

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

**OCTOBER 12, 2020**

**President Vear called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.**

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

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, David Bryant

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

**Public Hearing Meeting**

*Public hearing concerning the intent of the Board of Park Commissioners of the Park District of La Grange, Cook County, Illinois to sell not to exceed \$355,000 General Obligation Limited Tax Park Bonds for the payment of land condemned or purchased for parks, for the building, maintaining, improving and protecting of the same and the existing land and facilities of the District and for the payment of the expenses incident thereto. (BINA Hearing)*

At 7:01 P.M. President Vear opened the Public Hearing concerning the intent of the Park District to sell not to exceed \$355,000 General Obligation Limited Tax Park Bonds. There were no letters, communications or comments from the public attending. At 7:02 P.M. Commissioner Collins motioned to close the BINA Hearing. Commissioner O'Brien seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by Roll Call Vote as follows:

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

NAYES: None

ABSENT: None

**Communications, Presentations & Declarations**

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

David Bryant, 40 S. Ashland, La Grange, stated he was at the meeting on behalf of the Citizens Council of La Grange. The Council provides election support, and he brought forms for park district commissioner candidates to complete to be considered for Council endorsement. They will hold interviews for candidates in November and will assist candidates with obtaining signatures.

**Consent Agenda**

Commissioner Jacobs asked that the minutes from the September 14, 2020 board meeting be amended as follows:

On page 2 under Chris Finn's report, *as discussed previously with Director Bissias* should be added to the last sentence regarding the comparison of facility rentals.

In the last paragraph of page 3, the spelling of the name of the contact from Morton Arboretum should be changed from Chris to Kris.

On page 6 paragraph 1, *and is a fitness trainer* should be removed from the information on Cathy McCook Parzyck of the Parks and Open Lands Committee.

Commissioner Opyd motioned to approve Item 3.1 Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of September 14, 2020 as amended; Item 3.2 Approval of the Minutes of the Executive Session Meeting of September 14, 2020; Item 3.3 Approval of the Minutes of the Special Board Meeting of September 30, 2020; Item 3.4 Approval of the Minutes of the Executive Session Meeting of September 30, 2020; Item 3.5 Approval of the Financial Reports dated September 30, 2020; Item 3.6 Approval of the Consolidated Vouchers for October dated October 12, 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 Dean Bissias**

- Director Bissias stated that he has no updates to the information in his written report.
- Dean stated that the MBO dashboard in the packet has a couple of updates, and that we have not updated capital since we are watching expenses and spending little.
- He reported that we expect to receive the maximum reimbursement of \$5,000 from the Cook County Coronavirus Relief Fund.

***Staff Comments***

**Superintendent of Recreation Kevin Miller**

- Superintendent Miller stated that the Trunk or Treat event at Sedgwick Park went well with approx. 305 people in attendance. It was the first year for this event and staff is considering continuing it going forward instead of the traditional Halloween party.
- Kevin reported that the YDL basketball program started today and runs through December. There are 285 players in the league and it is nice to have activity in the building again.
- He stated that he is working with the recreation dept. on holiday event planning to alter programs for COVID guidelines, and to cancel those that cannot be altered.
- The fitness instructors are doing a virtual fundraiser for breast cancer awareness on 10/23 to benefit Susan G. Komen and have raised \$104 so far.

Commission Opyd asked if what we are learning is being considered for spring and summer programming, and what we anticipate participation to be. Kevin responded that he has not thought that far ahead, and the rec dept. has been busy focusing on fall and winter. He does anticipate better participation next summer. Virtual programs are not conducive for youth and he will be strategic as we look to those seasons to gauge what is different, and consider nature based and outdoor programs.

**Superintendent of Facilities Chris Finn**

- Superintendent Finn stated that gym use for programs will be heavy now that YDL has started, and travel basketball begins next month. He will try to accommodate as many court rentals as possible when the courts are open. There is a basketball clinic rental this weekend.
- Chris reported that room rentals remain slow but may pick up with the cold weather, and that we continue to have outdoor shelter rentals at Denning Park.
- He stated that user groups have struggled this year and are wrapping up their field use at the end of the month.
- The new signs for Gordon Park have been delivered and look good. He is working on setting the location and getting approval, and the signs should be installed before winter.

Commissioner Jacobs inquired if any work has been done on landscape design around the signs, and the status of her request for a report with facility rental comparisons. Director Bissias indicated that we have not heard back from G.G. Gordon on whether her donation can be applied to landscaping, and we will need permission from the village since the area on Ogden Avenue will be on village property. The rental report will be forthcoming.

**Superintendent of La Grange Fitness Jenny Bechtold**

- Superintendent Bechtold reported that the fitness center is picking up and we are at 50% usage from where we were before COVID. It is stabilizing a bit with fewer cancellations. October brought 16 new members for a total of 2,109. She included charts with her written report which show where we have been and where we are now. At this time last year, we had 2,374 members and considering the pandemic we are doing OK.
- Jenny stated that this month's financials show we are down \$64,000, but there was a lease buyout of \$33,000 which accounts for half of it. Moving forward we will have \$12,000 less in leased equipment and she hopes to make it up.

