

**MINUTES OF A THE FACILITY AND RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING
OF THE PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK
HELD ON APRIL 10, 2024, 5:03 PM.**

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

Absent: None

Also, Present: Executive Director Romes; Deputy Director Carr; Director Smith, Director Voss, Director Baird, Director Peters, Director Gogola, Assistant Director Reyes, Assistant Director Acevedo; Manager Ochs, Manager Nichols, Manager Schwartz, Manager Kutscheid, Coordinator Hejnowski

Guest Speaker: Eric Risinger, Managing Partner of Operations and Business Development, Holabird and Root; Barb Dickson, Associate, Holabird and Root; Rusty Walker, Design Principal Holabird and Root

Additions to the Agenda

Executive Director Romes recognized Mike Evans, the District’s Landscape Architect, for his 40 years of service.

Open to the Public to Address the Board

Irene Minkov

744 Marion Ave, Highland Park

The community is very upset and disappointed that ceramics will no longer be housed at the Park District of Highland Park. This is one of the few adult programs. We need art in our lives, not just sports. Art brings happiness and love into our lives. Let’s not let it go. Additionally, we have very few activities for adults, we would like to see more offered.

Wendy Griffiths

1024 Marion Ave, Highland Park

The new building plans do not include a space for ceramics. Asked not to discuss with the community until plans are finalized. Frustrated, feels their voice is being taken away. Be very careful not to lose one of the art programs, practically, one for adult members. The new community center has multi-use spaces; however, she feels ceramics offers multiUsed. It is being sidelined. She is worried the program will be cut entirely if relocated. She does not want to see the program destroyed.

Nikki Colbalt

320 Cedar Ave, Highland Park

Born and raised in Highland Park. Started ceramics two years ago, stressed how special the program and participants are. She does not understand why ceramics are being cut. If it is a profit

per square foot decision, she would like to see the numbers. If it is a multipurpose space/use decision, she would like a report comparing West Ridge Center programming utilization hours. She would like to be in discussions regarding the new community center. She is happy to fundraise. Would like to understand options for keeping the program.

Julie Malen

674 Pleasant Ave, Highland Park

The arts are so important. She echoed everything that has been shared. She would like to be involved in the planning for the new community center and does not want to see the program go away.

Tina Kelly

435 Clavey Lane, Highland Park

She supports everything that has been shared. Art is therapy. Not only is it therapy in and of itself and therefore it is a multipurpose program. It is a hallmark for this community. Let this be the cornerstone of building an arts program. The art center of HP does not have space. The ceramics program and available studio hours to participants makes this program a hallmark and community jewel. The hall stead and frequency of the firings is unsurpassed. People come from Chicago and Evanston to participate in the ceramics program. She would hate to see Highland Park lose this jewel. She would like staff to build on the program, even if grant funding is required to maintain the program.

Proposed Renaming of the Recreation Center of Highland Park

Manager DiTomasso reported that the purpose for renaming the Recreation Center of Highland Park is to better represent the activities at the facility, to connect with its current users, as well as attract a more inclusive environment including younger families and residents who are new to Highland Park. The renaming was proposed since the building has been dealing with an identity crisis being on a shared site: The Recreation Center of Highland Park, the Highland Park Senior Center, and the Preserve of Highland Park. The proposed name will better promote the brand and all the amenities and programs the facility has to offer.

Director Gogola reminded the Committee that the Park District of Highland Park has several sub brands, some examples include Heller Nature Center, Sunset Valley Golf Club and Deer Creek Racquet Club. Director Gogola reviewed the creative briefings to develop the new proposed name for the Recreation Center of Highland Park. Creative briefs include the image the District wants to convey, promote our competitive advantage, connect with our target market, recommended preferred styles, symbols, colors, and imagery.

