

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

**NOVEMBER 13, 2023**

**President Opyd called the meeting to order at 6:12 P.M.**

PRESENT: Commissioners Posey, Chvatal, Opyd

ABSENT: Commissioners Vear and Lacey

STAFF PRESENT: Executive Director Jenny Bechtold  
Director of Recreation Kevin Miller  
Recording Secretary Linda Muth

OTHERS PRESENT: Attorney Derke Price  
Jim Boo, Bob Poggensee, Harold Gibson, Rob Metzger  
Becky Lorentzen, Todd Vancleave, William Lanspeary

President Opyd welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked for any announcements or changes to the agenda. Director Bechtold reminded everyone that the finance reports are preliminary for the month because we are still working with Paycom to upload the general ledger files.

**Communications, Presentations & Declarations**

Becky Lorentzen from the Community Diversity Group stated that she was not able to attend the meeting last month and wanted to publicly thank the Park District for all their help and working with them on the art project. The mosaics at the community center are beautiful and it is the biggest project they have ever done. The sign will be ready on December 8<sup>th</sup>, and she will email Jenny to coordinate with the installers.

Bob Poggensee, 832 S. Stone, La Grange, stated that he took a pickleball course here in 2019 and it changed him. He inquired where we are going with pickleball courts. He plays in Western Springs in the summer with a community of players. He's heard us say that La Grange is a land-locked community but would like to know what options there are.

President Opyd thanked him for his comments. He stated that pickleball courts have come up often and it is his opinion that we need to find an opportunity when we do resurfacing to consolidate funds. Director Bechtold added that the last quote for resurfacing the tennis courts at Gilbert with detention was

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\$420,000. We want to put them in, and we are doing community planning for all our parks. There may be an opportunity at Sedgwick to convert space for pickleball. The Spring courts belong to the school district. If we add them at another park, we must include detention which makes it difficult due to the cost. Gilbert may not be the best location with its proximity to nearby homes.

Rob Metzger, 234 Leitch, La Grange, stated that he has been on the other side of the table and is also here in support of the pickleball community. He plays in Western Springs and in southwest Michigan, and they have a solution there. We have a couple of courts lined for pickleball and should line more. St. Joe has a system like baseball fields do with a lockbox for equipment that contains portable nets and balls, and they deputized pickleball players that set up round robin schedules. The thing that makes it great is that almost anyone can play, and it is a real community builder. We could get a lockbox with several nets, line the courts and set up round robin open play for different levels. The District could deputize players as we did for the ice rink pond posse and the people of the community could volunteer to be a part of the solution. The beauty of Sedgwick is that it is not next to homes and has good parking. This could be accomplished for less than \$2,000. The nets are cheap and when they need to be replaced the players can take up a collection to cover it. There may be a bit of cost for wind shears.

Jim Boo, 1327 Mason, La Grange, stated that there is a useless basketball court at Denning with a nice surface and back to back baskets that are not used which could be turned into a pickleball court.

### **Consent Agenda**

President Opyd asked for a motion to approve Item 3.1 Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of October 16, 2023; Item 3.2 Approval of the Financial Reports dated October 31, 2023; and Item 3.3 Approval of the Consolidated Vouchers for November dated November 13, 2023. The motion was so moved by Commissioner Posey, seconded by Commissioner Chvatal, and passed by Roll Call Vote as follows:

AYES: Commissioners Posey, Chvatal, Opyd  
NAYES: None  
ABSENT: Commissioners Vear and Lacey

### **Staff Reports**

#### **Executive Director Jenny Bechtold**

- Director Bechtold reported that we have not heard back from Countryside regarding the IGA.
- Jenny stated that we met with Mike Zahorik from the YMCA Club regarding the tree sale which will begin right after Thanksgiving. We provide a port-a-let at the park. They have provided us with a COI for the sale, which raised \$50,000 last year. We currently do not have an

agreement in place with them. If the Board would like a partnership agreement for liability purposes, we can investigate it.

Attorney Price counseled that we should have an agreement and stated that they are raising money for their cause and by doing this for them we would have to do it for everyone. The Board agreed with the recommendation of Attorney Price.

- Jenny reported that we are still working with Babe Ruth, but it is difficult to communicate with them and we have not been able to meet again.
- She stated that we met with the Village regarding Endless Summerfest to advise them that we are going in a different direction. She met with Cathy from LGBA who brought up a good point about holding a new 1-day event the same weekend and suggested a different weekend so we do not have the comparison factor which could bring negativity to what we are doing. She asked for the Board's opinion on changing the date for a new event.

