

**MINUTES OF A THE FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
OF THE PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK
HELD ON MARCH 17, 2026, 8:07 AM.**

Present: Commissioner Greenberg, Commissioner Beck, Commissioner Labrador

Absent: President Grossberg

Also, Present: Executive Director Romes; Deputy Director Carr; Director Peters, Director Voss, Director Gogola, Director Ochs, Director Baird, Assistant Director Soto, Assistant Director Acevedo; Manager Kutscheid; Accountant McLaughlin; Coordinator Hejnowski

Guest Speaker: None

Vice President Freeman joined the meeting at 8:15 a.m.

Additions to the Agenda

None.

Ordinance #2026-03 An Ordinance Amending the Appropriation Ordinance for the Fiscal Year Beginning January 1, 2025 and Ending on December 31, 2025

Director Peters reported that during 2025, several account type line items exceeded the appropriated amount. Accordingly, an ordinance is required to transfer appropriation from account types with excess budget to account types with deficit spending, as follows:

- General Fund: Utilities expense exceeded appropriation by approximately \$15,000; staff recommended a transfer from 620 Type, Contractual Services to 660 Type, Utilities.
- Special Recreation Fund: Capital outlay for special recreation equipment purchased for Park Fitness was not budgeted and exceeded appropriation by approximately \$15,000; staff recommended a transfer from 620 Type, Contractual Services to 720 Type, Capital Outlay.
- Recreation Fund: Maintenance and landscaping contracts expense exceeded appropriation by approximately \$8,000, largely due to building repairs at SVGC (roof and garage door); staff recommended a transfer from 640 Type, Materials and Supplies to 650 Type, Maintenance & Landscaping Contracts.
- Capital Fund: Contractual services expense exceeded appropriation by approximately \$445,000; staff recommended a transfer from 720 Type, Capital Outlay to 620 Type, Contractual Services.

After consultation with Park District legal counsel, staff were advised that a formal budget amendment does not need to be filed with the County. As allowed by the Park District's auditors, the transfers will be reported in the Annual Consolidated Financial Report.

It was the consensus of the Finance Committee to place this item on the consent agenda for the March 18, 2026 Regular Meeting of the Park Board.

Dynegy Energy Services, LLC Electric Service Agreement bid via Northern Illinois Municipal Electric Collaborative (NIMEC)

Director Peters reported that on February 25, 2026, the Park Board of Commissioners approved Resolution 2026-01 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 of up to three years. On March 11, 2026, the Park District received bids via NIMEC (Northern Illinois Municipal Electric Collaborative) and Priority Power for electricity rates for the District's facilities (21 meters total), excluding Deer Creek Racquet Club, West Ridge Center, and West Ridge Community Center. Deer Creek Racquet Club and West Ridge Community Center were excluded because they have a separate contract with Realgy in conjunction with the solar panel installation and delivery of electricity. The West Ridge Center meter was not bid because it will not be in service during the three-year contract period.

The lowest bid was received from Dynegy Energy Services, LLC (Dynegy) at 8.474 cents per kWh. Dynegy is the Park District's current electric provider and, with this award, will remain the provider through May 2029. In accordance with Resolution 2026-01, Executive Director Romes accepted the bid for the 21 Park District meters for the term of May 2026 through May 2029. NIMEC receives compensation from the electric supplier, and no NIMEC representative is employed by Commonwealth Edison.

Under the Park District's current electric contract, the average year-round rate is 8.257 cents per kWh. The new contract represents an increase of 0.217 cents per kWh. The District anticipates an average increase in electric bills of approximately 2.6% until Community Solar credits begin to reduce bills. This equates to approximately \$7,922.31 over a 12-month period, within the three-year contract term.

It was the consensus of the Finance Committee to place this item on the consent agenda for the March 18, 2026 Regular Meeting of the Park Board.

