

**PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK  
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS  
MINUTES OF THE DECENNIAL COMMITTEE MEETING  
SEPTEMBER 27, 2023**

The meeting was called to order at 5:05 p.m. President Grossberg

**ROLL CALL**

**Present:** Commissioner Bernstein, Commissioner Ruttenberg, President Grossberg, Resident Committee Member Jean Sogin, Resident Committee Member Hania Fuschetto, Resident Committee Member Rafael Labrador

**Absent:** Commissioner Kaplan, Vice President Freeman

**Staff Present:** Executive Director Romes; Deputy Director Carr; Director Smith; Director Peters; Director Gogola; Director Voss; Director Hall; Assistant Director Acevedo; Assistant Director Reyes; Coordinator Hejnowski

**Guest Speakers:** None

Vice President Freeman joined the meeting at 5:07 p.m.

**ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA**

None.

**DECENNIAL COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY OVERVIEW**

Executive Director Romes thanked and acknowledged resident committee members before reviewing the Decennial Committee purpose, requirements, and committee member roles. He reviewed the 2023 Decennial Committee Meeting schedule and the items which will be reviewed during each meeting.

Resident Committee Member Labrador commended staff, noting this is a thorough report. Additionally, he would like to know what is most important to the District and the Commission regarding the report.

Executive Director Romes reported that this is an opportunity to explain and highlight the benefits of having a park district in our community, overall, it is an opportunity for education.

**REVIEW PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK STATUES, ORDINANCES, POWERS, RULES, JURISDICTION, AND PROCEDURES**

Executive Director Romes reviewed section four of the Park District of Highland Park's Efficiency Report, highlighting the benefits of having park districts as a distinct unit of government and separate taxing body this includes:

- Having a mission and dedicated and elected Board solely focused on Park District facilities, programs, and services., because of singular focus (one general area to report on) communications can be more detailed and transparent, keeping taxpayers more informed of the inner workings and operations.

- As a separate taxing body, funds can only be used for parks and recreation; no competition of tax dollar allocations such as police, fire, public works.
- Park district property is held in trust for the residents and can generally only be sold or transferred by referendum.
- Have the opportunity for economical operations through intergovernmental agreements and partnerships.

In this section of the report, you will also find a list and description of adopted ordinances, rules, policies, and procedures.

Resident Committee Member Labrador requested that under the section pertaining to protection of assets, staff update the report to emphasize how having a separate taxing body for park districts provides stability.

### **REVIEW PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK SHARED SERVICES AND PARTNERSHIPS**

Executive Director Romes reviewed section five of the Park District of Highland Park's Efficiency Report, highlighting the benefits of shared services and partnerships as it allows for a cost-effective way to offer expanded recreational opportunities and the most efficient operations. In this section of the report, you will find a list of sporting groups, sponsor organizations, non-profit partnerships, intergovernmental agreements, and informal agreements.

All three Resident Committee Members requested that staff update the report so that there is a description of each partnership and service explaining how the community benefits from these shared services and partnerships.

President Grossberg requested that staff update the report Under Membership in SRA to include the financial support the Park District of Highland Park dedicates annually to the Northern Suburban Special Recreation Association.

### **REVIEW OTHER EXAMPLES OF EFFICIENT OPERATIONS PROVIDED BY THE PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK**

Executive Director Romes reviewed section six of the Park District of Highland Park's Efficiency Report, highlighting the benefits from volunteers and youth employment, and the financial support from the Parks Foundation of Highland Park and non-tax revenue. Park Districts are one of the largest youth employers and provide several volunteer opportunities. Youth employment is a lower labor cost, whereas volunteers come at no direct cost. Additionally, the Park District of Highland Park has a dedication foundation, Parks Foundation of Highland Park whose mission is to support and enhance exceptional Park District projects and provide scholarship funding to ensure that all community members are able to participate in Park District programs. Last year the Parks Foundation raised \$500,364. Lastly, the Park District of Highland Park proactively seeks forms of non-tax revenue, this includes memberships, program registrations, user fees, private donations, sponsorships, and grants.

Resident Committee Member Fuschetto requested that under the section pertaining to grants, staff update the report so that there is a description of how the grant funds were used to support each project.

All three Resident Committee Members requested that staff update the report so that the section four, the general overview of governing statues, ordinances, rules, procedures, powers, and jurisdiction, provide more details about the District, specifically how many people the districts serve, total assets, and budgetary figures (total annual budget, amount dedicated to projects and programs).

**SURVEY OF RESIDENTS IN ATTENDANCE FOR INPUT ON MATTERS DISCUSSED IN THE MEETING OF THE PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK'S DECENNIAL COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY**

No residents attended the September 27, 2023, Meeting of the Decennial Committee.

Commissioner Bernstein thanked the resident committee members for offering a great perspective so that we can better message to the community what the Park Board of Commissioners and Park District staff do to serve the community. He thanked the general assembly for mandating this. He thinks the final report submitted to the Lake County will be a great resource to the community to help members understand what we do to make Highland Park one of the greatest communities to live in.

Executive Director Romes reported that a revised copy of the DRAFT report will be submitted to the Committee along with the Meeting Minutes for review prior to the upcoming meeting.

Resident Committee Member Sogin requested adding a section about the pandemic and how the District came out of it.

Commissioner Bernstein requested adding a section about staff highlighting their value.

**NEXT MEETING OF THE DECENNIAL COMMITTEE**

Executive Director Romes reported that the next meeting of the Decennial Committee is Wednesday, October 25, 2023, at 5:00 p.m.

**ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made by Commissioner Bernstein, seconded by Commissioner Ruttenberg, and approved by a unanimous vote. The Board Meeting adjourned at 5:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Roxanne Hejnowski*

Roxanne Hejnowski, Assistant Secretary