President Opyd asked if we considered an Octoberfest. Director Miller stated that we are considering that option but would still like to hold a signature summer event. It was agreed that the original event weekend is a big vacation time for families, and the Board provided consensus to evaluate other dates and times for the new event.

- Jenny stated that during the Waiola Park planning meetings for community input we heard feedback that there was a lot of disorderly and lewd behavior in the parks. She contacted the police chief and requested reports for Gordon, Sedgwick, Gilbert, Waiola, Denning, and the Community Center. They ran a report for the last six months which indicated there was only one incident regarding a date night in June at Gordon Park. She asked if it was possible to receive these reports regularly, but the inquiry is difficult because when people call to report incidents, they are not reporting the address. There is a perception that there are challenges in the parks, but the data does not support that.
- She reported that we had a second meeting with Wight & Company for the planning process. They took the information from the CMP and feedback provided at the first meeting to start park planning. The potential referendum to keep the same tax rate when the bonds for this building roll off would provide 7 million dollars. Wight's first plan came in at 18 million. We are reviewing the items and the option to ask for a bit more than 7 million which would raise the tax rate. Referendum discussions have been preliminary, and we want to be sure to engage the community as we explore options.

**Finance & Human Resources**

- Jenny stated that the bond rollover is complete. Last year we went with Republic Bank at 3.6% but the bond climate is different and this year we went with Time Bank, formerly Park Ridge Bank, for the lowest rate which is at 4.64%.
- Jenny stated that the price increase in health insurance was mentioned at the last meeting. Last year we offered a PPO with a \$1,500 deductible and a \$1,000 HRA. This year we raised the PPO deductible to \$2,000 with an HRA of \$1,500. This will save money for the District but keep the \$500 deductible for staff. We are taking a small risk with our HRA payments but in the past they have been minimal. We are one of a few districts that cover employee insurance at 100% and will be looking at different options in the future.

**Director of Recreation Kevin Miller**

- Director Miller reported that we have entered our busy season with basketball and fall programs.
- Kevin stated that recreation supervisor Brandon Diaz has been meeting with La Grange Library to investigate a partnership with new ideas.
- He stated that La Grange Fitness is holding a food drive through November 16<sup>th</sup> for Beds Plus.
- Kevin reported that a small fee increase of \$2 per member is planned for La Grange Fitness starting January 1<sup>st</sup> which would bring resident monthly fees to \$35 for individuals and \$60 for couples. There are no apples to apples comparisons in the area with what we offer, but we are still cheap compared to the competition. Kevin provided examples of fees charged at E-Sporta, Orange Theory, CFX, and Elite Fitness. He also provided information on gift certificates and upcoming holiday specials being offered.

Director Bechtold stated that we own the fitness equipment now and with preventative maintenance we will get longevity out of the cardio equipment. She added that strength training is more popular, and she gave a shout out to Dom for building a great personal training team of six trainers. Commissioner Posey suggested serving our affiliates by offering specials for cross training athletes. Kevin answered that we are investigating options for personal training of high school and college students with a cross training package.

- Kevin stated that Secret Santa pick-up dates start tomorrow and finish in early December. Due to the parking lot they worked out a shuttle system to stage out of the Sedgwick parking lot and send a few cars over at a time to the north side of the recreation building.
- He reported that we entered into an agreement for pest control for the first time since we opened. Orkin sprayed today and placed houses outside for rodents. This is beneficial given the issues with insects coming in and the potential for rodents coming in due to the

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construction disturbing the land.

- Kevin stated that the holiday tree lighting event will take place on December 5<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 P.M. Last year we had 31 trees and so far this year we have 23 trees and 3 sponsors for a total of 26 trees.

### **Parks & Maintenance**

- Director Bechtold reported that there is progress with the parking lot and asphalt will be installed this week. She has a progress update meeting on Wednesday and the goal is for substantial completion by Thanksgiving.
- Jenny stated that the outdoor nets for tennis and volleyball were taken down this week to preserve them during the winter months.
- Jenny reported that she has begun interviewing for the position of Director of Parks & Maintenance and is continuing the process.

### **Attorney Report**

Attorney Price had nothing additional to report.

### **Treasurer Report**

Director Bechtold stated that there were no updates.