President Vear asked if our insurance-based memberships are all for ages 65 and older, and liked the newly offered student deals. Jenny stated that there is a Blue Cross plan for 18-64 year olds that pays us \$3 per visit. She hopes to attract students that may be home from school with the new deals. It is good to see them here as long as we can keep them following the guidelines. Commissioner Jacobs asked how the Y was doing. Jenny answered that they are also slow, with 4-5 students per class. We average 4 per class in-person, and she hopes to ramp it up in November with the addition of seven classes.

**Superintendent of Finance Leynette Kuniej**

- Superintendent Kuniej reported that we have spent approximately \$12,000 on PPE for the District, but with the \$5,000 reimbursement from Cook County and a potential FEMA grant, she hopes to recoup some of it.
- Leynette stated that we ran the last payroll today in our old software, and tomorrow the data will be dumped to the new Tyler software. Tyler had a breach in their communication network on 9/22 so a work-around will be used to send the data. She likes the software and is ready to go. It will provide new options for reports and graphics.

**Attorney Report**

Attorney Price reported that a preschool parent would like the Park District to enforce and conduct regular mandatory coronavirus saliva testing of our preschool students after learning that School District 102 has implemented a testing process. He explained that District 102 and District 105 have begun a program to screen students for COVID on a regular basis with a saliva test, however, it is voluntary. Their program is feasible for them because a parent works at the Loyola lab and it is part of their research, but it is still costing District 102 \$166,000. The saliva test is not FDA approved, and not endorsed by DCEO or IDPH. It is only for screening and any positive result must be confirmed with an actual COVID test. There is no legal compulsion for the Park District to test, nor do we have the funds and staff to administer and collect saliva samples. He knows of no park districts administering tests to patrons.

**Treasurer Report**

None

**Action Items**

*Discussion and/or Approval of Resolution 20-05 and an Agreement for Cook County Coronavirus Relief*

Director Bissias explained that the Cook County grant requires the Board to pass this resolution.

Commissioner Collins motioned for approval of the resolution and agreement for Cook County Coronavirus Relief. Commissioner O'Brien seconded the motion which passed unanimously by Roll Call Vote as follows:

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

NAYES: None

ABSENT: None

*Discussion and/or Approval and Selection of a Firm to Create a New Open Space Master Plan for the Park District of La Grange*

President Vear opened the floor to Board discussion on the three firms that gave presentations for a new open space master plan at the special meeting on September 30<sup>th</sup>: Hitchcock Design Group, JSD Professional Services and Planning Resources, Inc. (PRI)

Commissioner Collins stated that the presentations made him think about what makes a successful comprehensive plan. We have to keep in mind that these people will be the face of the Park District in meetings and will reflect on us. We want them to generate quality information with an honest evaluation of our programs and consider relevant trends. They will have to have a good working relationship with staff, look at our facilities with fresh eyes, and create a realistic 10-year plan. We should also consider how often they will check back with us after the plan is done to offer input. Hitchcock had the strongest presentation and offers the most follow-up, but none of them wowed him with new ideas. PRI shined when answering questions after their presentation and he liked that they said their job is to make suggestions and work with us, not to create a program they think we should follow. He also thought their facility assessment was the strongest.

President Vear reported that it is difficult to select a firm based on the previous plans they have completed. He looked at some of their completed plans and it was hard to decipher one from another; the plans seemed boilerplate. It will be important how they analyze and use our financial information, which has to be the basis moving forward, and JSD stressed this. How they communicate with us and answer staff's questions, as well as a fresh set of eyes, is also important. PRI was the only firm to say they would go to local schools. Hitchcock seems like the youngest team but is the most expensive.

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Commissioner Opyd stated that the expense for a new plan is considerable and the decision should not be taken lightly, and does not have to be made tonight. He believes a working relationship is important, as well as diversity of thought, age and gender in the firm, which Hitchcock and JSD exhibited. We should call other park districts for references.

Commissioner Jacobs stated that she would like to hear more from Andy Dogan of Hitchcock since he was only able to attend the meeting via Zoom. She thought their group was up-to-date on modern trends, innovative ideas, and strong with the pulse on using the parks for outdoor and nature based programming. She also noted that they stated they are negotiable with the project fee. She encouraged the commissioners to review the written packets again, and felt that PRI seems very mainstream and had the weakest packet.

Commissioner O'Brien asked staff if any firm had a "wow" factor and Commissioner Opyd asked if any firms seemed better for them and their job responsibilities.

