

**PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK  
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS  
MINUTES OF WORKSHOP MEETING  
NOVEMBER 9, 2022**

The meeting was called to order at 6:06 p.m. by President Grossberg.

**ROLL CALL**

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

**Absent:** None

**Staff Present:** Executive Director Romes; Director Smith; Director Peters; Director Voss; Director Carr; Director Gogola; Director Kopka; Assistant Director Maliszewski; Assistant Director Murrin; Superintendent/Manager Ochs; Manager Schwartz; Manager Johnson; Accountant Moraru; Supervisor Lawler; Coordinator Hejnowski

**Guest Speakers:** David Greenberg, District Deputy Grand Master of the First Northeastern District of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of the State of Illinois

**ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA**

Executive Director Romes introduced David Greenberg, District Deputy Grand Master of the First Northeastern District of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of the State of Illinois will be donating life-saving materials to the Park District as part of the “Stop the Bleed” Program.

Mr. Greenberg reported that he is here this evening on behalf of the A.O. Fay Lodge's Worshipful Master, Gerald Fortune, with a plan to help allay the fears by providing life-saving materials ("materials") which could be deployed in the event of a traumatic emergency before the First Responders are able to get on-scene, and also to provide the First Responders with additional supplies needed to respond to a mass-casualty event.

The materials are comprised of pre-packed trauma kits which meet the requirements of the Department of Defense's (DOD) Stop the Bleed (R) program. Each kit contains Protective Gloves, Trauma Shears, CAT6 Tourniquet, Sharpie Marker for recording the time the tourniquet was applied, Compressed gauze for packing wounds, Emergency Trauma Bandage, Vented Chest Seal, Bleedstop powder, Burnshield Ointment, and Bleeding Control Reference Card.

Their local donation is intended for the Highland Park Police Department, Highland Park Fire Department, City of Highland Park CERT Members, and the Park District of Highland Park. It includes Portable Stop the Bleed kits in paramedic-style bags, each of which contains 8 individual kits and individual Stop the Bleed Kits in resealable mylar bags.

The A.O. Fay Lodge is donating two portable bag kits to the Park District of Highland Park (total: 16 individual kits), two portable bag kits to the Highland Park Police Department (total: 16 individual kits),

three portable bag kits to the Highland Park Fire Department (total: 24 individual kits; one for each of the Stations), fifteen individual kits to the Highland Park CERT, four relocatable outdoor stations with polycarbonate cabinet, appropriate signage, and a portable bag kit within the cabinet (total: 32 individual kits). The outdoor stations are affixed to portable basketball hoops with weighted bases, which have been modified to hold the portable bag kit. We believe that they could be deployed at the beginning- and end points of the parade, as well as at additional equidistant points along the parade route.

As an added benefit, by not being permanently affixed, the stations can be relocated to other events which the City or Park District may hold.

Although we sincerely hope the need never arises and the kits simply gather dust, the donation comprises 103 trauma kits to be utilized to help save lives in the event of a traumatic incident at a City or Park District event, and that the presence of these items may help some to set aside their fear and continue to attend the Parade.

The materials detailed hereinabove for the City and Park District of Highland Park totaling approximately \$9,730.00 are our gift to our community and its residents, nothing more, nothing less.

The Park Board of Commissioners and Executive Director Romes thanked Mr. Greenberg and the A.O. Fay Lodge for their generous donation.

**PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

None.

**TRUTH IN TAXATION RESOLUTION #2202-07**

***Tax Levy Schedule/Timeline***

Director Peters reported that staff are here today to present the recommended tax levy and the supporting Truth in Taxation Resolution. On November 16, staff will request approval from the Park Board of Commissioners to pass the Truth in Taxation Resolution. On December 8, a public hearing notice will be publicized in the local papers regarding the Park District's Truth in Taxation Resolution. On December 14 there will be a public hearing where staff will request that the Park Board of Commissioners approve and pass the Tax Levy Ordinance. Finally, on December 15, staff will file the District's approved Tax Levy Ordinance with Lake County.

***Tax Revenue vs. Operating Revenue***

In 2019, property taxes accounted for 53% of the District's revenue vs. operations which was 47%. During the pandemic (2020), property taxes accounted for 66% of the District's revenue. In 2021, property taxes accounted for 56% of the District's revenues.

***Tax Refresher***

Director Peters reported that the purpose of the tax levy is to appropriate necessary funds to support mission-critical community assets and services which include repairing and replacing \$42 million in capital assets, \$30 million in capital improvements (\$25 million is currently unfunded), and cost for operational maintenance to support 45 parks, 4 lakefront properties, and nearly 800 acres of open space and 11 facilities.

***Tax Levy Considerations***

Director Peters provided a summary of things to consider when making decisions regarding the tax levy, such as uncollected tax revenue cannot be recaptured in future years if the Park Board of Commissioners freezes taxes, increasing the levy by the CPI and new growth avoids a negative impact on all future levies and long-term funding for capital repair and replacement, the tax cap limits the District's ability to keep up with inflation, the District would be giving up revenue without an alternative source to replace it, which will have a compounding negative impact on the District's ability to maintain community infrastructure, resources, services, and amenities, not levying the allowable increase will decrease the District's fund reserves, which could have a negative effect on our District's Triple-A bond rating, thus costing the District more to borrow money and not being good stewards of community assets.