### **Action Items**

*Discussion on Staff Presenting the Draft Proposal of Levy and Assessment of Taxes of the Park District of La Grange for the 2023 Tax Levy Year at the December Board Meeting*

Director Bechtold stated that this year is a different format than normally presented and we are only announcing our intent to levy. She wants to investigate levying smaller funds, make sure we are not over levying, and levying sufficiently to the general fund. The non-major funds are limited to those items; the general fund offers flexibility. Tonight, we just want to announce the intent whereas last year we discussed truth in taxation which the Board did not want to do. She explained that keeping the levy funds capped at 4.99% would not trigger truth in taxation. This would result in an overall increase of 3.86% is \$3,566,731 with debt service at \$936,908 and a \$47,286 levy adjustment. This would result in the loss of any increases from new growth in the district. Three scenarios of new growth were considered and we are going with 6.9 million of new growth which is what was on the tax agency report from last year and we would lose approximately \$25,000 in tax revenue. To capture new growth we would need to levy a 3.6 million increase to capped funds of 6.34% with an overall 4.83% increase to capture new growth. We cannot capture new growth if we stay below truth in taxation. Ancel Glink provided a certificate that we can file with our ordinance to try to capture it in the future. A hearing would be required prior to the December meeting and notice must be published. President Opyd stated that the hearing would consist of an opening, asking for public comments, and closing. He added that we are between a rock and hard place due to the increase in our expenses.

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Attorney Price stated that we would be giving new construction a lifetime discount and never catch up if we do not capture new growth this year. Most units of government will balloon the levy and recognize that it has to be implemented by the county extension anyways. The decision must be made tonight because the hearing must be announced 20 days in advance.

President Opyd stated that we should try to capture it. Director Bechtold confirmed that 3.6 million would be a 6.34% increase to the capped funds and a 4.83% increase overall. Commissioner Posey agreed with the higher amount and cited our mountain of deferred maintenance and things we would like to do. She added that the community wants pickleball courts, and we have to do what we can in light of a possible referendum. To Derke's point, we have new residents that will impact services and deferred maintenance and it is responsible to ask them to pay their share and not provide them with a perpetual discount. Commissioner Chvatal stated he was also in favor but to be clear, this money will not go to pickleball courts, and he does not want residents to think it will. We have many parks in need of work.

President Opyd asked for a motion to announce the levy amount of 3.6 million dollars. The motion was so moved by Commissioner Posey, seconded by Commissioner Chvatal and passed by Roll Call Vote as follows:

AYES: Commissioners Posey, Chvatal, Opyd  
NAYES: None  
ABSENT: Commissioners Vear and Lacey

### *Discussion and/or Approval of Board Policy Manual Updates*

Director Bechtold stated that there are several updates to consider. In Section 208 Conditions of Employment, the reference of a 37.5 hour workweek has been removed with the addition that supervisors will determine work schedules. The insurance update to Section 236 includes an opt-out for employees where they receive \$100 per month from the District if they provide proof of other medical and hospitalization insurance, which has the potential to save the District a significant amount in premiums. Section 240 Vacation has added language of non-cumulative. The major change is the addition of Section 632 with a sponsorship and advertising policy and we would like direction from the Board on what we are offering with sponsorships and what to stray away from in politics and religion. The last change is to Section 724 reflected in Ordinance 23-03 which updates the conditions that permit commissioners to participate in meetings via electronic means per OMA and adds childcare obligations.

Commissioner Chvatal stated that we should reconsider Section 632 and that taking politics out limits sponsorships that we have trouble obtaining. He has seen other districts allowing it, has been to concerts sponsored by politicians, and attended eight or nine events in other towns without it being an issue. We

would be turning away money. President Opyd asked Director Bechtold to clarify if residents have expressed concerns. She answered that sometimes these sponsors will bring their petitions for signatures, and she has received feedback that it is not appropriate, as well as inquiries if the District supports this candidate. We need a policy for direction. Commissioner Chvatal questioned whether a business sponsorship means we favor one business over another. President Opyd stated this is a difficult one and is thinking about the First Amendment and what we can say and asked Attorney Price for his input. Attorney Price stated that typically the First Amendment is treated like any other rental or sponsorship. There are campaign laws dictating how their funds can be spent. It should be in keeping with the mission of the District so, for example, we might not want a local gun shop.

Commissioner Posey stated that her opinion is similar to Mike's. Why turn away money if it is consistent with our mission. Complaints about not wanting to sign a petition are not the policy we are talking about. If a senator would like to sponsor Oktoberfest why say no? Attorney Price added that our events could have a designated free speech area in a corner that is relatively visible where literature could be passed out. He has seen people protesting the sale of meat next to a politician. If we get into the habit of doing this at every event we could get a sign and cordon off the area.

