

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

**JUNE 8, 2020**

**President Vear called the meeting to order at 7:08 P.M.**

PRESENT: Commissioners Vear, Jacobs, Collins\*, O'Brien, Opyd

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, Jennifer Brown, Katie Wiseheart, Kim Gebhart, Taikira Nix, Kenisha Lindsay, Mrs. Washington

\*Commissioner Collins joined the meeting at 7:16 P.M.

President Vear welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked for any announcements or changes to the agenda.

Commissioner O'Brien motioned for the Board to permit Commissioners Vear, Jacobs, Collins, O'Brien, and Opyd to participate remotely via Zoom. Commissioner Opyd seconded the motion which passed unanimously by Roll Call Vote as follows:

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

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Commissioner Collins

**Communications, Presentations & Declarations**

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

Jennifer Brown, 4420 Raymond Avenue, Brookfield stated that she was in attendance to discuss two of our parks which are near her home, Rotary Park and the Community Center park. She explained that, compared to our other parks, these two parks are lacking in upkeep and amenities, and the green space is not well cared for. She believes the parks would be utilized more if

## **REGULAR BOARD MEETING – JUNE 8, 2020**

they were more inviting and suggested a walking path, benches, improved landscaping, basketball court resurfacing, and updating of the permanent structures. Children cannot play in the grassy areas because the clippings are not removed after mowing. These parks deserve attention and should be improved so people can be proud of their neighborhood parks.

Director Bissias stated that our maintenance crew may not have completed flower planting and picnic table placement at the parks yet this season, and that due to current circumstances, the District does not have funds to improve any of the parks.

Supt. of Facilities Finn explained that grass clippings are not normally picked up at any of our parks due to the grass growing so quickly and the frequent mowing required.

Commissioner Opyd indicated that he walked through the parks this morning and agrees that the District needs to work on addressing the issues at these two parks.

President Vear stated that although we do not have any current projects planned for these parks, we are always looking at our facilities. The parks with heavy use normally include more amenities. He thanked Jennifer for bringing her concerns to the Board.

\*Commissioner Collins joined the meeting at 7:16 P.M.

Taikira Nix stated that she is a La Grange resident at 111 Hayes and has lived in front of Rotary Park for ten years. She has raised 5 kids there and they have to ride their bikes to Gordon Park instead of using Rotary Park near their home because the play structure is disgusting and needs updating, the park is filthy, and the green space needs improvement. Taikira suggested that the District get kids from La Grange involved in taking care of the community with an incentive of having them work part-time or volunteer doing park maintenance.

Commissioner Jacobs thanked Taikira for taking time to participate in the meeting. She stated that she is on the committee which focuses on the parks and that the District will reassess and address these issues in the upcoming 10-year plan. She agrees that those parks, and all parks, need to be kept in better shape. Hearing from residents is important and she encouraged Taikira to stay involved.

Commissioner Jacobs asked for clarification on maintenance staff responsibilities. Supt. of Facilities Finn explained that we do not have staff members available to focus only on parks. The crew consists of our foreman and 3 additional staff members who must maintain all our outdoor and indoor facilities.

## **REGULAR BOARD MEETING - JUNE 8, 2020**

Kenisha Lindsay of 316 E. Lincoln in La Grange stated that she agrees with Taikira Nix and having local youth involved with caring for the parks makes them accountable.

Commissioner Jacobs responded that typically we do hire from the community for summer park maintenance. Director Bissias added that our insurance requires that workers be at least 16 years old, and that due to current financial circumstances we cannot proceed with summer hiring until possibly Phase 4 of the Illinois reopening plan.

Katie Wiseheart, Program Director for the LeaderShop in La Grange, stated that they have young volunteers interested in helping to keep up the parks. Director Bissias recommended that Katie contact Supt. of Facilities Finn to discuss this.

Mrs. Washington attended virtually and agreed with Taikira Nix that getting kids involved with the parks encourages them to use their time in a positive way.

President Vear thanked all the public in attendance for their comments.

### **Consent Agenda**

Commissioner O'Brien motioned to approve Item 3.1 Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of May 11, 2020; 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 Collins seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by Roll Call Vote as follows:

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

### **Staff Reports**

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

- Director Bissias stated that all parks are open, and tennis courts and basketball courts have reopened for groups of 10 and under with Phase 3 of the Illinois reopening plan, however, playground equipment remains closed. Little League can hold practices on the fields for groups of 10 or less, but games are not yet permitted.
- Dean reported that the fitness center is now offering 1-on-1 training and outdoor fitness classes.
- He stated that the recreation dept. is offering virtual fitness classes and outdoor athletic programs begin next week.
- There has been a personnel change with the resignation of the Assistant Supt. of Recreation. Teresa Chapman has been promoted to fill the position and a new marketing person will be hired for Teresa's former position.

