

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING  
OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
OF THE PARK DISTRICT OF LA GRANGE, ILLINOIS  
536 EAST AVENUE, LA GRANGE, ILLINOIS**

**JULY 13, 2020**

**Vice-President O'Brien called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Commissioners Jacobs, Collins, O'Brien, Opyd  
Commissioner Vear present telephonically

ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Executive Director Dean Bissias, Superintendent of  
Finance Leynette Kuniej, Superintendent of Facilities  
Chris Finn, Superintendent of Recreation Kevin Miller,  
Superintendent of La Grange Fitness Jenny Bechtold,  
Recording Secretary Linda Muth

OTHERS PRESENT: Attorney Derke Price, Brad Belcaster\*

Vice President O'Brien welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked for any announcements or changes to the agenda.

Commissioner Opyd motioned for the Board to permit President Vear to participate remotely via telephone. Commissioner Collins seconded the motion which passed unanimously by Roll Call Vote as follows:

AYES: Commissioners O'Brien, Opyd, Collins, Jacobs

NAYES: None

ABSENT: President Vear

**Communications, Presentations & Declarations**

*Public Comments/Participation (Board Manual Section #152)*

None

**Consent Agenda**

Commissioner Jacobs asked that the minutes from the June 8, 2020 board meeting be amended as follows:

Page 7 Discussion and/or Approval on Applying for an OSLAD Grant, the last sentence should clarify her statement that she would like to acquire public input by adding *before the design is decided upon*.

Page 8 paragraph 2, the 99% of rental surveys referred to by Supt. of Facilities Finn should be clarified as an estimated figure.

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Commissioner Opyd motioned to approve Item 3.1 Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of June 8, 2020 as amended; Item 3.2 Approval of the Financial Reports dated May 31, 2020; Item 3.3 Approval of the Consolidated Vouchers for June dated June 8, 2020. Commissioner Jacobs seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by Roll Call Vote as follows:

AYES: Commissioners Opyd, Jacobs, Collins, O'Brien, Vear  
NAYES: None  
ABSENT: None

### **Staff Reports**

#### **Director's Report**

- Director Bissias stated that based on all federal and state COVID-19 regulations, everything is open except the indoor playground.
- Dean reported that based on the data, he unfortunately can make few recommendations to the Board for approving MBO and capital budget projects. Little revenue is coming in, fitness billing is only at 50%, and there is no real cash flow. We should rectify any emergency situations which may arise, such as roof or HVAC problems, but will be unable to fund most items. With 3.1 million in capital, by the time we finish with acquiring the property we will have approximately \$600,000 for two years. He estimates it will take 2-3 years to recover from the effects of COVID-19 and we are now tapping into reserve funds, but it is a decision for the Board to make. Further discussion will take place under Item 7.0 with Supt. of Finance Kuniej's working financial document.
- He stated that he has obtained two quotes for the District's Open Space Master Plan which are for budget purposes only. If the Board decides to proceed they will need to procure RPF's and conduct interviews.

### **Staff Comments**

#### **Superintendent of Recreation Kevin Miller**

- Superintendent Miller stated that summer day camps started on June 22<sup>nd</sup> and are going very well. Camp Mighty Munchkins for 4-6 year olds and Camp Quest Juniors for 7-9 year olds are running close to the max each week, and Camp Quest Seniors is breaking even. The children and staff have adjusted well to the COVID safety guidelines.
- Kevin stated that the Recreation Dept. is editing the fall brochure and working on in-person classes. Martial arts has resumed, fitness programs will begin soon and there are potential basketball camps.
- He reported that 43 people attended the outdoor movie at Sedgwick Park on Friday.
- He is conducting first round interviews for the marketing position this week, second rounds next week, and hopes to hire someone by mid-August.

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Commissioner Opyd asked about any changes to the fall brochure or program capacities due to COVID. Kevin explained that classes would be capped at 10-15 participants. We will be unable to offer gymnastics this fall because we have no access to Lyons Township High School facilities. Based on public input received, we may lose a few more programs due to health guidelines, but we will try to pivot some to virtual formats. Many youth programs already have a max enrollment in line with guidelines, however, a big concern will be whether clearance is given for basketball this fall. Yoga will take a hit because we previously had classes of 25. The fall brochure will be offered online to simplify editing for the many changes anticipated.

