offer recommendations for park improvements.
- ***Sunset Woods Site Master Plan*** - The plan strives to consider the timeless park holistically and in the context of the Highland Park community and surrounding area. The Park District applied for an Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development Grant (OSLAD) in the amount of \$600,000 to assist in funding components for the master plan. In 2023 the Park District was awarded \$600,000 for phase 1 of the Sunset Woods Master Plan project. Phase 1 includes a new relocated skate park, wheel friendly plaza, multi-use basketball court, and game area. The project is expected to break ground summer 2024.
- ***Golf Learning Center Optimization Report*** - The intent of the Golf Learning Center Optimization Report is to improve financial performance while meeting community and regional recreational needs at the Highland Park Golf Learning Center facility. The plan includes a comprehensive assessment and future recommendations that will be used to guide programs and investments. The recommendations address: the driving range, mini golf, building and general site connectivity, programming, operations, agreements and marketing strategy, relationship to the Dome and The Preserve, new amenities, capital improvements, and services.

On August 30, 2023, a Request for Proposal for Recreational Services of an Enterprise Facility at 2205 Skokie Valley Road (commonly known as Lot 3/Golf Learning Center) was issued by the District. Three responses were received; none from the current licensee. As such, the District expects large changes to occur at the site in late 2024 or early 2025.

- ***Athletic Fields Master Plan*** - The Park District provides both informal and programmed competition level sports fields at locations throughout the community. The District's Planning and Athletics Departments developed a comprehensive sports field master plan that addresses existing fields to meet current and projected program needs as well as explores potential new field configurations that would gain efficiencies in scheduling, program management, and tournament opportunities; ancillary amenities and infrastructure; maintenance; stormwater management, lighting, and utilities; as well as improved parking management strategies.
- ***Lakefront Master Plan*** - The recommendations are intended to guide lakefront operations, beaches, capital planning, and support possible future grant opportunities.
- ***Park Avenue Site Master Plan*** - The purpose of the plan is to address key issues facing the site including: improvements to the yacht club building, enhancements for non-motorized boaters, and enhancements to the pedestrian connections to and through the park. This plan does not directly address the breakwater nor boat launch.

The plan builds upon other current and previous studies such as: 2007 Highland Park Lakefront Plan, 2018 PDHP Community Input Surveys, Beach Management Strategy Plan, Smith Group Barge Replacement Study, and Capital Improvement Plan.

The Park District was awarded Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development Grant (OSLAD) funding in the amount of \$400,000 to implement Site Master Plan Phase 1 Improvements. This project will make improvements to the north end of the property including improved pedestrian access, native landscaping, parking improvements and the addition of a beach boardwalk. Construction is expected to begin Spring 2024 and completed Fall of 2024.

- ***Beach Management Plan*** - After two initial invitations for bids during the first half of 2022, that were unsuccessful due to weather conditions, contractor feedback, and high costs, the District went under contract following a third invitation for bid for the Millard Bluff Grading & Tree Removal project during the fourth quarter of 2022 with RES Environmental Operating Company. The project began in December of 2022 with the removal of more than 200 trees, many non-native or hazardous, to relieve the bluff face of heavy material and reduce the shade canopy. The second half of the work began in late March which included removing the topsoil from the top of the bluff, followed by bluff regrading to a 2:1 slope in three distinct sections, and the respreading of topsoil. Finally, in late May, seeding and plant plugs were installed with an erosion control blanket on all disturbed slope soils.

Following the completion of the contracted work, Parks & Natural Areas staff have maintained the temporary path to protect and allow for the growth of native plantings. Fencing is expected to remain, at a minimum, through the first half of 2024. Work will continue through the final months of 2023 with the planting of 18 replacement trees throughout the park to fulfill the City's original tree removal permit and the removal of the wooden, upper portions of the garden potting shed.

- ***Sustainability Plan*** - The Park District of Highland Park embraces concepts of sustainable practices in its mission statement and in its Environmental Policy. From 1992 to 2015 the District's Environmental Policy served as the primary document guiding sustainable efforts. In 2015, Park District staff developed the District's first sustainability plan to identify strategies to achieve sustainability goals and better coordinate with City-wide priorities. The 2015 plan has since been used as an internal document guiding practices leading to quantifiable achievements in District operations. It was updated in 2018 and will be updated again in 2024.
- ***Capital Plan (Annual and 5-year)*** - The Park District's 5-year Capital Plan is approved annually, and reviewed throughout the year, to ensure critical repair and replacement projects, facility and park improvements, and GreenPrint Projects are identified and funded. The Plan is prioritized into 6 tiers: Tier 1: Safety/Legal Compliance, Tier 2: Critical Repair/Replace, Tier 3: Scheduled Replacement, Tier 4: Improvement of existing Items, Tier 5: New improvements, and Tier 6: Unfunded
- ***Values Driven Strategic Plan*** - At the end of 2016, the District completed its 2012-16 Strategic Plan. As one of the top park districts in the state and an "Illinois Distinguished Agency" with a wide variety of outstanding programs, events, parks and facilities, it is important for the District to continue to be proactive meeting the community's ever-changing demands for programs and facilities. In 2016, staff developed the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan incorporating new initiatives identified through a series of focus groups with staff and community representatives.