The proposed name is "Park Fitness." Park reminds users it is owned by the Park District, it is located next to a park "The Preserve of Highland Park," the property is on Park Avenue, and Park connotes open, active, welcoming, caring, and healthy. Fitness is the condition of being physically fit and healthy. Fitness contributes to emotional, mental, and physical wellbeing, and fitness is a common term used by similar competitors. Park Fitness encompasses what we do, personal

training, strength training, group exercise, open gym, pickleball, learn-to-swim, lap swim, basketball, yoga, Pilates reformer training.

Director Gogola shared mockups of what signage could look like to promote Park Fitness, The Preserve, and the Senior Center.

At the August 24, 2024 Regular Meeting of the Park Board of Commissioners staff will request the Park Board of Commissioners approve letting the proposed name sit for 60 days before being formally adopted at a Regular Meeting of the Park Board.

Commissioner Bernstein requested staff follow up with other communities with similar multi-purpose facilities to get a better understanding of names in relation to a fitness facility that also houses athletic programs.

Commissioner Ruttenberg feels the Park District identity may be lost with the proposed rename since it excludes the Park District of Highland Park and asked how we can incorporate our Park District brand into promotional materials.

New Community Center at West Ridge Park

Manager Schwartz reported that Holabird and Root are here this evening to review the updated schematic designs for a new facility at West Ridge Park, replacing the existing West Ridge Center. The updated schematic design includes two key elements: the development of the site master plan and how the new building correlates to the site.

Mr. Risinger reviewed the updated schematic layout for the site identifying new elements and existing amenities that will remain in the first phase of this project. The north parking lot and access point will remain, and the existing playground will remain. The walking path will remain and receive enhancements. The ballfields will be relocated since the new community center will sit adjacent to the south parking lot. The proposed location for the new facility allows Holabird and Root to leverage the existing utility lines. A field for baseball, softball or tee-ball field may be constructed where the old community center existed on the site. Safety Village will relocate as well.

Mr. Walker reviewed the updated schematic layout for the new facility, noting that the design focuses on three areas; Administrative offices and meeting spaces are located on the north side of the building, the gymnastics studio, dance studio, and offices for recreation professionals are central focal point, and the cultural enrichment spaces are located on the southside of the building. The new building features a lobby which connects the park to the parking lot. He reviewed building access points addressing safety and security and highlighting access points from the ballfields.

Commissioner Ruttenberg requested a print copy of the building floor plan.

Commissioner Ruttenberg requested the drop zone near youth enrichment programs.

Commissioner Ruttenberg would like restrooms near an access point from the ballfields and playground.

Commissioner Ruttenberg would like to know if there is any room in the proposed plan for a ceramic studio.

Executive Director Romes reported that the proposed plan does not have a dedicated space for ceramics. Research and data were gathered including a market analysis and development of a draft pro-forma to make this recommendation. Additionally, the current building, West Ridge Center, is 44,000 square feet. Due to cost restraints, square footage has been reduced for the new facility to 23,000 – 25,000 so difficult decisions needed to be made regarding programming and office space. The focus has been on flexible, multi-use spaces. Ceramics needs a dedicated space due to the equipment.

Commissioner Ruttenberg would like to know if the multi-use spaces are large enough to allow for two dance studios to run simultaneously.

Commissioner Bernstein requested the working group work with Architects Holabird and Root and W.B. Olsen to evaluate if ceramics could remain in the new facility.

Commissioner Bernstein would like Architects Holabird and Root to follow up with the working group to define progression.

President Grossberg and Vice President Freeman would like to table the monetary discussion to another meeting.

The Facility and Recreation Committee does not feel comfortable showing the updated schematic designs to the community until further refinements are made. The working group will meet next week.

Athletic Trends and Participation

Will be presented at a future meeting.

Other Business

None.

Adjournment

A motion was made by Commissioner Ruttenberg and seconded by President Grossberg approved by a unanimous vote. The Board Meeting adjourned at 6:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Roxanne Hejnowski

Facility and Recreation Committee Meeting Minutes
April 10, 2024

Roxanne Hejnowski, Assistant Secretary