Commissioner Jacobs inquired about the success of our virtual programs and whether the price point was sustainable, and the potential for outdoor programs. Kevin stated that the virtual fitness programs are popular with our older demographic and we charged a premium fee the past six weeks because we had to pay Zoom, negotiate a rate with instructors, and can no longer subsidize a program with low enrollment with another of high enrollment, as we did with in-person programming. Hybrid classes have a better chance at running, and our older demographic has indicated resistance to outdoor programs in the summer heat.

### **Superintendent of La Grange Fitness Jenny Bechtold**

- Superintendent Bechtold reported that the fitness center reopened on June 26<sup>th</sup>, which was the first day allowed by the State guidelines. The first week was a soft opening with reduced hours which allowed her to be on site to train staff on sanitation procedures. Attendance has been at 20%-30%, Mondays are the busiest day, and evenings after 6pm are the slowest.
- Jenny stated that the first indoor group fitness class is tonight with 3 patrons enrolled for spin. She is rolling out group fitness classes slowly to make sure the sanitation process is doable and that people feel safe, and must also coordinate use of the larger rooms with the Recreation Dept.
- Fitness center billing was run today at just under \$23,000, though she anticipates losing some revenue to refunds for cancellations.
- The fitness center currently has 2,548 members with 29 new memberships and 16 student passes added in July. The 30-90 day passes have been eliminated to focus on members.

Commissioner Jacobs stated she has heard positive comments on the outdoor classes and asked if they will continue. Jenny responded that three weeks of outdoor classes were offered but that there were difficulties with staffing issues and the heat with no option to move indoors, and the classes made very little revenue. She does not anticipate continuing them for now, as her focus is on the fitness center, which offers the biggest bang for the buck.

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Commissioner Jacobs reported the she has heard feedback that our online registration system is difficult to use. Supt. of Recreation Miller stated that the casual user may not understand the process of setting up online access and agreed it can be difficult. Jenny explained that we have been lenient with registration policies during this time to make the process easier, but patrons often wait until the last minute to register. The system also works better on a computer than a phone.

### **Superintendent of Facilities Chris Finn**

- Superintendent Finn stated that the recreation center front desk extended its hours beginning in July to Monday through Friday 9am-5pm and Saturday 9am-1pm, which required bring back several staff members.
- Chris reported that three returning groups began gym rentals last week for basketball, and our first indoor party rental is this weekend in Room 105/106. The indoor playground and fun jump are still prohibited in Phase 4, so we are offering a small discount on gymnasium rentals to offer parties additional space for activities.
- He has been working closely with our user groups and their field use now that groups of 50 people are allowed. LTSC, Celtics and AYSO have all begun outdoor soccer. Babe Ruth has resumed practices and games, and Little League is holding practices with games to begin in August. He has met with the soccer clubs as a group and they are working well together. He'd like to invite Little League to participate in these field use group meetings next year.
- Chris reported that the handball group has paid for and installed new LED lights at the handball court at Gordon Park.
- Staff from the LeaderShop have organized a group of approximately 25-30 kids and adults to volunteer in our parks. They will go to Rotary Park and the Community Center park on Tuesdays in July to perform clean-up and do planting. The Park District has provided some supplies and they also received some donations for this effort.
- July and August are typically slow for rentals and he anticipates they could pick up in September.

### **Superintendent of Finance Leynette Kuniej**

- Superintendent Kuniej stated she has been reinstating staff as they come back to work.
- Leynette has been working with Tyler on the software upgrade and a parallel payroll process will take place in two weeks.
- She has been busy with the audit report and the related management letters and tables. It should be ready for Board approval at the August meeting.

Commissioner Jacobs commented that our average of 60% of revenue generated from services is down to 46%, and asked what the norm is for park

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districts nationally. Leynette responded that it depends on the park district. Our philosophy has been to generate program revenue, while other districts rely heavily on taxes. The auditors will provide a comparison of our district to others in our area.

