

**PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK  
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS  
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING  
JUNE 26, 2024**

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

**ROLL CALL**

**Present:** Commissioner Ruttenberg, Commissioner Grossberg, President Bernstein

**Absent:** Vice President Freeman

**Staff Present:** Executive Director Romes; Deputy Director Carr; Director Smith; Director Peters; Director Voss; Director Gogola; Director Baird; Assistant Director Reyes; Assistant Director Acevedo; Manager Kutscheid; Manager Deptula; Coordinator Hejnowski

**Guest Speakers:** None.

**ADOPTING A PROCLAMATION FOR THE DESIGNATION OF JULY AS PARKS AND RECREATION MONTH**

President Bernstein reported Since 1985, America has celebrated July as the nation’s official Park and Recreation Month. Created by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), Park and Recreation Month specifically highlights the essential and powerful role that local park and recreation agencies and their professionals – play in building stronger, more vibrant, and resilient communities across the country. It is my privilege to read our Park Board’s proclamation designating July as Parks and Recreation Month.

President Bernstein read the proclamation.

Executive Director Romes thanked the Park Board of Commissioners. This year’s national theme for Parks and Recreation Month is “Where You Belong.” The Park District of Highland Park has been integral to bringing Highland Park and Highwood residents together for over 115 years, providing essential services and fostering growth in our community. We provide connections to open space, and recreational programs, promoting health and wellness, and improving our residents’ physical, emotional, and mental health. This July, we will be highlighting how our parks and programs provide a place of belonging and adventure by sharing community members' cherished memories and stories about what the Park District means to them and celebrating with a series of events and activities.

A motion was made by Commissioner Grossberg and seconded by Commissioner Ruttenberg to adopt the Proclamation for the designation of July as Parks and Recreation Month.

**Roll Call:**

**Aye:** Commissioner Ruttenberg, Commissioner Grossberg, President Bernstein

**Nay:** None

**Absent:** Vice President Freeman

**Abstain:** None

**Motion Carried**

Vice President Freeman joined the meeting at 6:07 p.m.

**ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA**

Executive Director Romes reported there are no additions, however, staff would like to remove Item K, Approval of the Donation Agreement Between the Park District of Highland Park, Parks Foundation of Highland Park and the Bondy Family Foundation For the Paddle Facility, from the Consent Agenda and Move it to Unfinished Business.

The Park Board of Commissioners supported the Executive Director’s recommendation.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

A motion was made by Commissioner Ruttenberg, seconded by Grossberg to approve the Minutes May 01, 2024 Facility & Recreation Committee Meeting, Minutes May 13, 2024 Facility and Recreation Committee Meeting, Minutes May 14, 2024 Finance Committee Meeting, Minutes May 22, 2024 Annual Meeting , Minutes May 22, 2024 Regular Meeting, the 2024 Ford Electric Transit Van Capital Purchase, the 2024 Park Avenue Beach Access Improvements Project Bid, the 2024 Deer Creek Racquet Club Locker Room Improvements Project Bid, the Arbitrage Rebate Payment Due For the 2021 Debt Certificates, Ordinance 2024-08 Authorizing and Providing for the Conveyance or Sale of Surplus Personal Property, Bills and Payroll in the amount of \$3,189,277.43

**Roll Call:**

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

**Nay:** None

**Absent:** None

**Abstain:** None

**Motion Carried**

**PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

None.

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

*Mindy Solomon*

*511 Pleasant Avenue, Highland Park*

Thank you for this opportunity, and thank you all and the park district leaders over the last 30 years for prioritizing and establishing a world-class ceramics program for Youth and Adults. I started working in that program, in that studio 20 years ago. In order to register for each session, I set an alarm like rock concert ticket sales, signing up before it sells out, and there’s reason for that. Because what takes place across the hall shapes so much more than a block of clay. Ceramics is a community, not a class. It speaks to the values placed on visual arts intergenerational programming and resident well-being by this park district. It was a safe creative space during covid. It continues to be a place of healing for residents. And it fosters emotional and physical wellbeing. Some of the patrons of this program asked me to speak on their behalf as they have ailments or physical limitations, and they can't do yoga or play pickleball but they can find recreation and movement

therapy through wheel-throwing. There are multi-intergenerational families in the program right now; mother and son, mothers and daughters, and we all come together for creativity, connection, and care. And we re-register session after session, year after year, and in many cases decade after decade. We admire the way this board is managing the Lincoln School Park concerns over the loss of recreational amenities. Developing a conceptual plan, applying for and receiving grant funding, soliciting city-wide feedback to join the conversation, and including a sign-up for real-time email updates we would hope for the same consideration and collaboration for West Ridge. This is not an if you build it they will come scenario. We are here and we are committed, with our passion and our paid tuition and we are confident that you hear us and that it is the building plan not the belief in the program that needs to take a new shape. Thank you.