As the District completed nearly all initiatives outlined in the Strategic Plan, an update to the District's Strategic Plan was completed in 2023. After redefining Park District Values in 2022, the District established a Values Driven Strategic Plan coinciding with updated District Values of Welcoming, Caring and Extraordinary.

The Park District's Values Driven Strategic Plan provides direction on what operational Goals and Objectives we want to achieve to align our *operational perspectives* with our *Mission, Values* and *Vision*.

Operational Perspectives:

- *Customer* – Individuals and Groups that our Park District provides Mission Critical Services to
- *Team Member* – Individuals and Teams who deliver Mission Critical Services to Customers
- *Resources* – Assets that enable Team Members to deliver our Mission to Customers

Values Driven Strategic Themes:

- Build personal relationships
- Create inclusivity
- Deliver the extraordinary
- Empower our team
- Grow our team
- Value our Team

- Build and maintain trust
 - Create a sustainable future
 - Steward our resources
- **Annual Work Plan** - The Park District's Annual Work Plan is a compilation of annual goals derived from the above Park District planning documents and are financially reflected in the 2024 Budget.

Salaries and Wages

Director Peters reported that a Classification and Compensation Plan was developed and approved on January 1, 2023, which forms the foundation of the compensation, recruitment, management and retaining of employees. Positions were evaluated based on the nature of work, essential duties, responsibilities, qualifications required and relative level of difficulty. Similar positions were grouped creating a classification structure.

Based on industry standards, salary ranges were determined for each classification. The administration of a classification and compensation plan is a continuous process, adapting to changing conditions. As part of the budget process, staff evaluate annually a set of market indicators and a survey of comparable entities to determine if pay ranges are still relevant and to create the recommended pay range adjustments. After pay range adjustments are made, then a recommendation is made for the annual merit budget.

For 2024, a 4% plus a 1% contingency full-time salary pool (merit/compensation contingency) increase is budgeted for all full-time employees.

In 2023, a Part Time and Seasonal Compensation and Classification Study was completed. Part-time and Seasonal positions were classified by skill and pay ranges were defined. Both studies support the Employee Values Driven strategic theme and initiatives. Salaries are budgeted accordingly in the 2024 budget to adhere to minimum wage laws.

Capital Analysis

Expenditures for 2024 are detailed in Appendix A and are accounted for in the Capital Fund. The Capital Plan (CP) summarizes districtwide replacement needs for 2024 and the next four years prioritized by Tier. As the first step of the budget process, planning and facility staff review the requirements of all facilities and parks, creating and updating repair and replacement schedules. For informational purposes Appendix B provides a summarized schedule of replacement items for 2024 and the next four years.

For 2024, the budget has been prepared while incorporating District values. Striving to always be extraordinary, welcoming, and caring, we have incorporated opportunities to ensure equity and inclusion, along with fiscal responsibility, in delivering services through our programs and at our facilities. We have increased the Grant-in-Aid budget by 3%, addressing financial barriers for residents, while still incorporating cost recovery strategies and seeking alternative revenue sources such as grants and donations. The Champion's Gala is scheduled again for 2024 and usually generates tens of

thousands of dollars that the Parks Foundation of Highland Park donates toward aid for residents. Investment income far exceeded the budget in 2023, as operations rebounded from Covid-19, and staff felt more comfortable to invest again. Additionally, with inflation being so high, rates on investments were over 5%.

Summary

Preparation of the 2024 Budget was made possible by the dedicated Park District of Highland Park staff and coordinated by the Finance staff. Many thanks to the Board of Commissioners for their dedication, support, and service to the District.

It was the consensus of the Park Board of Commissioners to lay the budget down for a period of thirty days so that the public may review it.

B. Consideration to Approve a Restricted Donor Agreement with Ron Saslow at 2205 Skokie Valley Road (Lot 3)

Executive Director Romes reported that 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. Ron Saslow proposed donating 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. Executive Director Romes reviewed the proposed Restricted Donor Agreement terms noting that Ron Saslow is willing to donate \$2 million to the Park District, the proposed agreement is a 20-year term, the usage must be strictly for pickleball and padel, and there are two (2) contingencies that are still being negotiated this includes the termination rights to be extended in the Second Amendment to Lot 3 Lease Agreement by and Between the City of Highland Park and the Park District of Highland Park, second, both parties must agree on the schematic design before the project commences.

