

**MINUTES OF A THE LAKEFRONT, PARKS, AND NATURAL AREAS COMMITTEE MEETING  
OF THE PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK  
HELD ON MARCH 16, 2022 5:01 PM**

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

**Absent:** Commissioner Kaplan, President Ruttenberg

**Also, Present:** Executive Director Romes; Director Smith; Director Voss; Director Carr; Director Peters; Director Gogola; Assistant Director Maliszewski; Assistant Director Murrin; Manager Divincenzo; Manager Schwartz; Manager Johnson; Coordinator Hejnowski

**Guest Speaker:** None.

Commissioner Freeman joined the meeting at 5:29 p.m.

**Additions to the Agenda**

None.

**Approval of the Lakefront, Parks, and Natural Areas Committee Meeting Minutes from February 16, 2022**

The Minutes from the February 16, 2022 Lakefront, Parks, and Natural Areas Committee Meeting were approved.

**Sports Field Master Plan Update**

Assistant Director Maliszewski provided an update on the Sports Field Master Plan initiative. The update included a brief refresh on past Sports Field Master Plan efforts from 2019, the creation of the Athletic Boosters who help build awareness and raise funds to enhance the District’s athletic fields and facilities, and the current planning process including an identified renovation project at Fink Baseball Field (synthetic turf infield turf, addition of a warning track, enclosed bleachers, etc.) to serve several age groups, including 14years+ requiring a 60/90 field. The presentation also included a review of the professional services proposal from Gewalt Hamilton Associates to develop construction documents for this project, a suggested timeline with an estimated end goal of April 1, 2024, and prospective funding mechanisms specific to the Fink Baseball Field renovation project. The estimated cost for this renovation is \$1 million, so the Athletic Boosters are identifying corporate sponsorship opportunities, developing event-based fundraising, and working with the Park District and the Parks Foundation to collect donations from the community.

**Public Comment**

***Paul Miller***

***434 Pleasant Avenue, Highland Park***

The Athletic Booster Club is identifying corporate sponsorship opportunities, developing event-based fundraising, and working with the Park District and the Parks Foundation to collect donations from the community to secure funds needed to enhance the athletic fields throughout the District. The Club is committed and eager to work the District and the Parks Foundation to turn this goal into a reality.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to know if this renovation replaces or works in conjunction with the planned renovations for Danny Cunniff.

Assistant Director Maliszewski reported that this renovation works in conjunction with the renovations at Larry Cunniff allowing the District to serve a larger audience, specifically 14year+.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to know if the demand justifies the renovations for Larry Fink and Danny Cunniff.

Assistant Director Maliszewski reported that the demand will not decrease with the introduction of a field at Larry Fink that serves multiple age groups.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to know if drainage and flooding is a concern for the proposed location at Larry Fink.

Assistant Director Maliszewski reported that part of the plan includes drainage and grading to address the flooding occurring in the in/out fields.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to see the drainage and grading plans. Overall, he supports the plan and would like the District to fast-track the completion goal.

Vice President Grossberg would like to know if a fence is needed to protect the turf.

Assistant Director Maliszewski reported that field turf is durable, so passive use from the community is not a concern.

Vice President Grossberg would like to know the life expectancy and if rubber materials will be used.

Assistant Director Maliszewski reported there are a range of options with varied materials, so the life expectancy depends on the materials used.

Vice President Grossberg would like to know if the Athletic Booster Club is strictly to raise funds to improve fields.

Assistant Director Maliszewski reported that this is the first campaign, however, the Club was developed to build awareness and raise funds to enhance the District's athletic fields and facilities.

Commissioner Freeman supports the project, and she would like to see it fast-tracked.

Commissioner Bernstein feels this is long overdue and he is happy to help fast-track the project.

#### **Moroney Park Playground Project Update**

Manager Schwartz reported that the Weil Tot Lot playground at Moroney Park is identified in the Park District's Capital Plan and scheduled for replacement in 2022/2023. The playground is located on St. Johns Avenue at Cedar Avenue. Cedar Avenue bisects the park into two separate park areas. The Weil Tot Lot is in the south area and the north area is open space.

New playgrounds are a major investment in a park that can last up to 20 years or more. Therefore, it is time to re-evaluate and confirm the existing design and impact to the community. To do this, it is helpful to understand how residents use and access the park and associated amenities. In doing so, one of the primary factors to consider is whether the south area of the park is the best place for the playground.

In November, the Park District issued a survey to the neighbors of Moroney Park and received 130 responses. Staff presented the results of the survey, which neighbors value and support a playground upgrade or expansion, however, the most notable feedback is 70% of respondents support the Park District's consideration to explore relocation of the playground. As a result, Manager Schwartz presented four options, which includes an equipment replacement with ADA access, moving the tot lot to the north lot, expand the existing playground footprint, and lastly, moving both playgrounds (2-5yrs and 5-12yrs) to the north. If approved construction would occur in March of 2023.

Commissioner Freeman and her family frequently visit this playground. The tot lot is heavily utilized; however, she does not see the 5-12 playground, nor the open space being used. She is interested to hear what the community has to say since she is favoring an equipment replacement which is the least costly of the four options.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to know if the playground has passed its useful life.

Director Voss reported that some play features may not need to be replaced for another 2years.

Vice President Grossberg does not feel connectivity or access enhancements will make a significant improvement, since there is access from St. Johns. He is not in favor of removing trees.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to know how many paver bricks still need to be sold to meet the Sunset Woods fundraising goal.

Director Gogola reported that the District needs to sell 10 bricks.

Commissioner Bernstein and Vice President Grossberg are in favor of replacing the existing equipment. Anything beyond that, he recommends the Parks Foundation raise funds.

### **Public Comment**

***David Sogin***

***1092 Wade Street, Highland Park***

The idea of keeping the tot lot in the current location is preferable. He and his grandchildren frequently use it. Possible alternatives for Moroney are a dog park, however, noise might disrupt the neighbors. He is concerned that constructing a 5-12 playground will have little to any usage. Most children will continue to utilize Ravinia School instead. At one of the proposed community meetings, he would like the following question presented to the community "what other recreational activities could be used in Moroney Park." Furthermore, he would like staff to contact the Ravinia Neighborhood Association before scheduling the meeting to get a larger audience.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to know who is responsible for maintaining the playground property at Moroney.

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Director Voss reported that it is the responsibility of the school district to maintain the property.

**Other Business**

None.

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 6:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Roxanne Hejnowski*

Roxanne Hejnowski, Assistant Secretary