***Sarah Apple***

***35 Blackhawk, Highland Park***

I'm here to voice my support and concern about the ceramics program. My children were in ceramics. I lived here for 35+ years. Ceramics was profoundly important to my children. I appreciate the importance this community places on recreation, however, the Proclamation doesn't mention the arts and how important those programs are to children growing up here. Not everyone is athletic. I'm concerned about this new building not having the space established from the beginning for ceramics. I understand that you want flex space. It's clear that gymnastics is being given priority since it hasn't been a prioritized space comparable to other spaces for other athletic programs. So, I understand the importance of the gymnastics space for this new building, but if you don't add the ceramics program build-out now, including whatever filter it needs you'll have an excuse not to do it as you move forward. Given the special nature of that space, I think it should be considered from the beginning. So, either you're going to do it or you're not going to do it, but it has to be put in there at the beginning, and it can't be an afterthought. Thanks for the opportunity to talk about it.

***Jennifer Klein***

***1086 Andean Place, Highland Park***

Thank you for the opportunity to speak. I joined the ceramics program just at the beginning of this year and I have to say that it really is a community for me. I moved here from California, and I didn't know a lot of people the people are so welcoming and I really find it a wonderful opportunity. As we were brainstorming as a team, we came across something that the City of Highland Park wrote as a dedication to the Arts a few years back to promote and preserve the artistic and cultural history of our community and our artists and make cultural arts accessible to all and help arts organizations expand facility options by spreading artistic engagement throughout our community and encourage artists to take risks and grow and expand collaboration between government entities and artists to create efficiencies and leverage the arts as a driver of innovation and economic growth in Highland Park. We see closing ceramics is not really holding true to Highland Park's cultural arts plan. In the class that I'm in there is an adult with special needs. She looks forward to the class she knows everyone's name and for her, it's so important to her. It would make me so sad to see a program go that is so important to so many people in our community including adults with special needs and people who can't maybe do sports. My kids play soccer and don't do ceramics, but they do have friends who are in ceramics. I feel it's important and I hope that you can put it in from the beginning at this new building. Or make a plan to have it somewhere else as opposed to having it merge with the Arts Center, which is totally different and a lot more expensive than what the Park District offers. Thank you.

***Amanda Fox***

***3240 University Avenue, Highland Park***

My husband is from Highland Park and my two-month-old baby and I moved here last August. He is from here, I am not. If any of you ever had a baby or moved cross country or done both at the same time it's a pretty intense thing to do and West Ridge programming has been instrumental in my transition. Luna and I took Kindermusik and I have been taking ceramics on Monday nights and sneaking back into the studio any opportunity that I have so that I have a little me time. However, it's never just my time since there are always other ceramicists there working on inspiring projects. It's a program that really exemplifies the park district's values of welcoming, caring, and extraordinary if you ever stopped and looked at that case. Last week we were

at the plan and design meeting and when asked about the programming, I mean. I've seen the design of the new building it's beautiful. I love that there's an emphasis on sustainability, on welcoming the outside indoors, there's a lot of thoughtfulness on how the baseball field is being moved near the playground so there's a central outdoor area. I know that's coming down the line later. I am concerned that I'm not going to spend very much time here because there is no plan to include ceramics. As you have heard already there are a lot of people that mean a lot to me. It's an art form that's very old that's pretty incredible in and of itself. It's a form of therapy, it's low low-impact way to be very physical. If you've ever tried to throw a piece of clay and fight centripetal force you know that's a way to exercise the mind and the body in an artistic, functional, and beautiful way. When asked about the plan last week, somebody said, ceramics specifically that if the board so chooses to bring that in there's additional funding for that. We certainly have a spot for that, but the ceramics itself the kilns and all that, that's a very specialized piece, and that's not going to make the move on day one, but it certainly may be implemented. My question is what will happen to all those things in the interim? What would it take to be able to add ceramics the ceramics studio to the building? I'm assuming money of course. It's much more expensive to add on later, to try to retroactively create a space that will be helpful for ceramics. What would happen to all the costly equipment? Are you considering finding alternative park district locations rather than adding it to this place? I know there is the idea of merging with the Art Center. The Art Center currently is about \$19 more per class. So it's not as accessible or affordable. If it is going to be a transition. I hope you are thoughtful and transparent in creating a transition plan and holding all parties accountable. There are a lot of people who have been practicing ceramics here for many, many years. I hope to be one of those people. We are not asking you to reinvent the wheel, however, we are asking for wheels where we can throw and do our craft. Thank you so much for your thoughtfulness and for doing this work.