President Opyd stated that he is not hearing a lot of interest in limiting sponsorships and the topic could be revisited next month. The other sections could be approved tonight. Commissioner Chvatal added that he would like to give the absent commissioners an opportunity to discuss it.

Commissioner Chvatal made a motion to approve all Board Policy Manual updates minus Section 632. Commissioner Posey seconded the motion which passed by Roll Call Vote as follows:

AYES: Commissioners Chvatal, Posey, Opyd

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Commissioners Vear and Lacey

*Discussion and/or Approval of Financial Assistance Program & Policy  
Section 626*

Director Miller explained that the District had a scholarship program which is being transitioned to a financial assistance program. The policy has been the same for the 14 years he has been here and is dated. We budgeted \$2,000 per year for the program and capped La Grange households at \$175 per year, with Countryside households added per the IGA. When the BASE program came on board it had its own school program and fundraising efforts with a lot of different criteria. The process to reevaluate the scholarship program began in 2021 and with the rise in the cost of programs we budgeted \$10,000 this fiscal year. Section 626.3C has been updated to include Countryside residents and

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BASE participants and 626.3E is an update to the amount participants pay. The current amount is 25% but the revised policy implements a household tier status based on income with a cost share of 30%, 45%, or 60% and an updated max of \$500 per household per fiscal year. The application forms have also been revised.

President Opyd asked how much of the budgeted \$10,000 has been requested this year. Kevin reported that \$321.50 has been allocated so far between three families. One family used it for day camp and the other two used it for rec programming. Two other families opted not to proceed since the \$175 max barely covered one week of summer camp. Director Bechtold stated that we have not been promoting it because we only had \$2,000 and we wanted to stabilize the program first. The next step is to determine how to raise funds to add to it. President Opyd agreed it was important to raise funds for the community to take advantage of programs, including summer camp. Kevin added that with the new marketing position this will be a priority to benefit the many families that are in need. President Opyd stated that at one point the Community Diversity Group had a scholarship program. He stated that there is a need for summer camp assistance for the population that Becky Lorentzen works with. Becky asked if it would be appropriate to connect offline regarding the scholarship program. Kevin answered yes, that is appropriate.

President Opyd suggested that the language in the policy specifies Countryside but that it should reference an IGA instead. Commissioner Chvatal agreed that if we eliminate naming a town and say with any current IGA, the Board will not have to reapprove a policy revision.

President Opyd asked for a motion to approve Policy Section 626 with an amendment that the reference to Countryside be replaced with any community with an IGA. The motion was so moved by Commissioner Chvatal, seconded by Commissioner Posey, and passed by Roll Call Vote as follows:

AYES: Commissioners Chvatal, Posey, Opyd  
NAYES: None  
ABSENT: Commissioners Vear and Lacey

### **Board Business**

#### **Old Business**

None

#### **New Business**

*Discussion and/or Approval of Updated Mission Statement, New Vision Statement and New Core Values*

President Opyd stated that per a brief conversation he had with Director Bechtold this item will be tabled until the full Board is in attendance.



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*Discussion and/or Approval of Energy Procurement Agreement, Natural Gas*  
Director Bechtold stated that it is time to discuss our natural gas options with our current agreement set to expire June 20, 2024. She contacted Nania for pricing and as of Thursday it was down approximately 33% from where we are, with reductions available of 28%-33% depending on the term. Today the market is up 6%. She wanted to bring this to the Board because last year we waited, and it kept rising. We can delay the discussion until a full Board is present but there is a savings as of right now.

Commissioner Chvatal stated that he is not that up to speed on gas pricing and is alright with waiting until December when Commissioner Vear is attendance to provide his opinion. Jenny replied that waiting backfired last year and prices go up in the colder months and may also be affected by the war. Commissioner Posey stated that she has not heard of anything going down in price and is concerned about waiting and rolling the dice. We have been down that path and it did not work out. Jenny suggested that the Board could make a motion giving the executive director approval to lock in the price between a savings of 25%-30%. It will fluctuate so the motion needs wiggle room or restrictions to lock in at a certain percentage. She added that this is a unique year. It used to be cheaper the longer the term, but now the 36-month is more than 12-month. Companies do not feel safe going longer because they lost money locking people in longer. There was brief discussion of the 24 and 36 month term options with the latter only 1% higher. There was Board consensus to lock in a rate for a savings of 25% or higher.