Commissioner Bernstein, Commissioner Ruttenberg, and Vice President Freeman are thankful for the Saslow family and their generous donation, however, there is a large gap in the estimated cost vs. the donation funds. They are willing to explore other opportunities to find money to fill the expense gaps, however, it's premature to have this conversation. Staff and the City of Highland Park Officials need to have further discussions to get a better idea of the actual cost vs estimated.

A motion was made by Commissioner Kaplan and seconded by Vice President Freeman to approve the Restricted Donor Agreement with Ron Saslow for the Enterprise Property Improvement Plan at 2205 Skokie Valley Road.

Commissioner Ruttenberg requested that language in section 5B of the agreement needs to change for his approval. Commissioner Kaplan and Vice President Freeman withdrew their motion.

Section 5B of the Donor Agreement were reviewed and amended language was provided and approved by the Park Board of Commissioner's.

A motion was made by Commissioner Kaplan and seconded by Vice President Freeman to approve the agreement, with amendments to Section 5B to include the word materially before improve and to replace the word certified with approved for the Restricted Donor Agreement with Ron Saslow for the Enterprise Property Improvement Plan at 2205 Skokie Valley Road.

Roll Call:

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

Nay: None

Absent: None

Abstain: None

Motion Carried

NEW BUSINESS

A. Parks Foundation

Vice President Freeman reported that the Park Foundation had their final meeting of the year. During the meeting the Foundation reflected on fundraising efforts, discussing shortfalls and successes, and discussed 2024 fundraising initiatives.

B. Board Committee Updates

Executive Director Romes reported that at the December 7 Finance Committee Meeting Staff reviewed the 2024 Budget and Ordinance 2023-10, An Ordinance Amending the Appropriation Ordinance for Fiscal Year 2023.

The Finance Committee recommended the Park Board of Commissioners approve the agreement with Lakes and Rivers Contracting to the Park Avenue Boating Facility South Parking Lot Restoration project, the agreement with Stuckey Construction for the Larry Fink Memorial Park Baseball Field Improvements project, the agreement with Absolute Home Improvements for the Hidden Creek AquaPark Pool Shell Maintenance project, the Change Order for the Hidden Creek AquaPark Concrete Desk Replacement, and the agreement with Gewalt Hamilton Associates, Inc. for the Deer Creek Racquet Club Parking Lot Engineering proposal.

Staff are meeting with the City of Highland Park to discuss extending the termination rights for the Second Amendment to the Lot 3 Lease Agreement.

C. Sunset Valley Golf Club End of Season Report

Manager Ochs thanked his dedicated staff, team members outside of golf operations, Executive Director Romes for his leadership, and the Park Board of Commissioner’s for their support.

Manager Ochs reported that he is pleased to report that Sunset Valley Golf Club won the Annual Ryder Cup vs. Wilmette.

Manager Sangern reviewed the completed 2023 improvements, notable items include the cartpath resurfacing project, bridge removal and replacement project, hole 15 fairway expansion, and adding a new outdoor television, new outdoor furniture with firepits and flowers to improve the customer experience for golfers and non-golfers.

Manager Sangern reviewed the monthly paid green fees, the total paid rounds, and the operational revenues and expenses.

D. Directors Report

Executive Director Romes shared upcoming evenings including the Winter Solstice on December 16 from 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. at Heller Nature Center, and array of Holiday Break Camps on December 26 – 29 and January 2 – 5 at Deer Creek Racquet Club and West Ridge Center, Ice Castles on January 20 from 1:00 – 2:15 p.m. at Rosewood Beach, Indoor Pool Olympics on January 20 from 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. at the Recreation Center of Highland Park.

He recognized recent award recipients, including Sunset Woods Park being recognized at the 2024 IAPD/IPRA Conference, and four (4) employees who were nominated **by staff members (PT & FT)** who consistently go above and beyond in their pursuit of our values to become a Welcoming, Caring and Extraordinary Park District. He reported that a ***Values Champion*** is someone who actively models, supports, and advocates Park District Values. Different from a sports Champion who is has “won” a competition, a Values Champion has “embodied” a value so well that they inspire others to be a ***Values Champion*** as well. A ***Values Champion Award*** is designed to recognize a staff member who consistently goes above and beyond in their pursuit of our values to become a Welcoming, Caring and Extraordinary Park District.

E. Board Comments

None.

OTHER BUSINESS

None.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE BOARD

None.

CLOSED SESSION

A motion was made by Commissioner Bernstein, seconded by Commissioner Ruttenberg, 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)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;

Roll Call:

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

Nay: None

Absent: None

Abstain: None

Motion Carried

The meeting adjourned into Closed Session at 7:29 p.m.

The meeting reconvened into Open Session at 8:39 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)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;

No action was taken.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Commissioner Ruttenberg and seconded by Commissioner Bernstein and approved by a unanimous vote. The Board Meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Roxanne Hejnowski

Roxanne Hejnowski, Assistant Secretary