***Wendy Griffith***

***1024 Marion Avenue, Highland Park***

I'm here to ask that this could be a collaborative process with ceramics and more of a dialogue versus us feeling like we are being told what is happening that's so important to so many people. If moving forward we could just have conversations as opposed to retroactively hearing ceramics but, it's not in the new building. I think that would go a long way towards making everybody feel like they are being heard and we are valued, and this important program is accessible to as many people as possible. Thank you.

President Bernstein thanked the members of the public for sharing their concerns regarding ceramics. This program is valued, however, it's a question of dollars and cents.

Commissioner Grossberg requested the Park Board of Commissioners schedule a meeting in the coming weeks to further discuss ceramics.

President Bernstein requested staff have a presentation in the coming weeks to the Park Board of Commissioners and invite the ceramics participants.

**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 May 31, 2024. She is pleased to report that actual revenues exceeded budgeted revenues by \$2.5 million. Compared to the 2023 year-to-date surplus it's a \$1,000 difference. Actual expenses were less than budgeted by a little over \$800,000.

***Conclusion***

The following Park District programs and facilities are performing better than budget: skating school and gymnastics exceeded the budget by \$82,000, golf exceeded budget by \$208,000, tennis exceeded the budget by \$152,000, early childhood enrichment exceeded the budget by \$140,000, and interest income exceeded budget by \$224,000.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**A. Sunset Woods Park Improvements Project Update**

Manager Kutscheid reported that the Sunset Woods Park Improvements Project, funded in part by an Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) Grant, will implement Phase 1 of the Sunset Woods Master Plan, including a new multi-use basketball court, new skate park, new wheel friendly plaza, new game court, and native planting. Staff provided an update on this project at the June 12, 2024 Workshop Meeting. Tonight’s presentation responds to requests received at that meeting. Manager Kutscheid reviewed the grading analysis and design plans for new impervious and drainage areas along the multi-use basketball court, wheel-friendly plaza, and parking lot.

**B. Recreation Center of Highland Park Locker Room Renovation Update**

Deputy Director Carr provided updates with regard to primary scope, alternate scope, and cost estimating on options to renovate the locker rooms and bathrooms at the Recreation Center of Highland Park.

Concept A is within budget. Scope includes building demolition, millwork/countertops, drywall, tile, painting, chilewich carpet and flooring, plumbing, lighting, and electrical.

Concept B is outside of the budget. Scope includes demolition, carpentry/millwork/countertops, drywall, ceiling work, tile, painting, chilewich carpet and flooring, sauna, towel tracking system, plumbing, lighting and electrical, and HVAC.

Concept C is a reduced scope within the budget that addresses the carpet, bathroom area, showers, new vanities, and saunas.

The Park Board of Commissioners prefers Concept C and requested staff to develop a stage plan and project timeline to present to the Board at a future meeting.

**C. Consideration to Approve the Plan 2 Play Registration System Proposal**

Director Gogola reviewed a Reservation, Membership, and Registration System Proposal for the new Pickleball and Padel Facility. Plan 2 Play specializes in fitness, tennis, and pickleball space. The system is focused on providing a positive customer experience with state-of-the-art features than competitors.

The District currently utilizes the Plan 2 Play customer relationship management system (CRM) for the Recreation Center of Highland Park. She reviewed the proposed scope, highlighting system benefits tailored to our facility.

Director Gogola reported that staff would like to enter into a 3-year agreement with Plan 2 Play. She reviewed the yearly and total costs over the term. Overall, she is pleased to report that Deer Creek Racquet Club and the Recreation Center of Highland Park have the ability to utilize the system at no additional cost.

A motion was made by Commissioner Grossberg and seconded by Commissioner Ruttenberg to adopt the Plan 2 Play proposal, authorizing the Executive Director to enter into a contract.

**Roll Call:**

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

**Nay:** None

**Absent:** None

**Abstain:** None

**Motion Carried**

**D. Consideration for a Consensus of a 60-day Waiting Period for the New Indoor Pickleball and Padel Facility Proposed Name**

As part of the Park District’s ongoing branding initiative to build strong and clear connections with our residents, customers, and potential customers; to maintain a competitive presence in the marketplace; and to provide a fresh interpretation for our new indoor pickleball & padel facility, staff is recommending naming the facility Club Pickle & Padel.