### **Attorney Report**

None

### **Treasurer Report**

None

### **Action Items**

#### *Discussion and Possible Approval of 2020-2021 Capital Budget*

- Director Dean Bissias explained that our current finances don't support the budget. The treasurer report shows a balance of 6 million dollars in cash but 1 million is needed for the fall bond payments and 3.1 million is the capital reserve fund. Based on operational costs and cash flow, without revenue we will be down to \$50,000-\$60,000 by December, though we hope to have more revenue coming in by then.
- Supt. of Finance Leynette Kuniej stated that normally at the end of the fiscal year we transfer money to the capital fund, but we did not do that this year because we issued so many refunds. We will wait a couple of months to see if the reserves are needed for operations. Normally about \$80,000 in rollover bonds and excessive fund balances goes to capital. Leynette provided the Board with a detailed capital plan for FYE 2017-2027.
- Dean stated that only limited projects can be funded. These include a maintenance area furnace at \$2,900 and maintenance area hanging heater for \$5,000; accounting software at \$30,000; ComEd grant at \$27,000; furnace at the Community Center for \$8,000; master plan at a max of \$135,000, HVAC units as needed, soccer field restoration, and the 2.6 million for property development. The capital budget figure of \$3,864,000 is short \$118,000. Due to the current situation his recommendation is that the Board approve the budget knowing that expenditures will be monitored closely and it will be revisited in December when we know where we stand.
- Commissioner Opyd commented that this makes sense and asked if there are any health and safety issues that need to be addressed. Director Bissias assured him that any emergencies could be handled and Leynette added that we are being conservative with the funds we have available.

After Board discussion Commissioner Collins motioned for approval of the 2020-2021 Capital Budget to include a review of the budget in December. Commissioner Collins seconded the motion which passed unanimously by Roll Call Vote as follows:

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AYES: Commissioners Collins, O'Brien, Opyd, Jacobs, Vear  
NAYES: None  
ABSENT: None

### **Board Business**

#### **Old Business**

##### *Discussion on Future Plans/Ideas to Update PDLG Open Space Master Plan*

Director Bissias stated that per discussion at last month's meeting he obtained two quotes for the options of updating or completely redoing the PDLG master plan. The Board will decide if and how to proceed with obtaining RFP's, interviewing, and planning for surveys/meetings.

Commissioner Jacobs stated that this item has been on the MBO list since 2018 and it is apparent as we consider grant applications that an updated plan is vital. Our plan is outdated and it is a good time to move forward, with a goal of making this a 6-month process. Dean explained that the OSLAD Grant and Land and Water Conservation Grant have been tabled for this year.

Commissioner Opyd expressed that regardless of grants and funding, he would like to take the next step. It is the Board's objective to work with staff and the community to plan a strategic vision and he would like a timeframe established.

Commissioner Collins stated that Director Bissias clarified that if we go down this path, it is with the knowledge that this year's grants are on hold. Commissioner Collins understands this is good for the public, and asked how the expense of taking action squares with the budget concerns. President Vear inquired if there were any options to structure the payments.

Director Bissias explained that we are in the red and the cost could range from \$50,000 to update the plan to \$150,000 to redo the plan, and we would have to tap into our reserves. He believes the plan needs to be redone rather than updated, but that we could save some money by excluding the financials since Supt. of Finance Kuniej developed a financial update a couple of years ago. He stated that normally fees are paid monthly as work proceeds, but that we could request a different payment schedule, possibly spanning two fiscal years. He was advised that COVID concerns be addressed separately in any surveys so that it could easily be eliminated from the plan post COVID.

Commissioner Opyd stated that he supports the Board beginning the RFP process, which would not incur any costs, and further work could be put on hold, if necessary, when the budget is reviewed in December.

After Board discussion Commissioner Jacobs motioned that the Board give consensus to move forward with obtaining RFP's for the PDLG master plan. Commissioner Opyd seconded the motion which passed unanimously by Roll

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Call Vote as follows:

AYES: Commissioners Jacobs, Opyd, O'Brien, Collins, Vear  
NAYES: None  
ABSENT: None

### **New Business**

*Discussion, Nomination and Approval of Board President, Vice President, 2nd Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer*

#### *Board President*

Commissioner Collins nominated Commissioner Vear, Commissioner Opyd seconded the motion and Commissioner Vear accepted the nomination. Commissioner Opyd nominated Commissioner Jacobs, Commissioner Jacobs declined the nomination.

Commissioner Vear was elected unanimously to the position of President by Roll Call Vote as follows:

AYES: Commissioners O'Brien, Collins, Jacobs, Opyd, Vear  
NAYES: None  
ABSENT: None

#### *Board Vice President*

Commissioner Collins nominated Commissioner O'Brien, Commissioner O'Brien seconded the motion and Commissioner O'Brien accepted the nomination.

Commissioner O'Brien was elected unanimously to the position of Vice President by Roll Call Vote as follows:

AYES: Commissioners Opyd, Jacobs, Collins, O'Brien, Vear  
NAYES: None  
ABSENT: None

#### *Board 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President*

Commissioner O'Brien nominated Commissioner Collins, Commissioner Opyd seconded the motion and Commissioner Collins accepted the nomination.

