

**PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
APRIL 27, 2022**

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m. by President Ruttenberg.

ROLL CALL

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

Commissioner Freeman and Commissioner Kaplan participated by electronic means.
- Absent:** None.
- Staff Present:** Executive Director Romes; Director Smith; Director Voss; Director Peters; Director Gogola; Director Kopka; Assistant Director Maliszewski; Assistant Director Murrin; Manager Johnson; Coordinator Hejnowski
- Guest Speakers:** None.

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

President Ruttenberg requested moving items A and B from Unfinished Business regarding Park Avenue to the top of the agenda. After staff presents on both items there will be an opportunity for public comment, followed-by a motion to consider approval of these items.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A-B. Consideration to approve the 2022 Park Avenue Breakwater and Boat Launch Improvements Bid and the SmithGroup Park Avenue Boat Launch Construction Administration Project Proposal

Director Smith reported that the Park District of Highland Park received six sealed bids on Wednesday, February 23, 2022, for materials and labor to complete the 2022 Park Avenue Breakwater and Boat Launch Replacement Project. The base scope of this project includes removal of the existing barge breakwater and boat ramp, stockpiling and salvaging existing breakwater fill and armor stone, construction of a new steel sheet pile breakwater with a concrete crown wall and construction of a new concrete boat launch.

Alternate items included furnishing and installing site furnishings including bollards, chains, floating docks, lighting, and associated items.

The low bidder was Lakes and Rivers Contracting, Inc. This contractor has favorable references and extensive experience with this type of work. Construction costs, funding for the project, and the project timelines were presented and discussed at the April 13 Regular Park Board Workshop Meeting. If the base bid is approved by the Park Board of Commissioners, construction is scheduled to begin on September 6, 2022, and conclude in May 2023. Staff is not recommending approval of

alternate items at this time as the Park District has applied for a grant to support funding for these items in the amount of \$200,000 which will not be announced until Fall 2022. If the Base Bid is approved, Construction Alternates will need to be bid in Fall 2022 and considered for approval by the Park Board in early 2023.

Staff recommends that the Park Board of Commissioners approves the base bid from Lakes and Rivers Contracting, Inc. for the 2022 Park Avenue Boat Launch Project and authorizes the Executive Director to enter an agreement in the amount of \$2,221,890. Likewise, staff recommends that the Park Board authorizes the Executive Director to enter into an agreement with SmithGroup for the Park Avenue Boat Launch Construction Administration Project Proposal in the amount of \$68,000.

PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

Jean Sogin

1092 Wade Street, Highland Park

She congratulated the community for raising \$400,000 in donations for this project. special thanks to the anonymous donor for the \$100,000 matching donation, the Parks Foundation, Director Gogola, Director Carr, and Commissioner Freeman.

Peter Mordini

1853 Sheahen Court, Highland Park

It has been 7 years on this adventure. Thanked Board Members and City Councilmen for donating to this cause. Special thanks to the Park Board of Commissioners and staff for working together to pull this off. Requested a standing ovation for PDHP Board and Staff.

Lynn West

1900 Green Bay Road, Highland Park

Has been a realtor for many years and knows this will be a real asset to the community. Thanks to everyone who is bringing new things with property values and new opportunities to the citizens of Highland Park.

Steve Knapp

700 College Place, Highland Park, IL

Looks great, seems like money is there. Huge pouring out of personal money from over 600 people. Hopes the Park Board does the right thing and votes in favor. The community has spoke and are all looking forward to it.

Alan Cohen

1822 N. Lynn Avenue, Highland Park

About to move back to Highland Park, largely due to the NSYC and the Park Avenue Beach and Boating Facility. Hopes the Park Board votes in favor.

Laura Knapp

700 College Place, Highland Park

Commodore of the NSYC. On behalf of the NSYC thanked the Park Board and staff for making project a reality. There are over 400 members who utilize the site. Would not be able to offer classes without the protection of the breakwater. Thanked the community for their donations.

Wes Madara

349 Vine Avenue, Highland Park

Thanked everyone. Moved to Highland Park 4 years ago and one of the big factors was the access to the lake and boating facilities. While it is a big investment and a lot of funding, it is great to see the community and users for this facility really step up and make this monetary support to get project moving forward and hopefully a strong yes vote tonight.

Josh Nugent

2229 Saint Johns Avenue, Highland Park

Moved to Highland Park for access to the lakefront. Recently joined NSYC to take fully advantage of lakefront. Thinks continue access to Lake Michigan is vital to the growth of the community.