A verbal presentation of the recommended facility name was made by Director Gogola and Director Baird at the June 12, 2024, Board of Park Commissioners Workshop Meeting.

A verbal presentation will be presented to the Board of Park Commissioners. The Board will be asked to discuss and consider the recommended name. Section 4.02.2 of the Park District of Highland Park Policy & Procedure Manual authorizes the naming of a Park District facility or park by the affirmative vote of a four-fifths majority of the Board of Commissioners after discussion and a wait of at least sixty days before voting. The Park Board’s approval for naming the new indoor pickleball and padel facility to Club Pickle & Padel would occur at the August 28, 2024, Regular Board Meeting.

It was the consensus of the Park Board of Commissioners to allow the recommended new name, Club Pickle and Padel, to wait the sixty-day period prior to a vote to formally approve the new name.

President Bernstein recused himself from the meeting at 7:12 p.m.

**E. Approval of the Donation Agreement Between the Park District of Highland Park, Parks Foundation of Highland Park and the Bondy Family Foundation For the Paddle Facility**

Executive Director Romes reported that the Bondy Family would like to donate \$250,000 to support construction of a new indoor pickleball and padel facility. He reviewed the terms and conditions of the Bondy Family Foundation Donor Agreement with the Finance Committee on June 18, 2024. The Bondy Family will be recognized for its contribution with signage at the site of the Project.

A motion was made by Commissioner Ruttenberg, seconded by Commissioner Grossberg to approve the Donation Agreement Between the Park District of Highland Park, Parks Foundation of Highland Park and the Bondy Family Foundation For the Paddle Facility, authorizing the Executive Director and the Park Board Vice President to enter into a donation agreement.

**Roll Call:**

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

**Nay:** None

**Absent:** President Bernstein

**Abstain:** None

**Motion Carried**

President Bernstein returned to the meeting at 7:15 p.m.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Parks Foundation**

Director Gogola reported that the Parks Foundation has been discussing upcoming events to support scholarship programs, primarily the Pickleball Tournament in September.

**B. Board Committee Updates**

Executive Director Romes reported that at the June 18, 2024 Finance Committee Meeting PMA Network and the Arbitrage Group reviewed the Park District's arbitrage rebate payment due for the General Obligation (Limited Tax) Debt Certificates, Series 2021.

Staff reviewed the actual vs. budgeted quarterly revenues and expenses, membership and program utilization for the Recreation Center of Highland Park.

Staff reviewed the donation agreement from the Bondy Family Foundation to generously support construction of a new indoor pickleball and padel facility.

The Park District and City of Highland Park planned to renovate the shared parking lot in 2025. The Park District received an estimated cost from the City of Highland Park for the shared project, and the estimate was significantly higher than anticipated. The Park District is meeting with City Officials to discuss shared use terms outlined in the Intergovernmental Agreement and expenses the Park District can cover to support the project.

Staff also reviewed several of the items which we approved this evening.

**C. Grant-In-Aid Annual Report**

Manager Deptula compared the 2022, 2023, and year-to-date scholarship spending. In 2022, \$130,000 was awarded and \$83,441.56 was spent (7% was funded by the Parks Foundation of Highland Park). In 2023, \$195,500 was awarded, \$119,709 was spent (21% was funded by the Parks Foundation). As of today, \$165,536.79 was awarded, \$109,311.76 was spent (40% funded by the Parks Foundation). Manager Deptula reviewed the 2023 and year-to-date scholarship participant demographics (household vs. individual utilization and adult vs. child utilization) and the membership, program, and camp utilization.

**D. Directors Report**

Executive Director Romes shared the events occurring in Highland Park on Independence Day: 8:00 – 9:00 a.m. FREE Community Yoga at Rosewood Beach, 10:00 a.m. Remembrance Ceremony at Edgewood Middle School (hosted by City HP), 1:00 p.m. Highland park Parade (hosted by the City HP), and 1:30 - 4:30pm – Fourth Fest in Sunset Woods Parks.

**E. Board Comments**

President Bernstein commended staff on the Grant-In-Aid Annual presentation.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

**CLOSED SESSION**

A motion was made by Commissioner Grossberg, seconded by vice President Freeman 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.

**Roll Call:**

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

**Nay:** None

**Absent:** None

**Abstain:**

**Motion Carried**

The meeting adjourned into Closed Session at 7:31 p.m.

The meeting reconvened into Open Session at 7:49 p.m.

**ACTION FROM CLOSED SESSION IF ANY**

President Bernstein 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.

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 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Roxanne Hejnowski*

Roxanne Hejnowski, Assistant Secretary