



Call to Order:

President Sarah Michehl called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

Roll Call:

Commissioners Present: Jason Heisler, Michael Jacobson, Karen Johnson, Sarah Michehl, , Linda Matthias

Commissioners Absent: Cathy Cagle, Eric Anderson

Legal Counsel: Scott Puma, Ancel, Glink, Diamond, Bush, DiCianni and Krafthefer, P.C.

Staff: Jason Herbster, Executive Director, Erik Jakubowski, Superintendent of Park Services, Amy Olson Manager of Park Planning and Development, Tina Becke, Superintendent of Business Services, Kurt Reckamp, Superintendent of Recreation Programs and Facility Services, Claire Naughton, Manager of Facility Services, John O'Hara, Park Police Officer, Anne Sandor, Recording Secretary

Pledge of Allegiance: The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Citizens: John Pletz, Resident

Approval of Agenda

Commissioner Jacobson moved to approve the agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Johnson. All were in favor.

Matters from the Public:

Dianne Miller, Resident, expressed that she was not in favor of the Park District keeping the Park Police Department. She noted that since Chief Longo was hired, she no longer sees the Park Police patrolling Lippold Park. She added that it took Chief Longo three weeks to address a situation with a soccer coach setting up his own equipment and running practices at Lippold Park and the he did not address a landscaper that was dumping debris in the wetlands. Mrs. Miller asked the Board to fix the parks first before building a new facility. Mrs. Miller submitted a copy of her comments; these comments will be included in the correspondence section of the February 15, 2024 Regular Board Meeting packet.

Bob Miller, Resident, stated that he was not in favor of keeping the Park Police force. He noted comments made at the last board meeting regarding ride-a-long with the Park Police, the Park Police equipment and duties of the Park Police. He suggested that the Board ask the community if they know that the Park District had it's own Police Department and if they were all right with paying additional taxes to finance a Park Police force. Mr. Miller said that he did not feel that the Park District was keeping up with the staffing, maintenance and the upkeep of our existing parks. Mr. Miller submitted a copy of his comments; these comments will be included in the correspondence section of the February 15, 2024 Regular Board Meeting packet.

Discussion Items

A. Park Police Review Discussion

Executive Director Herbster noted that staff created three scenarios of a budget without a Park Police force. The first scenario was created with two patrol shifts per day, the second scenario with one shift per day and the third scenario with 1 shift year round and a second shift for four months of the year. Bank courier service was included in each model.

Executive Director Herbster noted that all models included a bank courier service and the special event hours are approximate, as the security level will need to be determined for each event. The costs for municipal police may be needed were not included in these models.

Commissioner Jacobson asked if a security agent is able to enforce Park District ordinances. Attorney Puma stated that the security agent can enforce ordinance but cannot write citations. The City of Crystal Lake would need to be contacted if a citation is needed. Commissioner Michehl reported that Commissioner Cagle stated that she is not in favor of disbanding the Park Police force.

Commissioner Michehl asked the Board for feedback of their thoughts with regard to the models presented with the Park Police.

Commissioner Jacobson noted that once the Park Police force is eliminated the District will not be able to get it back. There may not be a cost savings if the District eliminated the Park Police. If the public has complaints with the Park Police they can contact the Board or the Park District staff to address their concerns.

Commissioner Michehl noted she was not in favor of dissolving the Park Police and stated that the advantage of having staff is that they are intimately familiar with our properties and the downside being not knowing the costs of hiring an outside firm.

Commissioner Johnson noted that she did not realize all of the work that is done by the Park Police. She expressed concern that a contractor would not know how to cover the District's parks and facilities, and that she was in favor how the Park District is currently operating with the Park Police.

Commissioner Matthias noted that she had taken a ride-a-long with Chief Longo. She said she had an amazing tour through Sterne's Woods. She was impressed with his knowledge and the duties that are performed. She noted that she is a high school teacher and appreciates that the Park Police lock the restrooms at night. She stated that she does want to be fiscally responsible but you can't put a price tag on prevention. She stated that she appreciates the District having its own Police force.

Commissioner Heisler noted that he would like more information to make a decision and felt that going to referendum to ask the residents whether or not to disband the Park Police force will solve the issue.

Commissioner Michehl stated that staff has taken a long time to present all the information asked for by the Park Board. She suggested setting a goal to market and collect feedback on Park Police operations and to educate the community on the role of the Park Police to show how the how tax dollars are spent.