***Tax Levy Factors***

Regarding the General and Recreation Funds, the current tax law restricts park districts to limit increasing their levy by CPI or 5%, whichever is lower; the CPI factor is automatically adjusted through economic conditions. The CPI for 2022 is 7%. The most significant impact has been on projects since several bids have been coming over budget. Another thing to consider is new growth, which accounts for new property that cannot be accessed in future years. As of October 19, 2022, new growth is estimated at \$18 million so staff are recommending that number to increase to \$25 million come the end of the year. The last thing to consider is the equalized assessed valuation (EAV). As of September 1, 2022, the EAV is 4.3%. As for the Special Recreation Fund, the tax is .04%.

When looking at a property tax bill for a \$685,000 homeowner, the estimated tax increase is \$5.67 per month. When comparing percentages on your tax bill, the Park District truth in taxation levy increase is 6.9%, the City of Highland Park is taxing 6.7%, School District 112 is taxing 5.98%, and School District 113 is taxing 5.91%. Furthermore, over 60 neighboring park districts were surveyed, and all except for two plan to levy more than 5% this year.

***Truth in Taxation Calculation and Resolution Reviewed by PMA***

Director Peters provided a brief report of the factors used to determine the truth in taxation calculation.

***Tax Cap General fund***

For the current fiscal year, Lake County provided the Park District with a \$5.8 million extension. Staff are recommending levying \$6.2 million for 2023, a 6.83% increase.

***Tax Cap Recreation fund***

For the current fiscal year, Lake County provided the Park District with a \$5.5 million extension. Staff are recommending levying \$5.9 million for 2023, a 7.27% increase.

***Special Recreation***

For the current fiscal year, Lake County provided the Park District with a \$931,842 extension. Staff are recommending levying \$990,000 for 2023, a 6.24% increase.

Overall, the Park District had a \$12.3 million extension for the current fiscal year. Staff are recommending levying \$13.1 million for 2023, for a 6.99% change to the Truth in Taxation (5% accounts for the CPI, and the remaining is new growth).

***Key Considerations***

The Park District's Tax Levy increase will be less than the 7% CPI and the recent 9% inflation. A 5% levy, plus new growth will provide Park District with the revenue to sustain its operation and address increases in minimum wage and salaries, construction, materials and supplies, and utilities. As a reminder, the Park District has more than \$25 million in unfunded capital expenditures, so staff's recommendation will continue to focus on equity, alternative revenue sources, and grant-in-aid scholarships.

At the November 16 Regular Meeting, Staff are recommending the Park Board of Commissioners approve the Truth in Taxation Resolution #2022-07, where the estimated percentage increase in the proposed 2023 aggregate levy over the amount of real estate taxes extended upon the final 2022 aggregate levy based on 5% tax cap and anticipated growth is 6.99%.

***Supplemental Property Tax Levy for the Debt Service Fund***

Mr. Lewis reported that the debt service fund has a separate tax levy outside of the operating funds to pay off the debt service on the District's general obligation bond. The amount is determined at the time the bonds are sold. If the Park Board of Commissioners were to approve a 5% tax levy on the CPI, the subsequent years would increase by an additional 1.5% of the amount able to be levied. Furthermore, a Supplemental Ordinance would not be needed next year since the CPI is higher than the amount assumed when the bonds were structured and sold.

Director Peters reported that there are roughly 30,000 residents in Highland Park, it is an increase of \$2.00 for every homeowner. Furthermore, a public hearing shall be scheduled at the December 14 Regular Meeting, with the anticipated passing of the Tax Levy Ordinance and Supplemental Property Tax Levy for the Debt Service Fund.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to know if the District can request more money in 2024 for the bond issuance.

Mr. Lewis reported that the District has the ability to borrow more money in 2024.

President Grossberg supports staff's recommendation for the tax levy; however, he may want to waive the supplemental property tax levy and have the Park District cover those costs through operations.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to know if the Park Board of Commissioners is in favor of reducing programming and closing facilities to reduce the tax levy.

Vice President Freeman, Commissioner Ruttenberg, and Commissioner Kaplan feel the community's need for park district programming increases with inflation since park district programs are more affordable than programs offered by private competitors. They are opposed to reducing programs and closing facilities, they support staff's recommendation for the tax levy and the supplemental property tax levy. Conversely, they prefer to increase property taxes on the entire community instead of penalizing users by significantly increasing program fees.

**Draft Five-Year Capital Plan Review**

Director Smith provided an overview this evening since the plan was reviewed line by line at the October 11 Finance Committee Meeting.

***Tier 1: Safety/Legal Compliance***

Any investment where the primary purpose is to correct a safety hazard or is pursuant to a legal contract, ordinance, or law.