Centennial Ice Arena Gymnastics Studio Conversion Update

Executive Director Romes reported that the gymnastics studio at Centennial Ice Arena will be vacant in May with the opening of the West Ridge Community Center. The ductwork that supported a second sheet of ice for the studio rink (decommissioned in 1983) is intrusive and limits alternative programming. Staff requested direction from the Finance Committee and the Park Board regarding removal of the ductwork.

Vice President Freeman, Commissioner Greenberg, and Commissioner Labrador expressed support for removing the ductwork to allow the space to be used for athletic training. They also indicated support for the Park District having a second full sheet of ice, noting the current space cannot accommodate that use.

Commissioner Beck stated she was undecided. She noted that if the Park Board supports removal of the ductwork, she would like the alternative programming to be dedicated to off-ice training.

Executive Director Romes reported that staff will present conceptual designs in April.

March Bid Results

a. 2026 Routine Grounds Maintenance Services – North and South Routes

Director Voss reported that on March 5, 2026, the Park District of Highland Park received seven bids for the Routine Grounds Maintenance – North Route Bid. The bid proposal includes weekly mowing and string trimming at 19 park and school sites and two alternate sites. An alternate requiring the use of electric equipment only was also included.

Director Voss reported that the Park District received eleven bids for the Routine Grounds Maintenance – South Route Bid. The bid proposal includes weekly mowing and string trimming at 17 sites, including schools and NSSRA, and four alternate sites. An alternate requiring the use of electric equipment only was also included.

The work specified in both bids will occur primarily over 26 weeks, beginning approximately the third week of April and continuing through the second week of October.

There is \$211,493 budgeted for landscape maintenance. The low bidder was Langton Group. Langton Group has performed this contract for the District for the past three seasons with positive results.

The total North Route proposal price is \$97,885.24.
The total South Route proposal price is \$60,663.98.

It was the consensus of the Finance Committee to place the North and South Route bid proposals from Langton Group on the agenda for the March 18, 2026 Regular Meeting of the Park Board.

b. 2026 Weeding and Landscaping Services

Director Voss reported that the Park District of Highland Park received six bids on March 10, 2026, for the Weeding & Landscape Services Bid. The bid proposal includes monthly weeding, cultivating, edging, and mulching at 14 park sites and seven alternate sites, including the North Suburban Special Recreation Association. The work specified in the bid will occur primarily over six months, beginning in April and continuing through September.

JJ Residential Landscaping LLC was the low bidder; however, the company is based in Ludlow, IL (approximately three hours from Highland Park). Staff noted the company has been in business for one year, and two of the four references were for new contracts that began within the past month. Staff recommended rejecting the bid from JJ Residential Landscaping LLC.

The second-lowest bidder, Moreno Landscape and Hardscape LLC, excluded costs for Brown and Carroll Snyder Parks. Staff recommended rejecting the bid from Moreno Landscape and Hardscape LLC.

The third-lowest bidder was Langton Group. Langton Group has performed this contract for the District for the past three seasons with positive results.

It was the consensus of the Finance Committee to recommend approval of the 2026 Weeding & Landscape Services bid proposal, including Alternate 3, from Langton Group in the amount of \$52,036.

c. 2026 Park Avenue Dredging Rebid Project

Manager Kutscheid reported that the project scope includes mobilization and dredging. Manager Kutscheid reported that in February the Park District received two bids, with the low bid submitted by American Shoreline in the amount of \$42,050. American Shoreline subsequently rescinded its bid, and the Park District was unable to reach an agreement with Ohio Dredge; therefore, staff rebid the project.

The Park District received three sealed bids on March 9, 2026, for materials and labor to complete the 2026 Park Avenue Dredging Rebid Project. Work is scheduled for early May 2026.

The low bidder was John Keno & Company, Inc. Staff reported the contractor has favorable references and experience working with the Park District.

There is \$50,000 budgeted for the project. While the bid from John Keno & Company, Inc. is within the project budget, it excludes environmental testing. If the contract is approved and environmental testing is added, the total project cost is expected to exceed the budget by \$6,871.25.