Commissioner Chvatal motioned to authorize the executive director to lock in a 3-year term for natural gas at a savings of 25% or higher. Commissioner Posey seconded the motion which passed by Roll Call Vote as follows:

AYES: Commissioners Chvatal, Posey, Opyd  
NAYES: None  
ABSENT: Commissioners Vear and Lacey

### *Discussion and/or Approval of ComEd Temporary Access and Construction Agreement*

Director Bechtold reported that she received a call from ComEd on November 2<sup>nd</sup>. They are working on relocating their overhead equipment underground at the north end of Gordon Park. She worked with them and Ancel Glink and put together the agreement in the packet. ComEd would use our property and keep some fenced equipment there overnight for approximately six days starting 1-2 weeks after the agreement is in place and will pay the District \$2,000. Soccer is over and the fields are not being used, and the walking path will not be obstructed. They will also put down matting under any equipment.

Commissioner Posey stated that she likes the equipment being moved underground so they will not have to cut the trees.

Commissioner Chvatal motioned to approve the agreement with ComEd

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granting a license for temporary use. Commissioner Posey seconded the motion which passed by Roll Call Vote as follows:

AYES: Commissioners Chvatal, Posey, Opyd  
NAYES: None  
ABSENT: Commissioners Vear and Lacey

### *Discussion and/or Vote on Authorization of Delegates/ Alternates for the 2024 Annual IAPD Meeting*

Director Bechtold explained that this is a standard annual process to assign a delegate and first alternate for the state conference. She would be the delegate and Director Miller the alternate.

Commissioner Chvatal motioned to appoint Director Bechtold as the delegate and Director Miller as the alternate for the annual IAPD meeting. Commissioner Posey seconded the motion which passed by Roll Call Vote as follows:

AYES: Commissioners Chvatal, Posey, Opyd  
NAYES: None  
ABSENT: Commissioners Vear and Lacey

### *Discussion and/or Vote on 2024 Board Meetings*

Director Bechtold asked the Board to look at their schedules. The January meeting is difficult with the holidays and avoiding MLK Day, so it has been pushed back. The April and July meetings will be held at the community center and were pushed to the third Mondy due to a regular rental there on the second Monday of the month. The October 14<sup>th</sup> meeting date is Indigenous People's Day, but we need to consider the timing of the bond rollover, and national conference is the prior week and the week after is too late.

President Opyd stated that the full Board should be present for approval and tabled the topic to be brought back next month. Jenny indicated she would reach out to Commissioner Vear and Lacey regarding the dates.

## **Committee Reports**

### *Administration Committee*

No report at this time.

### *Parks and Facilities Committee*

No report at this time.

### *Recreation & Cultural Programming Committee/ Arts & Cultural Affairs Committee*

Commissioner Posey stated there had been no meetings and there is no report but is intrigued about the discussion of a summer event and would like to be a part of it.

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

Bill Lanspeary, 118 S. Park, La Grange, stated that it was fascinating to sit and watch the meeting. He stated that sponsorships for events is a great idea and he can understand the hesitancy with politics, but it also gets the money coming in. When he visited parks in other towns he observed athletic fields with sponsorships and that might be a good way to bring money in. He added that when he checks out at the grocery store they ask if you want to make a donation. When people sign up for programs they may be willing to make a scholarship donation.

Todd Vancleave, La Grange resident, commented that he noticed the name of the banquet room as a business sponsorship. He stated that regarding the BASE program, his understanding is that parents have to camp out here in order to sign up and he hears from other parents that it is an inefficient process. He suggested moving it online or having a lottery so it is not chaotic.

**Board Comments**

Commissioner Chvatal stated that he heard the Trunk or Treat event was fantastic. He suggested considering a different date since AYSO had conflicting soccer games or moving it to late afternoon or a Sunday. He added that he did a rental in the gymnasium and the staff were amazing; he was very happy.

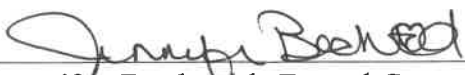
Commissioner Posey thanked the Decennial Committee members for attending tonight and staying for the whole meeting. She appreciates it anytime the public gets involved.

President Opyd thanked the committee members for their time and effort tonight; it will help to educate them for things to come. He stated that the Trunk or Treat was amazing, and his son had a good time. He is excited that the parking lot is almost finished. The community will be happy, especially during basketball season. He wished everyone a happy Thanksgiving.

**Adjournment**

Commissioner Posey moved for adjournment at 7:31 P.M. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Chvatal and passed unanimously by Voice Vote.

  
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Brian Opyd, President

  
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Jennifer Bechtold, Board Secretary  
*Approved December 11, 2023*