***Tier 2: Critical Repair/Replace Existing Items***

A project fits this criterion if it is an existing asset that is in critical condition. An asset is defined as critical if it meets one or more of the following criteria: If not addressed in the proposed year it may pose a safety hazard; If not addressed and fails, it could lead to a larger expense and/or impact programming/recreation.

***Tier 3: Scheduled Replacement***

A project fits this criterion if it is an existing asset that is recommended for replacement and has reached its useful life.

***Tier 4: Improve Existing Items***

These projects improve built environment, parkland, or equipment that staff recommend improvement, but the recommended improvement would have limited or no impact on status quo operations. These projects are proactive in nature and keep the District looking fresh, up to date, or benefit existing recreation offerings.

***Tier 5: New***

Projects that are adding capacity/programming or altering current conditions. Not completing these projects would have no impact on the District's status quo.

***Tier 6: Unfunded***

Identified projects that do not have confirmed funding. May require alternative funding strategies.

Director Smith reported that the total budget for 2023 is \$11.3 million, \$205,000 is for district-wide/annual projects, \$279,000 is for technology, \$676,721 for parks equipment, and \$2.9 million for parks. When examining parks and facilities, \$2.1 million is budgeted for Centennial Ice Arena, \$445,000 for Deer Creek Racquet Club, \$100,000 for the Golf Learning Center, \$112,000 for Heller Nature Center, \$1 million for Hidden Creek AquaPark, \$1.3 million for Park Avenue Beach and Boating Facility, \$859,655 for the Recreation Center of Highland Park, \$1.2 million for Sunset Valley Golf Club, and \$990,000 for West Ridge Center.

**APPROVAL OF CENTENNIAL ICE ARENA RENOVATION PROJECT CHANGE ORDER #5**

Manager Schwartz reported that the Centennial Ice Arena Renovation Project includes removal and replacement of the existing fascia at the front entrance of the building. The fascia is the band under the roof edge that is visible to patrons. During design, it was identified that additional portions of the fascia were starting to deteriorate, and funds were earmarked in the five-year capital repair and replacement plan to address these sections. Though, as the Park District is proceeding with construction, the team requested pricing from Stuckey Construction to consider possible efficiencies to conduct the needed work along the east facade of the building as part of the larger project. Staff will present the proposed scope of work and pricing.

As for the financial impact, \$200,000 is currently earmarked in 2024 of the Five-Year Capital Plan for this work. Staff propose to spend these funds now to gain efficiency in implementing the project. This work would not impact the Centennial Ice Arena Renovation Project contingency budget.

A motion was made by Commissioner Kaplan and seconded by Commissioner Ruttenberg to approve the Centennial Ice Arena Renovation Project Change Order #5 in the amount of \$184,295 for East Facia Improvements.

**Roll Call:**

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

**Nay:** None

**Absent:** None

**Abstain:** None

**Motion Carried**

**CONSTRUCTION PROJECT UPDATES**

***A. Danny Cunniff Park Pond Deck Removal Project***

Manager Schwartz shared images of the gazebo and pond deck at Danny Cunniff Park. Both items were installed in the 1980s and over the last 5 years staff have identified heaving. Based on findings from a structural analysis, staff will be removing the gazebo and deck and restoring the surrounding natural areas.

***B. Centennial Ice Arena Facility and Site Renovations project***

Manager Schwartz shared images of the drainage renovations and site repairs for the parking lot. She is pleased to report that the District was awarded \$38,000 from Storm Water Management to help cover some of the drainage renovations. She also shared images of the facility renovations, reporting that the project is moving smoothly.

***C. Centennial Ice Arena Ice Rink Floor Replacement project***

Director Smith shared images of the current progress, including installation and piping for the warm floor system and cooling system. As of next week, Ice Builders will begin pouring the concrete slab.

Commissioner Bernstein would like to know if LED Lights will be installed at the ice arena and if the arena will be painted.

Director Smith reported that LED lights will be installed, and staff will repair the ice arena.

***D. Park Avenue Breakwater and Boat Ramp Replacement project***

Director Smith reported that the inner wall of the breakwater is complete. SmithGroup and Lakes and Rivers are currently working on the outer wall of the breakwater. A third of the breakwater has been filled with stone.

***E. Moraine Beach Pathway project***

Director Smith reported that the demolition of the path and stabilization for the toe of the ravine and trail grading are complete. Boardwalk sections that have been constructed off-site are being delivered. The project should be complete and the pathway available for use in late December.

Lastly, our Projects and Planning Supervisor is working with the Highland Park Art Center to beautify the concrete structures at the bottom of the ravine owned by the North Shore Water Reclamation District.

***F. Districtwide Asphalt projects***

Director Smith shared images of the renovations to the Heller Nature Center parking lot and the paved paths at Sunset Valley Golf Club.

**REVIEW OF VOUCHERS**

Commissioner Bernstein reported that he reviewed the vouchers, he had no concerns.

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

None.

**ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made by Commissioner Kaplan and seconded by Commissioner Bernstein and approved by a unanimous vote. The Board Meeting adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Roxanne Hejnowski*

Roxanne Hejnowski, Assistant Secretary