It was the consensus of the Finance Committee to reject the first bid issuance and place Base Bid Items 1 and 2 from John Keno & Company, Inc. on the consent agenda for the March 18, 2026 Regular Meeting of the Park Board.

d. 2026 Sport Court Improvement Project

Manager Kutscheid reported that the Park District of Highland Park received two sealed bids on Thursday, March 12, 2026, for materials and labor to complete the 2026 Sport Courts Improvements Project. The project includes color coating for the six tennis courts at Danny Cunniff Park and Deer Creek Racquet Club Courts #5 and #6. Work is scheduled to occur June–July 2026.

The low bidder was American Sealcoating of Indiana, Inc. Staff reported the contractor has favorable references.

There is \$136,000 budgeted for Danny Cunniff Park and \$25,200 budgeted for Deer Creek Racquet Club. The proposal from American Sealcoating of Indiana, Inc. was \$70,600 under budget.

It was the consensus of the Finance Committee to place the total Base Bid from American Sealcoating of Indiana, Inc. on the consent agenda for the March 18, 2026 Regular Meeting of the Park Board.

Employee Compensation Plan Update

Director Hall reviewed the Park District's compensation policy goals and philosophy. Key takeaways included:

- The policy supports establishing and maintaining competitive wages so positions are valued appropriately relative to one another within the District and aligned with market rates. The District aims to attract, recruit, and retain skilled and dedicated employees.
- The District strives to provide base pay that meets or exceeds the market. For most positions, pay ranges are structured to target the 75th percentile of the market.

In keeping with policy and best practices, the Park District conducts a third-party review of its compensation plan every five years to benchmark positions against external market data and verify internal equity.

In 2022, GovHR conducted a compensation study comparing the Park District to eleven comparable agencies and identified three key findings:

- PDHP's compensation structure was outdated and lacked clearly defined pay grades and consistent progression between grades and pay bands.
- PDHP's pay scale was not being reviewed and adjusted annually based on market conditions.
- PDHP's job grade midpoints were no longer competitive at the 75th percentile, the District's historical benchmark.

GovHR provided three recommendations:

1. Develop a new compensation plan and structure.
2. Move to an open-range merit plan in place of fixed-percentage increases.
3. Implement the compensation plan with a defined process for advancement through the ranges.

Commissioner Beck left the meeting at 9:29 a.m.

In 2023, the Park District implemented a new compensation plan and structure and adopted Compensation Administration Guidelines.

In 2024, the Park District implemented an open-range merit plan and began an annual evaluation of the compensation plan and structure.

To address the recommendation for annual pay scale review, the Human Resources team uses four market indicators that consider cost-of-living and inflation measures, as well as parks and recreation market data, to develop an annual pay scale adjustment recommendation. The most recent review (May 2025) for the 2026 budget recommended a 2.5% market adjustment to the pay scales.

Staff develop merit increases for the next budget year by taking the pay scale adjustment and adding an additional 0.75% to 1.25%, and then confirming the total using industry-specific data. This analysis is typically completed in August. The spread between the merit budget and the pay scale adjustment allows employees with satisfactory or above performance to progress through the pay range.

The Park District also implemented a merit matrix to guide allocation of the budgeted merit pool. The matrix provides managers with guidelines for annual increases based on performance and position within the pay band. The "B" tertile represents proficient, solid performers and includes the market midpoint with the largest portion of the pay range. The District's goal is to hire, develop, and retain employees so that most employees are in the "B" tertile through initial placement based on experience and continued performance.

In conclusion, the Park District's goals for pay administration are fairness, consistency, transparency, and equity.

2025 Year End Cost Center Review

Deferred to a future Finance Committee Meeting.

Other Business

None.

Open to the Public to Address the Board

None.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:44 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Roxanne Hejnowski

Roxanne Hejnowski, Assistant Secretary