Supt. of Facilities Finn stated that no single firm had a wow factor, but that certain comments did stand out, and he liked what the PRI architect had to say regarding facilities. Supt. of Recreation Miller liked the PRI presentation, their facility assessment plan, and thought the personality of the group was a good fit. He believes team member Ray Ochromowitz's experience as a park district director would be a big benefit. Supt. of Fitness Bechtold added that she is sold on PRI. There is a lot of space in our building which can provide opportunities to do more, and she feels their architect will give us what we need in facilities and parks. She feels they will get the job done, no matter the circumstances, as evidenced by the rapid assessment they did for the Munster plan (in Indiana). Administrative Supervisor Muth liked that PRI specifically talked about including front line staff and would survey a greater number of households.

Director Bissias reported that JSD and PRI met with him and Supt. Finn personally prior to their presentations. His preference would be PRI. He appreciates their effort to sit down and meet ahead of time, and was impressed with the detailed questions they asked and how they seemed to get the big picture. He added that whichever firm is chosen, the overall report must meet the Board's standards.

After further discussion, the Board decided that they would like additional information before selecting a firm for the master plan. Commissioners and staff should submit their questions to Director Bissias by Friday, and a cohesive list will be developed and submitted to the firms the following week. Director Bissias will also reach out to other park districts for references on the firms. There were some issues with the last master plan process that we do not want repeated. A decision can then be made at the November board meeting.

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*Discussion and/or Approval of the Executive Director to Negotiate a Contract Allowing a Firm (based on Board discussion) to Create a New Open Space Master Plan for the Park District of La Grange*

After Board discussion Commissioner Jacobs made a motion that Item 7.3 approval of the Executive Director to negotiate a contract allowing a firm to create a new open space master plan be tabled. Commissioner O'Brien seconded the motion which passed unanimously by Roll Call Vote as follows:

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

### **Board Business**

#### **Old Business**

*None*

#### **New Business**

*Discussion and/or Possible Vote on Authorization of Delegates/ Alternates for the 2021 Annual IAPD Meeting*

Director Bissias reported that he normally serves as the delegate and this year's January conference will be held virtually. After Board discussion Commissioner Opyd motioned to authorize Director Bissias to serve as the delegate for the 2021 annual IAPD meeting. Commissioner Collins seconded the motion which passed unanimously by Roll Call Vote as follows:

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

It was decided that Commissioner O'Brien would serve as an alternate.

### **Committee Reports**

#### *Administration Committee*

None

#### *Parks and Open Lands*

None

#### *Finance & Capital Project Committee*

None

#### *User Group Committee*

None

#### *Marketing/ Social Media Committee*

Commissioner Opyd reported that he had a good conversation with Kevin, Dean and Teresa about our website and working on technology with Noventech

to add more information on our events. They would like to put all the details in and increase visibility.

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

None

**Board Comments**

Commissioner O'Brien thanked Supt. Finn for a fantastic job dealing with all the soccer and baseball groups during the evolving pandemic and handling it with grace. He told Supt. Miller he was glad to hear that the Trunk or Treat event went well and that it was a great thing to do for the community at this time.

Commissioner Collins echoed Tim's comments. He also announced that he would not be running for commissioner in the upcoming election, and would be stepping down after next month as he and his family are moving to Florida. Serving on the park board has been fantastic and he has appreciated working with professionals that take pride in what they do. He added that concerns expressed in emails in recent months about a divide in La Grange was disheartening to hear, but staff is doing the right things. He thinks it is important to consider public commentary, but also to remember that we represent the 16,000 people in La Grange. Sometimes we hear from a minority opinion of only one or two people on an issue, and we appreciate their passion and consider it, but should continue to do what needs to be done. It has been fantastic to be a commissioner and see how the Park District works, and he looks forward to reading our new 10-year plan.

Commissioner Jacobs stated that she is happy we are approaching the new plan with deliberation to look at what is best for the District. The plan is needed and she is excited to see it come to fruition. She thanked Supt. Bechtold for her efforts to keep the fitness center going. The parks are looking good and she appreciates the park staff and the pictures that Claudia included in her report.

Commissioner Opyd told Supt. Kuniej that he is glad to hear that the end of the road is near with the new financial software. He thanked staff for their work and wearing double hats during this time. He said it has been an honor and a pleasure to have Commissioner Collins on the Board. He enjoyed serving with him and is sad to see him go, but wishes him the best of luck.

President Vear is looking forward to the implementation of the new financial software. He thinks there will be an influx of young people to the fitness center with the new pricing, and commended staff for the excellent job with basketball. He also offered his congratulations to Commissioner Collins.



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**Executive Session**

At 8:20 P.M. Commissioner Jacobs motioned the Board convene to Executive Session pursuant to Item 12.7 Selection of a Person to Fill a Public Office Vacancy, 5 ILCS 120/2 (c)(3). Commissioner O'Brien seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by Roll Call Vote.

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

At 8:35 P.M. the Board resumed the regular meeting.

**Adjournment**

Commissioner Opyd moved for adjournment at 8:35 P.M. The motion was seconded by Commissioner O'Brien and passed unanimously by Voice Vote.

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Robert Vear, President

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Constantine Bissias, Secretary  
*Approved 11/09/2020*