Commissioner Jacobson noted that Commissioner Anderson wanted to be on record stating that he is favor of not having the Park District Police force and that he thought there was not enough

support to absolve the Park Police with the current Board and that it would not make sense to continue discussion. Commissioner Heisler ask how long the marketing would last. Michehl stated it would never end. Heisler stated that he wanted to be sure that the Board is making the right decision for the people that the Board represents. Johnson noted that this police budget is a small portion of the budget, and the Board makes decisions on many projects without asking for public input.

Commissioner Michehl asked if the Board wanted to wait for the entire Board to be present to make a final decision. The Board agreed. Executive Director Herbster asked if a motion to disband the Park Police should be placed on the Regular Park Board meeting in February. The Board agreed.

Herbster added that staff addresses any complaints received in regard to the Park Police and the Park Police only responds to ambulance calls on park property.

B. Barlina Barn Update

Executive Director Herbster reported that staff did meet with members of the Historic Commission and toured the barn. Amy Olson added that the Historic Commission members had the same ideas as staff with regard to restoration. She said that she has reached out to local vendors to harvest or recycle the wood and she had received no interest. She did want to salvage some of the wood for future exhibits to provide some history of the Barn. It was a consensus of the Board to move forward with the demolition of the barn.

Commissioner Heisler asked if the Hill Farm renderings that were presented at the community meeting be made available. Olson stated that the meeting was for community input and the renderings were only some ideas. She noted there are many projects ahead of the plans for Barlina and she will be developing a site master plan.

C. Park Naming Policy / Haligus Park Name

Executive Director Herbster noted the Board asked for park and facility naming policy. He presented a draft policy modeled after the City of Whitewater and asked for input.

Executive Director Herbster will revise the policy to remove Item D. under section V. A notice naming a park or facility will be published in the Northwest Herald, posted on the Park District Website and social media outlets to offer residents a chance to provide public comment. The Board agreed to place the policy on the Consent Agenda for Board approval at the Regular Park Board Meeting in February.

Other:

Executive Director Herbster noted that Commissioner Cagle requested the Park District offer complimentary beach days to help people that cannot afford to pay the beach admission and suggested free admission on the concert days.

Superintendent Reckamp noted that it is hard for the young staff to remember to charge different admissions fees and is concerned with the beach becoming overrun with people. Currently, the beach is free for resident seniors and children under 3 years old, and after 5pm the admission fee is free for residents and ½ price for non-residents, The Monarchs and Music program is free for residents and park-only users are free, every day. Last year, approximately \$20,000 was received for beach admission. Executive Director Herbster asked Superintendent Reckamp to provide a list of concerns and programs that currently have no beach admission.

Commissioner Jacobson suggested offering working with the high school counselors and consider offering a coupon or complimentary card for students. Commissioner Johnson suggested offering gift cards or membership passes. She agreed with Jacobson as the schools have a better handle on the family needs.

Herbster noted that staff will also look in to the scholarship program and look to offer free programming to students when their programs meet the minimum registration. The Park District can develop relationships with School Guidance Counselors and work with them to offer programs to the underprivileged students. Superintendent Reckamp noted that he will reach out to the School District Guidance Counselors and will provide the board with additional information regarding the current free beach day offerings at a future Park Board meeting.

Executive Director Herbster noted that the Committee of the Whole meeting on March 7, 2024, will be a Budget Workshop meeting. The Budget Binders will be delivered to the Park Board on February 22, 2024.

Superintendent Becke distributed a budget information sheet to use as a tool in understanding the different headings on the budget reports.

Executive Director Herbster reported that the Crystal Lake Brewery is considering developing a new label using a picture of the Main Beach as the background and asked if the Park District had any objections. The Board had no objection to the Brewery developing a label with a picture of Main Beach.

Manager Amy Olson reported that the IDNR has approved the Haligus Park project. She distributed the design for the playground.

Manager Olson announced that the Park District will be receiving a \$329,000 OSLAD grant for the Della Park project. The adjacent creek is privately owned and the District is unable to provide a bridge for the neighborhood that was requested at the community meeting. The Board thanked Olson for her work done on the grant application.

Superintendent Reckamp reported that the Snowbird Tournament will be a regular softball tournament and the Chili Open has been cancelled due no ice on the lake.

Commissioner Michehl adjourned the meeting at 7:49 PM.

Approve: _____ Attest: _____
President Secretary