

**PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
FEBRUARY 26, 2025**

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

A motion was made by Vice President Freeman and seconded by Commissioner Grossberg to allow Commissioner Ruttenberg to participate in tonight's meeting by electronic means.

Roll Call:

Aye: Commissioner Grossberg, Vice President Freeman, President Bernstein

Nay: None

Absent: Commissioner Labrador

Abstain: None

Motion Carried

ROLL CALL

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

Absent: Commissioner Labrador

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

Guest Speakers: None

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

Staff would like to discuss the Recreation Center of Highland Park Monument Sign Under Other Business.

PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

None.

CONSENT AGENDA

A motion was made by Commissioner Grossberg, seconded by Vice President Freeman to approve the Minutes from the January 08, 2025 Finance Committee Meeting, Minutes from the January 15, 2025 Workshop Meeting, Minutes from the January 29, 2025 Finance Committee Meeting, Minutes from the January 29, 2025 Regular Meeting, the 2025 Park Avenue Dredging Project Bid, the 2025 Larry Fink Tot

Lot Renovation Bid, the New Recreation Facility at West Ridge Park Construction Material Testing Proposal, the Williams Architects Recreation Center of Highland Park Locker Room Shower Area Remodeling Proposal, Ordinance 2025-02 An Ordinance Amending the Appropriation Ordinance for Fiscal Year 2024, Ordinance 2025-03: Authorizing and Providing for the Conveyance or Sale of Surplus Personal Property, Resolution 2025-02 Authorizing the Purchase of Electricity for Park District Facilities and Meters and Authorizing the Director to Approve a Contract with the Lowest Cost Electricity Provider for a Period up to 3 years, and Bills and Payroll in the amount of \$2,708,517.65

Roll Call:

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

Nay: None

Absent: Commissioner Labrador

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 January 31, 2025. She is pleased to report that Actual Revenues exceeded budgeted revenues by \$500,000.

Conclusion

The following Park District programs and facilities are performing better than budget: interest income has a \$110,000 surplus. Skating school exceeded the budget by \$39,000 and sponsorships exceeded the budget by \$12,000.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

A. Parks Foundation

Parks Foundation President discussed upcoming Champions Celebration on March 14. All proceeds for the event will provide scholarship funding to ensure that Highland Park and Highwood residents with financial constraints can participate in Park District programs and to support and enhance exceptional Park District projects. Thus far the Parks Foundation has secured \$18,000 in sponsorship for the event. Tickets are still available.

Two seats are available to serve on the Parks Foundation. They received two applications this week.

Director Gogola is working with the Parks Foundation to streamline and reduce the steps needed to qualify for the scholarship fund.

The Parks Foundation is looking at opportunities to provide more support to Highwood residents.

B. Board Committee Updates

At the February 21, 2025 Finance Committee Meeting staff reviewed Ordinance #2025-02, An Ordinance Amending the Appropriation Ordinance for Fiscal Year 2024 and Resolution 2025-02 to allow the purchase of electricity for the District from Northern Illinois Municipal Electric Collaborative. Staff also reviewed and provided contractor recommendations for the Park Avenue Dredging bid results and the Larry Fink Tot Lot Renovation bid results. These items were approved this evening under the consent agenda.

Staff provided construction updates for the New Facility and Site Improvements at West Ridge Park, Club Pickle and Padel, and the Recreation Center of Highland Park (landscaping plan for shared parking lot located at 1207 Park Avenue West, emergency repairs due to flooding, and the proposal from Williams Architects to provide architectural and engineering services for Phase Two of the locker room renovation).

At the February 24, 2025 Master Planning Committee Meeting the Lakota Group (designers, planners, and communication experts), aQity Research and Insights (survey consultant), and BerryDunn (Recreation Services Assessment consultant) held a kickoff meeting for the Greenprint Master Plan Update.

C. Heller Nature Center and the Rosewood Interpretive Center Annual Reports

Manager Meredith is pleased to report that the Heller Nature Center and Rosewood Interpretive Center collaborated with several local agencies in 2024 to offer new and DEI driven programs and events. Over 600 people participated in the 2024 special events. She reviewed the users and visits to the Heller Nature Center and the Rosewood Interpretive Center, noting that there was a 68% increase from the previous year. She reviewed the 2024 camp enrollments and revenues. This summer nature camps will also be offered weekly to offer flexibility and hopefully increase enrollments. The team's course was utilized by 55 groups in 2024 which resulted in a 9% increase in revenue from the previous year. She reviewed the five-year financial analysis for the Heller Nature Center and the Rosewood Interpretive Center. The report concluded with what's occurring in 2025 to attract new users and participants.

D. Directors Report

Executive Director Romes reviewed upcoming Special Events:

- Maple Syrup Harvest on March 1, from 10 – 1:30 p.m. at the Preserve. During this sold-out event, participants will take a short hike to learn about how to identify the right tree, know when trees are ready, how to tap a tree and the process of making the sweet syrup. Enjoy a delicious tasting of maple syrups and pancakes to enjoy by the fire.
- Wicked Musical Theater Pop-Up on March 2, from 1 – 2:00 p.m. at West Ridge Center. Participants will dance, sing, and act a song from the popular movie Wicked.
- Neon Night on March 7, from 7 – 8:30 p.m. at Centennial Ice Arena. Experience the ultimate glow-up with dazzling neon lights, electrifying music, and an unforgettable night of skating fun.

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- Nature Playdates, Sat. Mar. 8, from 10 – 11:00 a.m. at Heller Nature Center. Each date offers a different themed activity (one per family) and a self-guided I Spy hike. Afterwards, bring a picnic lunch, play in Wander Woods – our outdoor nature play space, or rent an explorer pack from us to continue the fun!
- Girls in STEM Day on March 9, from 1 – 3:00 p.m. at Rosewood Beach. Hear from some real women in science fields and get hands on practice in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics with some challenges and activities.

E. Board Comments

None.

OTHER BUSINESS

A. Recreation Center of Highland Park Monument Sign

Director Gogola shared the final design renderings for the Monument Sign for the facilities located at 1201-1207 Park Avenue West (the Recreation Center of Highland Park, the Preserve of Highland Park, the Highland Park Senior Center, and Moraine Events). The Park Board of Commissioners provided feedback and recommendations to take back to the City of Highland Park.

OPEN TO PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE BOARD

None.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Commissioner Grossberg and seconded by Vice President Freeman and approved by a unanimous vote. The Board Meeting adjourned at 7:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Roxanne Hejnowski

Roxanne Hejnowski, Assistant Secretary