Commissioner Bernstein reported that this has been a difficult vote. He supported the project when it was originally \$900,000, and when it increased to \$1.5 million. Since then, the project has ballooned to over \$2 million. Staff has done a tremendous job addressing ongoing issues with facilities and parks. He is immensely proud of the five-year capital plan that he, the rest of the Park Board, and staff have worked diligently on. As a reminder, the five-year capital plan has a 6th tier for unfunded projects. Personally, he would prefer to fund those projects before this one, specifically the locker rooms at the RCHP and the athletic fields. However, he recognizes the passion of the community for this facility, as it was exhibited by the level of support and the number of people who donated to the cause. He recognized the arduous work of staff, the Parks Foundation, and the community who donated to this project. Last fall, he would have voted against this project. However, after reviewing the financial model developed by staff to reimburse costs, he felt it was realistic. Weighing the equities in regard to this, it was very hard to vote yes. However, he wants to acknowledge the persuasive skills of his fellow Commissioners, as they converted his vote to a yes.

Commissioner Freeman thanked everyone for their arduous work.

Vice President Grossberg feels that this project is a revenue-generating, forward-looking, beach protecting, community center project that is the heart of our lakefront. He cannot imagine another project that completes so many of our goals as a Park District. He wholeheartedly supports the project.

Commissioner Freeman thanked everyone for their arduous work.

A motion was made by Commissioner Kaplan, seconded by Vice President Grossberg to approve the base bid from Lakes and Rivers Contracting, Inc. for the 2022 Park Avenue Boat Launch Project, and authorize the Executive Director to enter an agreement in the amount of \$2,221,890.

Roll Call:

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

Nay: President Ruttenberg

Absent: None

Abstain: None

Motion Carried

A motion was made by Commissioner Bernstein, seconded by Vice President Grossberg authorizing the Executive Director to enter into an agreement with SmithGroup for the Park Avenue Boat Launch Construction Administration Project Proposal in the amount of \$68,000.

Roll Call:

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

Nay: None

Absent: None

Abstain: None

Motion Carried

C. Consideration to approve the Moraine Park Path Improvement Project Rebid

President Ruttenberg reported that this item is being deferred to the May 11 Workshop Meeting.

CONSENT AGENDA

A motion was made by Commissioner Bernstein, seconded by Vice President Grossberg to approve the Minutes from the March 9, 2022 Workshop Meeting, the Minutes from the March 30, 2022 Regular Board Meeting, the 2022 Park Avenue Dredging Project, the 2022 Lakefront Security Services Request for Proposals, the 2022 Heller Nature Center Entrance Improvements Project Bid, the Recreation Center of Highland Park Mechanical Engineering Proposal, and Bills and Payroll in the amount of \$1,779,324.50

Roll Call:

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

Nay: None

Absent: None

Abstain: None

Motion Carried

FINANCIAL FORECASTS AND TREASURER'S REPORT

Operations (General and Recreation Funds) Budget vs. Actual

Director Peters reported that as of March 31, 2022, the Park District revenues are trending higher than budgeted. The Park District budgeted \$1.7 million in revenue. Actual revenues are \$2.4 million, which is a \$640,000 surplus. Conversely, The District budgeted \$3.7 million in expenses. Actual expenses are a little over \$3 million, for a savings of \$658,000. She reminded the Park Board As a result the Park District has a little under a \$1.3million surplus. When compared to the pre-COVID years (2017-2019), the District has a \$215,789 surplus.

Conclusion

As of March 31, 2022, West Ridge Center has a \$107,000 surplus due to early childhood enrichment programs, Centennial Ice Arena has a \$113,000 surplus with both gymnastics and ice programming surpassing budgeted enrollment figures by 100 participants each, Athletics has a \$43,000 surplus due to additional participants in travel baseball, martial arts and basketball, Aquatics has a \$12,000 surplus due to swim lessons, and Recreation has a \$9,000 surplus due to open gym usage. The District received over \$200,000 in Replacement Taxes. Typically, the District receives \$300,000 annually in Replacement Taxes, so the bulk was received in the first quarter of the year. Lastly, there is a \$350,000 savings in salaries and wages due to open positions, as well as correlating insurance and retirement. Overall, the Park District is in a very favorable position at the end of the first quarter.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Parks Foundation

Director Gogola reported that at the Annual Meeting two new members were elected to the Board. Rafael Labrador will remain President and Tom Decker will remain Treasurer. The new Secretary is Jennifer Tier. There were no changes to the Fundraising, Governance, Marketing, and Finance Committees with the Parks Foundation. Meetings were scheduled for next year and will occur on the third Tuesday of every month at 6:00 p.m.