Commissioner Collins was elected unanimously to the position of Vice President by Roll Call Vote as follows:

AYES: Commissioners O'Brien, Opyd, Jacobs, Collins, Vear  
NAYES: None  
ABSENT: None

#### *Board Secretary*

Commissioner O'Brien nominated Executive Director Bissias, Commissioner Collins seconded the motion and Executive Director Bissias accepted the nomination.

Director Bissias was elected unanimously to the position of Secretary by Roll Call Vote as follows:

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AYES: Commissioners O'Brien, Collins, Vear, Jacobs, Opyd  
NAYES: None  
ABSENT: None

### *Treasurer*

Commissioner O'Brien nominated Rob Metzger, Commissioner Collins seconded the motion. Rob Metzger was not in attendance but indicated in advance to Director Bissias that he would accept the nomination. Rob Metzger was elected unanimously to the position of Treasurer by Roll Call Vote as follows:

AYES: Commissioners O'Brien, Collins, Jacobs, Opyd, Vear  
NAYES: None  
ABSENT: None

## **Committee Reports**

### *Administration Committee*

None

### *Parks and Open Lands*

Director Bissias apologized that Commissioner Jacobs' written summary regarding the park walk-throughs was not included in the board packet. Copies were passed out at the meeting and will be included with the minutes. Commissioner Jacobs reported that walk-throughs were done of the parks at Sedgwick, Rotary and the Community Center in response to public sentiments for the District to do more at these locations. President Vear, Commissioner Jacobs, Director Bissias, Supt. of Facilities Finn, Parks Foreman Galla and Supt. of Fitness Bechtold participated in the walk-throughs. Commissioner Jacobs said that the takeaway is that it opened our eyes on what we hear from the public on the need for increased maintenance and financing for these parks. She encouraged everyone to read her report which suggests accounting practices that track spending at each park and provides transparency, and would like regular walk-throughs each year per our strategic plan. Commissioner O'Brien thanked Commissioner Jacobs for her time on this, and President Vear agreed that annual walk-throughs are a good idea.

### *Finance & Capital Project Committee*

None

### *User Group Committee*

Commissioner O'Brien stated that he and Supt. of Facilities Chris Finn have spent several weeks working with our regular groups to accommodate their field use, which is challenging during this time like no other. He complimented Chris on a great job.



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### *Marketing/ Social Media Committee*

Commissioner Opyd commented that with Supt. of Recreation Miller busy with hiring, and new Assistant Supt. of Recreation Chapman juggling two roles, they will wait until mid-August for the new marketing person to be hired and re-engage the committee at that time.

### **Public Comments (Board Manual Section #152)**

None

### **Board Comments**

Commissioner Collins stated that during his time on the Board he has felt that the Park District focuses on the full District, not just on certain areas. It was tough to hear in emails that any of our citizens feel differently. We are a small village and the Park District is for everybody, and even though there is no public at the meeting tonight, he hopes they appreciate that the Board takes their concerns very seriously. Staff does too, and they set out to make sure all the parks are in good shape. With a limited budget park projects should be on rotation, and the next year or two will be even more challenging. Staff is doing the best they can and he hopes that the citizens of La Grange feel that the District is pulling for them.

Commissioner Opyd recommended that we follow up with data regarding park concerns, which can be hard to find. He stated that over the last two fiscal years the park location with the highest capital expenditures was the Community Center, with new roofing and a new playground at approximately \$170,000. The second highest was Sedgwick and the third was Gilbert. The track record shows the narrative that Commissioner Collins provided in his comments, and we are trying to do the best in the areas that need attention. Commissioner Opyd said it was great to see everyone at tonight's meeting in person. He is pleased to see our facilities opening and urged residents to practice safe guidelines so the community can remain safe. He commended staff on engaging the community by quickly offering virtual classes, and stated he walked through Gilbert Park and saw the day camp outside engaging safely.

\*Brad Belcaster arrived at the meeting at 8:10 P.M.

Commissioner Jacobs complimented Supt. of Recreation Miller on his great ideas, and was very glad to meet with everyone face to face.

Commissioner O'Brien echoed Commissioners Collins and Opyd. He also did not like seeing the emails that people felt some areas are neglected, and suggested that during COVID-19 there may be students looking for service projects that could involve our parks. He thanked Supt. of Facilities Finn for his work with our user groups; it is interesting for him to see this from the other side. He also thanked Commissioner Jacobs for her hard work and for serving as 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President over the last year.

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President Vear thanked Commissioner Jacobs for the parks walk-through, and commended the Board for their attention to the emails received and their response. He stated that the parks in all areas of La Grange need attention and that is what we want. He is sorry he couldn't attend the meeting in person. Director Bissias stated that the family interested in sponsoring the sign at Gordon Park has been in touch. Supt. of Facilities Finn is working with a company for drawings and figures. He hopes to have drawings later this week and the current estimate is \$2,000 per sign.