**Staff Comments**

**Superintendent of Recreation Kevin Miller**

- Superintendent Miller stated that Assistant Supt. of Recreation Diana Faught has resigned and Teresa Chapman will fill that role. Teresa's marketing position will be advertised for the next 3-4 weeks, with the interview process following for 4-5 weeks, and a mid-August start date for the new employee. He is updating the marketing job description.
- Kevin stated that he has been busy preparing for summer camp which begins on June 22<sup>nd</sup>. Training for camp counselors begins tomorrow via Zoom and it will include a lot of Covid-19 safety instruction.
- He reported that virtual specialty fitness is being offered, as well as several virtual early childhood programs. Outdoor athletics begin next week.

**Superintendent of Finance Leynette Kuniej**

- Superintendent Kuniej stated that the auditors are here for the annual audit which is moving along quickly.
- Leynette has been activating staff for camp.
- She has worked on data imports for the new Tyler Technology software and worked on bond refunding.
- She reported that she has contracts with Nania Energy Advisors for electric and gas service to present to the Board under the action items on the agenda.

**Superintendent of Facilities Chris Finn**

- Superintendent Finn stated that one part-time staff member has been rehired to work the recreation center front desk Monday through Friday, 9am-1pm. The desk is open to assist patrons with program registrations, rental reservations, and general inquiries. Plans are to extend our hours when we reach Phase 4.
- Chris reported that he has been working with Josh on maintenance in the recreation center and has had contractors in where needed.
- He has been working with Claudia on outdoor fields. User groups have begun practices including lacrosse, Little League and AYSO soccer at Sedgwick Park; Celtics soccer at Ideal School park and Countryside Park; and Lyons soccer at Gordon Park. All groups were required to provide a certificate of insurance and their protocols for Phase 3 compliance. He is working with Babe Ruth League on their protocols.
- Resurfacing of the Sedgwick tennis courts is complete, and the benches will be reinstalled this week. There are four tennis courts and two of them have also been lined for pickleball. Four pickleball courts fit on the two tennis courts and players need to bring their own nets. This project was the final capital project for FY 2019-2020.
- Chris stated he continues to work with renters and evaluate which rentals may proceed under Phase 4.

## **REGULAR BOARD MEETING – JUNE 8, 2020**

Commissioner Jacobs asked if the basketball courts at the Community Center will be resurfaced this year as she has had complaints regarding their quality. Chris answered that they were done just 5-6 years ago, but did not hold up as expected, possibly due to a paint or drainage issue. Commissioner Opyd stated that this should be discussed for inclusion in the strategic plan.

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

- Superintendent Bechtold was excited to report that 1-on-1 personal training has resumed 3 days a week and is offered from 9am-2pm. This schedule is working well, and 7 new clients have signed on.
- Jenny stated that outdoor fitness classes begin tomorrow with a max of 9 participants, and two of the three programs have 6 enrolled. DCEO safety guidelines will be followed.
- She is hopeful that the fitness center can reopen soon.

### **Attorney Report**

Attorney Derke Price discussed changes to the Open Meetings Act expected to be signed by the Governor. It preserves the rules applicable during the State disaster declaration but going forward we will need to provide a physical location for the public to speak at meetings, including meetings via Zoom. The space will have to allow for social distancing. If we have a physical quorum then the old rules would apply, but we need to consider whether to allow the public to comment virtually at these meetings. At the next meeting with a physical quorum the Board should pass an omnibus ordinance ratifying all acts taken remotely at previous virtual meetings. Attorney Price stated that Phase 4 would probably begin around June 26<sup>th</sup>. He advised that there are still contradictions in the rules for use of playgrounds for day camps and additional guidance is needed.

### **Treasurer Report**

None

### **Action Items**

*Discussion and/or Approval of Ordinance 20-01 the Combined Annual Budget and Appropriation Ordinance for the Park District of La Grange Fiscal Year 2020-2021*

- Director Bissias requested that the budget be approved as is, knowing that an internal budget will be monitored and adjusted as needed, due to the current situation. This will allow us to file the ordinance with the county as required.