Assistant Director Maliszewski reported that the Travel Baseball program, held a kickoff event on Sunday, April 24 at Centennial Ice Arena. The results were fantastic. The event is intended to kick off the season for families of all age groups in a fun and social setting while raising donations to enhance the District's athletic fields and facilities. The silent auction raised \$2,900. These donations will cover the first bill from Gewalt Hamilton Associates who are developing construction documents for the proposed renovation at Fink Baseball Field. He commended Manager DiVincenzo and Manager Sassorossi who played a huge part in the event.

B. Board Committee Updates

At the April 13 Facility and Recreation Committee Meeting, the Park Board Commissioners met with the principal architect at Holabird and Root to discuss conceptual planning for the West Ridge Park and Site Project.

At the April 20 Lakefront, Parks, and Natural Areas Committee Meeting staff provided an update on the Moraine Fencing Improvement Project which is intended to address access control for patrons who visit Moraine Beach. Based on staff's findings, the Committee favored the option to continue messaging that the beach is open for all patrons and will be entirely open for off-leash dogs.

Staff provided an update on Sunset Woods Park Playground, including landscaping and signage plans. The project remains under budget, with an anticipated grand opening in June of 2022.

Staff also provided an update on the welcome signage at Sunset Woods Park and the incorporation of the Sheahen Woods history.

At the April 20 Finance Committee Meeting staff provided an update on the Dectron Mechanical System at the Recreation Center of Highland Park pool which is budgeted to be replaced in 2023.

Staff also reviewed the April bid results which were up for approval this evening.

C. Director's Report

Executive Director Romes shared a list of May public Meetings.

Staff are working with a consultant to update the District's Strategic Plan. The process begins with redefining our values. Due to everything that has occurred over the last two years we are taking an

opportunity to engage staff, the Board, and the community to establish a list of values, specifically what you value most about the Park District and what do people hope that the Park District becomes as we look forward to the future. That feedback will materialize into values that will be used to provide future direction. The next steps will be to take those values and embed them into our culture and our strategy. From there, staff will be hired and evaluated based on their ability to incorporate these values into their performance. The Park Board will continue receiving updates.

Executive Director Romes shared a list of upcoming events including the Daddy Daughter Dance this Saturday, April 30 from 5:30 – 7:00 p.m. at the Recreation Center of Highland Park. This is a sold-out event with 130 couples (290 individuals) registered. Family Golf Day is this Saturday, April 30 – Sunday, May 1 from 10:00 – 12:00 p.m. at the Highland Park Golf Learning Center. This is a free clinic, which allows families to try golf, ask questions about short game techniques, full swing, rules of the game, and get started in golf. On Sunday, May 1 the Highland Park Figure Skating Club is hosting its first annual Skate-A-Thon fundraising event to raise funds for lighting and other rink enhancements. On Sunday, May 8 the District is offering a Mother’s Day Yoga and Mimosa from 8:30 – 12:00 p.m. at the Rosewood Interpretive Center. Two classes are available 8:30 – 10:00 a.m. or 10:00 – 12:00 p.m. Lastly, the Ice Show is Thursday, May 12 – Saturday, May 14 at Centennial Ice Arena. The theme this year is Peace, Love, and Skate. Over 75 performers of all ages perform in this annual event across all three days. Ticket sales began on April 26 for Ice Show Soloists, Ice Show Participant Tickets went on sale on April 27, and Ice Show General Public Tickets go on sale on May 2 at 9:00 a.m.

Summer programming was released for viewing Friday, April 29. Resident registration begins Wednesday, May 4 at 7:00 a.m.

D. ParkSchool and General Recreation Update

Manager Nichols reported that in 2017, NSSD112 announced kindergarten would be moving from part-time programming to full-time programming which would impact the Park District’s enrichment classes. Through committee meetings, focus groups, and research, the decision was made to move our enrichment programming into a formalized ParkSchool program that launched in the Fall of 2019. ParkSchool was built on six fundamentals: STREAM, Friendship, Nature, Independence, Skills, and Confidence. A lot are indicative of a ParkSchool preschool/nursery school program, however, what sets the Park District of Highland Park apart from some of those is our attention to STREAM which includes recreation and nature as we partner with Heller Nature Center to bring that unique feature to our ParkSchool students.

Currently, we have three excellent new teachers closely followed by three wonderful aides at the West Ridge Center, as well as two staff that are running Heller Nature Center ParkSchool program. This year programs are split by age, and she is pleased to report that enrollment numbers look great, and staff has received positive feedback from the community. When compared to 2021, the program had a \$147,978 year-end surplus. As of today, our 2022 program has a \$138,195 surplus which places the program in a favorable position as we move forward.