### **Executive Session**

At 8:22 P.M. Commissioner Opyd motioned the Board convene to Executive Session pursuant to Item 12.2 Acquisition of Real Property, 5 ILCS 120/2 (c)(5). Commissioner Jacobs seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by Roll Call Vote.

AYES: Commissioners O'Brien, Collins, Jacobs, Opyd, Vear  
NAYES: None  
ABSENT: None

At 8:45 P.M. the Board resumed the regular meeting.

### **Adjournment**

Commissioner Opyd moved for adjournment at 8:45 P.M. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Jacobs and passed unanimously by Voice Vote.

  
Constantine Bissias, Secretary  
*Approved 08/17/2020*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Robert Vear, President

## June 24, 2020 Summary Notes

### Walk through of Sedgwick, Rotary and Community Center Parks

Attendees: Board President Vear, Commissioner Jacobs, Director Bissias, Facilities Super. Finn, Parks Foreman Galla, Fitness Super. Bechtold

A small group of Park District staff and Pres. Vear met at the request of Comm. Jacobs for a walk through of three parks on June 24, from 3:00-5:20 pm. The request came to better understand and discuss comments from several members of the public regarding the need for more equitable care of the parks, requests from the Parks Committee over several months to improve/increase park maintenance and beautification, and also is in alignment with the Comprehensive Plan from 2011 to hold twice annual walks examining the parks

The following topics were discussed and items were viewed.

All parks:

Public comments of: a) Disrepair or lacking furnishings, benches, b) weeds, overgrown trees, shrubs, dirty out of date playground equipment, poor condition of basketball courts

1. What is the percentage of non-wage/salary PD expenditures spent on the parks (Jacobs' rough estimate based on budgets of the last few years is only 10%).
2. Well cared for/beautiful parks should be a basic expenditure tied to the property taxes that did not decrease due to COVID. Hiring two of the 4 summer interns was in process and would help assure regular maintenance occurs.
3. Jacobs suggested that accounting in the future could be more regarding parks expenditures if done on a per park basis and categorized rather than groups with facilities maintenance. This would more clearly demonstrate to the public how funds are spent in parks near their homes, and help the board see how the parks and in general are scheduled for improvement, upgrades, general care. This differs but expands upon the parks' expenditure information Dir. Bissias has been gathering. She offered as example a list of possible categories used by other PD budgets including:
  - pathways and sidewalks, roads
  - weed control
  - tree and shrub care, planting
  - Landscape planting, supplies
  - Park furnishings repair/replacement (benches, picnic tables, etc.)
  - Resurface and maintenance of courts
  - Maintenance of athletic fields
  - Mowing, lawn care
4. Several areas in need of improvement were viewed and discussed at Sedgwick and other two parks including:
  - weeds and overflow of lack of grass or around all ball fields
  - weeds in the playground and beds that require different approach but more frequency (non-chemical in play areas)

- divots, depressions, holes in crushed gravel path make it non-ADA compliant and hazardous to runners/walkers. Material is washed away with rainfall so needs more regular replenishment
- mature trees are important assets so consider mulching certain specimens to protect roots, and also mulching large exposed beds that are unsightly/messy.
- volleyball courts lack leveling and 5' sand perimeter standard (ex. at LaGrange Park)
- Babe Ruth and Little League contribute a lot to development and care of the fields and structures but not mowing nor ongoing maintenance of surrounding benches, fencing, landscaping, weed control. Because of their contribution we do not ask for user fees.
- We maintain soccer field areas for AYSO, but they do the striping and weekly set up, etc.
- Community Center and Rotary Parks had similar levels of need regarding more regular weeding, beautification plantings. Play equipment was power washed. Dir. Bissias suggested cleanliness a problem from lack of use due to COVID.
- Contracts are not generally used to assist in maintenance efforts such as crushed gravel path repair, mulching, weeding, landscape plantings, etc. Tree partial planting contract is used annually, and large tree pruning is contracted as needed. Otherwise all maintenance and upkeep are done in-house. Park Pride day is one day community helps.
- Special note is that basketball court at Community Center was resurfaced a few years ago, but problem occurred such that Super. Finn is inquiring with company.
- Approximately \$300,000 has been spent in recent years on community center building repairs and basketball court resurfacing.

Submitted by  
 K.A. Jacobs  
 Commissioner  
 Chair, Parks and Openlands Committee