After Board discussion Commissioner Opyd motioned for approval of Ordinance 20-01 the Combined Annual Budget and Appropriation Ordinance for the Park District of La Grange Fiscal Year 2020-2021. Commissioner Collins seconded the motion which passed unanimously by Roll Call Vote as follows:

## REGULAR BOARD MEETING – JUNE 8, 2020

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

### Action Items

#### *Discussion and/or Approval of a Three-Year Agreement with Nania for Electrical Service for the Park District (3-Year Contract)*

- Supt. Kuniej explained that our contract for electrical service expires in August and we normally renew for a 1-year period. She was impressed with Nania Energy Advisors and asked them to represent us. They submitted quotes from four suppliers and recommended a 3-year contract for the best cost savings. Our current rate is 0.07204 and the new rate would be 0.06736 for a 6% savings, and would give the budget stability. Contracts for more than one year require Board approval.

After Board discussion Commissioner O'Brien motioned for approval of a 3-Year Agreement with Nania for Electrical Service for the Park District at a rate not to exceed 0.06736. Commissioner Opyd seconded the motion which passed unanimously by Roll Call Vote as follows:

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

#### *Discussion and/or Approval of a Two-Year Agreement with Nania for Natural Gas Service for the Park District (2-Year Contract)*

- Supt. Kuniej explained that we have always used Nicor for natural gas at a fluctuating rate, which averaged 0.299 last year. After consulting with Nania it was decided to go out for bid for natural gas service. The industry is changing and uncertain, so locking in now could save us money if prices increase. Nania recommends the bid from Constellation Energy at a fixed rate of 0.315, which is a 5% increase over current Nicor rates, for an increase of approximately \$900 per year for the recreation center. Constellation Energy is reputable and we have used them for electric service in the past.

After Board discussion Commissioner O'Brien motioned for approval of a 2-Year Agreement with Nania for Natural Gas Service for the Park District at a rate not to exceed 0.315. Commissioner Jacobs seconded the motion which passed unanimously by Roll Call Vote as follows:

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

## REGULAR BOARD MEETING – JUNE 8, 2020

### *Discussion and/or Approval on Applying for an IDNR Tree Grant/Inventory Grant*

- Commissioner Jacobs explained that a matching grant for a minimum of \$3,000 and maximum of \$20,000 is being offered by IDNR in partnership with the Morton Arboretum, which encourages public lands to be managed in a more sustainable way while assessing risks to trees. The U.S. Forest Service is also involved. She has discussed this grant with Park Foreman Claudia Galla who agrees that it is a good opportunity. The grant would include a tree inventory, which we do not currently have, and a tree management plan. The District's match can be in cash or in-kind, so staff's time spent on the project can be included. The grant permits two years to complete the project and will allow us to focus on our parks and view them as a community resource in a formal way.

After Board discussion Commissioner Jacobs motioned for approval to apply for an IDNR/Morton Arboretum Grant in the amount of \$3,000-\$10,000 depending on our needs, at a not to exceed Park District match amount of \$5,000.

Commissioner Jacobs withdrew the original motion to substitute a new motion to authorize staff to apply for an IDNR/Morton Arboretum Grant in the amount of a maximum \$7,500 Park District match. Commissioner Opyd seconded the motion which passed by Roll Call Vote as follows:

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

### *Discussion and/or Approval on Applying for an OSLAD Grant*

- Commissioner Jacobs reported that OSLAD (Open Space Land Acquisition and Development) funds are available this year through IDNR. These grants allow park districts to acquire land to be used as open space or parks for a maximum \$750,000 match, or to develop existing parks for a maximum \$400,000 match. Gordon Park was developed with an OSLAD Grant. The deadline for applications has not been announced but will likely be in September. Commissioner Jacobs would like us to re-envision the Nicor parcel as more than space for parking for the recreation and fitness centers, to maximize funds with this grant and add additional green space and recreation elements. She stated that with limited time, we could hire a contractor to design the space and prepare and present the grant. She would also like to see a parking study done and acquire public input before the design is decided upon.

Director Bissias stated that it is the general operating budget that funds capital projects and that our capital funds are uncertain this year. There are also limitations to the grant regarding the percentage of concrete or asphalt allowed in the area. We cannot apply for the grant until we take ownership of the

## **REGULAR BOARD MEETING – JUNE 8, 2020**

property and have the required documents, which will be difficult with a September deadline. It would be best to consider an OSLAD Grant as the master plan is developed and look at multiple projects. The current plan for the property does include some green space and a retention pond area. Dean stated that the 155-160 parking spots planned are critical for our facility and staff agrees it is our number one issue.

Supt. of Facilities Finn stated that an estimated 99% of facility rental surveys include renter complaints about the lack of parking. He must block off 16-20 days each year when we cannot accept any rentals due to parking.

Supt. of La Grange Fitness Bechtold reported that we have lost fitness center members due to lack of parking and multiple complaints are received daily. Staff also has problems parking. We need to grow to generate revenue, which will allow us to pursue green space.