Beginning in the Fall of 2022, ParkSchool will present some enhancements to the community including:

- Full year registration with more consistency and longer days.
- Focus on school readiness, enrichment, and core social emotional learning tools.
- Optional recreational program called ParkSchool Plus.
- Early Childhood Enrichment programs.

E. Board Comments

None.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE BOARD

Heather Redisch

280 Poplar Road, Highland Park

Parent of three girls, ages 12, 10 and 7. All three daughters have attended Park District classes from toddlerhood all the way through ParkSchool. Have participated in Park District summer camps, take tennis 2-3 times a week at Deer Creek and spend 5+ days a week at Centennial. Skated at Centennial throughout childhood. Compared to other community rinks Centennial is much too small to serve both figure skating and hockey communities. Some other communities have two rinks. These are the rinks that community members support at least twice a week to seek additional ice time for our children. That is taking money out of our community and reinvesting in others. Parents, coaches, and kids are not proud of the facility we have. They go to other facilities and are constantly reminded at how little the Park District has reinvested back into Centennial. Absolutely appreciates new compressor that was replaced a few years ago if the compressor were not replaced Centennial would have closed. The Park District has only been reactive to necessary updates, never initiative-taking. There is an unspoken competition between hockey and figure skating that does not make for a collaborative culture from either side. An additional rink would allow the hockey players and figure skaters to coexist, and even more may create the opportunity to unite and raise money for Centennial. From a revenue perspective, the studio rink would create an additional revenue stream for the Park District. The gymnastics revenue will continue to be captured in a different location, and depending on the location, size and investment, there may be even a greater return as the current facility clearly needs its own updates. It has unfortunately a reputation for at least the last 10 years of being too small, run down, outdated, which deters many gymnasts in the community to go as far as Vernon Hills for instruction on a daily basis. A studio rink would also provide Centennial the opportunity to host more impressive competitions, showcases, and hockey tournaments. It would allow to hold birthday parties where children can navigate safely around the ice privately instead of dodging hockey players, figure skaters and older more aggressive children on public ice. These are just some of the reasons expanding Centennial would be incredible for our community. I have waited 35 years to get this studio rink back. Nothing would make our skaters, parents and community members feel a sense of pride in showing your support back to them and finally investing in a rink that has deserved love and attention in far too long.

Jamie and Liv Klein

675 Wake Robin Lane, Highland Park

Four children attended ParkSchool. Grew up in Northbrook and skated at Sports Complex. Now lives in Highland Park and it was an automatic for daughter to skate at Centennial, but it is a different environment. Would like to see improved things. Thinks there is so much opportunity with kids coming into figure skating as there is a lot of energy. Has two sons that play travel hockey with Falcons, so she understands both issues. Knows there is lot of stuff that goes into how Falcon's purchase ice from Park District. Does believe that a second rink would ultimately be better for both figure skating and hockey.

Commissioner Bernstein reported that the District is spending over \$2 million for renovations at Centennial Ice Arena, so the Park Board would like this community to utilize the Parks Foundation to supplement additional funds.

President Ruttenberg stated that the Park Board and staff are undertaking a planning process for West Ridge. And part of that planning process there is the possibility or probability of moving gymnastics to a new facility at West Ridge. If gymnastics is relocated this allows for discussion to potentially restore the studio rink.

Chris Lee

1089 Ridge Road, Highland Park

Have lived in Highland Park 15 years. As an ice-skating mom and has been driving to every rink possible? In ice skating unlike other sports, you can only get better if you have ice time.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to recognize our Olympic Athlete coming out of the figure skating program.

Commissioner Bernstein reported that he is the father of a figure skater. He requested that this issue be presented at the Facility and Recreation Committee Meeting.

Vice President Grossberg would like to make a connection to the Parks Foundation to help groups like this make their dreams come true.

President Ruttenberg reported that the District is undertaking a planning process for West Ridge Center and Park, so there are discussions of relocating gymnastics here, which would mean the studio rink would be restored. The Park Board is taking their concerns seriously, reporting that these discussions are in the planning process.

Vice President Grossberg and President Ruttenberg requested that Heather and Jamie connect with Executive Director Romes.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Commissioner Bernstein and seconded by Vice President Grossberg and approved by a unanimous vote. The Board Meeting adjourned at 7:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Roxanne Hejnowski

Roxanne Hejnowski, Assistant Secretary