Commissioner Opyd encouraged the Board to plan for the long term and identify future improvements for the next 5-10 years in a master plan so that when opportunities arise, we are prepared. It is the Board's job to be strategic.

Commissioner Collins stated that after talking to staff and the public, he would disapprove of any revised plans that would reduce the number of parking spaces.

President Vear stated that the District needs the income we generate from facility rentals, which requires parking. He recommended waiting for the July meeting to revisit the topic based on the status of the property. No motions can be considered without ownership of the land. He stated that Commissioner Jacobs and her committee are welcome to explore the potential grant in the meantime. He would like to know if the grant could be used to develop the green space already planned for.

### **Board Business**

#### **Old Business**

None

#### **New Business**

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

President Vear stated that the master plan is up for renewal next year and that it is important for the Board to review the current plan in preparation. The cost will dictate how we proceed with this project.

Director Bissias stated that the plan is due to be updated but funds would be required and our capital for this year is uncertain. He estimates this project would take 3-6 months and recommends it be started toward the end of the year. Surveys and data collection will need to be included. The Board's vision for the plan will dictate the time frame. He will acquire and provide ballpark

## **REGULAR BOARD MEETING – JUNE 8, 2020**

numbers on the cost at the July board meeting.

Commissioner Opyd commented that the current plan is outdated and contains many items related to Gordon Park. If we begin now, we will not be rushed, and if it is completed in 3-6 months it would be ready for the 2021-2022 budget cycle. Commissioner Jacobs stressed that an updated master plan is needed for grant applications and she would like to fund it in the current fiscal year.

### *Update from Staff in Collecting User Group Data*

Supt. of Facilities Chris Finn stated that he has reached out to our 5 user groups to request demographic information on their players and has heard back from 4 of them. The majority of La Grange Little League and Celtics Soccer players are from La Grange. La Grange Babe Ruth League serves an older demographic, so they have a mix of players from La Grange and the surrounding towns in our neighborhood network area. The boundaries for Lyons Township Soccer Club are further out. Chris explained that he has made several requests but is still waiting for data from AYSO. He will compile and provide detailed data to the Board as soon as he has all the information.

Commissioner Jacobs asked if the user groups assist with upkeep of the fields they use.

Supt. Finn explained that AYSO provides the field goals and lines all the soccer fields, but the District maintains the fields. Little League and Babe Ruth are the priority users of the fields at Sedgwick Park. We do the mowing, but they do a lot of work on the fields and cover the cost, including edging the fields, adding ball mix, and hiring contractors. Babe Ruth paid to have new siding installed on the building there and Little League paid for an irrigation/sprinkler system. Major projects such as these are presented to the Park District for approval.

## **Committee Reports**

### *Administration Committee*

None

### *Parks and Open Lands*

Commissioner Jacobs stated that they met on May 31<sup>st</sup> and set goals for their group. They want to seek guidance and feedback from the community regarding park aesthetics, provide a balance of active and passive amenities at the parks, and develop a green infrastructure with existing and future park lands. She stressed the need for an updated strategic plan that includes examining the parks, and a walk through of all parks done at least yearly. One member of her group had to step back due to family commitments.

### *Finance & Capital Project Committee*

None

**REGULAR BOARD MEETING – JUNE 8, 2020**

*User Group Committee*

None

*Marketing/ Social Media Committee*

Commissioner Opyd congratulated Teresa Chapmen on her promotion to Assistant Supt. of Recreation. He would like us to include information posted on Facebook on our website as well, with details of the work we have been doing.

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

None

**Board Comments**

Commissioner Opyd thanked staff for the great job painting the backboards at the basketball courts. He stated that tonight's meeting was long, but it was a good meeting with good topics.

Commissioner Collins thanked Director Bissias and all the staff for their work during this crazy time.

Commissioner Jacobs complimented staff on the Covid-19 information on our website. She thanked staff for the upkeep of our parks and said she spoke to several women while at Waiola Park recently. They stressed how important the parks are at this time. She is proud to be part of the Park District which practices inclusion and provides safe parks for everyone in the community.

Commissioner O'Brien thanked staff and said the basketball courts and parks are great. He complimented Supt. of Facilities Finn on his handling of affiliate group issues.

President Vear stated that he hopes we can open additional facilities by the time of the next board meeting.

**Executive Session**

None

**Adjournment**

Commissioner Opyd moved for adjournment at 9:10 P.M. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Jacobs and passed unanimously by Voice Vote.



Constantine Bissias, Secretary

Approved 07/13/2020



Robert Vear, President