

**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**

**OCTOBER 11, 2021**

**President Vear called the meeting to order at 7:04 P.M.**

PRESENT: Commissioners Opyd, Posey, Lacey, Vear

ABSENT: Commissioner Lawrence

STAFF PRESENT: Executive Director Jenny Bechtold  
Superintendent of Finance Leynette Kuniej  
Superintendent of Facilities Chris Finn  
Superintendent of Recreation Kevin Miller  
Superintendent of BASE Leanna Hartung  
Park Foreman Claudia Galla  
Fitness Supervisor Dom Adjoumani  
Recording Secretary Linda Muth

OTHERS PRESENT: Attorney Derke Price  
Marian Honel-Wilson, Ali Bowe  
Nancy Bramson, Dave Paulus

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

Director Bechtold stated that she asked Fitness Supervisor Dom Adjoumani to join the beginning of the meeting to put a face to the name. He is in his third week with us and is doing an amazing job and has a background in management and corporate fitness. President Vear welcomed Dom to the Park District. Dom exited the meeting.

**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 \$358,000 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 7:09 P.M. President Vear opened the Public Hearing concerning the intent of

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the Park District to sell not to exceed \$358,000 General Obligation Limited Tax Park Bonds. There were no letters, communications or comments from the public attending. At 7:12 P.M. Commissioner Lacey motioned to close the BINA Hearing. President Vear seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by Roll Call Vote as follows:

AYES: Commissioners Lacey, Vear, Posey, Opyd  
NAYES: None  
ABSENT: Commissioner Lawrence

### **Communications, Presentations & Declarations**

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

Ali Bowe, 50<sup>th</sup> & Spring Avenue, La Grange, stated she represents over 700 members of Dry Up La Grange, and their mission is to solve the flooding problems in La Grange. They exist to support efforts that use science, facts and engineering to develop solutions that prevent further damage to homes, health, and financial loss due to flooding. They would like to establish a working relationship with the Board. They have learned that a supplementary solution to the flooding is to create underground retention areas under green spaces such as parks. They can be built quickly, store a lot of water, and the parks are returned to the same or better conditions. They are waiting for engineering information which will indicate whether they could and should be implemented in La Grange. She would like our Board to be an advocate for them and looks forward to working together in the future.

### **Consent Agenda**

Commissioner Lacey motioned to approve Item 3.1 Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of September 13, 2021; Item 3.2 Approval of the Minutes of the Special Board Meetings of September 16, 2021; September 23, 2021; September 28, 2021 and October 4, 2021; Item 3.3 Approval of the Minutes of the Executive Session Meetings of September 13, 2021; September 16, 2021; September 23, 2021 and September 28, 2021; Item 3.4 Approval of the Financial Reports dated September 30, 2021; Item 3.5 Approval of the Consolidated Vouchers for October dated October 11, 2021. President Vear seconded the motion, which passed by Roll Call Vote as follows:

AYES: Commissioners Lacey, Vear, Opyd, Posey  
NAYES: None  
ABSENT: Commissioner Lawrence

### **Staff Reports**

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

- Director Jenny Bechtold stated that she received an update from PRI today on the new master plan and shared her screen with a revised timeline. There have been some delays due to the numerous changes to the survey and it is taking longer than anticipated to get it right. It is going to Readex Research now with plans to mail it out on November 2<sup>nd</sup>

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and accept responses for five weeks. She reviewed the timeline dates and stated that she requested preliminary raw data from the architects and recreation analysis portion for review prior to getting the drafts back.

There was Board discussion on the delay and payments to PRI. The commissioners would like a copy of the timeline and the data when it is available. The billing process was also discussed.

President Vear asked if a replacement rowing machine was found. Jenny reported that a similar machine of a different brand has been ordered and will be covered by insurance, less the \$1,000 deductible.

### ***Staff Comments***

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

- Superintendent Kuniej stated that she has been adding new staff as they come in. We have picked up a few new employees and lost several too.
- Leynette is excited about the records retention process and getting rid of some of the old records stored in the back. She found money in the budget to cover the shredding.

Commissioner Opyd asked which area saw employee turnover and why. Leynette stated that it is across the board. Some employees returned to school, and there were new hires that did not show for their first day or did not like the job when they started.

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

- Superintendent Miller reported that it was a successful special event weekend. The Zombie Candy Hunt was held Friday with approximately 60 kids and went well. The Trunk or Treat special event on Saturday was great with 22 cars and about 1,000 people in attendance. Andrea did a great job with it.
- Kevin stated that the rec dept. is wrapping up the winter/spring brochure, which went out to the graphic artist today.
- The rec dept. is putting together new nature-based programming for the spring with conservation education classes. He has been in contact with the Cook County Forest Preserve and the La Grange Environmental Quality Commission. He is also waiting to hear back from the La Grange Garden Club.

Commissioner Opyd stated he was glad to see Andrea developing a newsletter for the senior community; it is a fantastic idea.

President Vear complimented the mural painted by Melissa for Halloween photo opps. He also stated that basketball enrollments look good, though 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade is lower. Kevin reported that he and Zach are trying to build that group. They reached out to other districts to gauge interest in combining this age group or playing each other, but so far it has not panned out. They may

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enter them in a couple one-day tournaments for extra play.

### **Fitness Supervisor Dom Adjoumani**

Director Bechtold provided information on Dom's report. The bottom line for the fitness center is good at \$96,000. The conservative budget was \$46,000 and the fitness center is thriving considering the pandemic. President Vear asked if an increase is expected this winter. Jenny stated it is hard to predict with the Delta variant. The numbers have been hovering consistently around 1,600. Expenses are way down and they are watching them. The max in the past was 2,835. Commissioner Opyd asked if the fitness center can run successfully with 1,600 as the member base. Jenny stated that it could, but eventually we will have capital projects, so we need to plan accordingly. The original break-even number was 2,000 with the monthly equipment lease, but we do not currently have a lease expense.

### **Superintendent of BASE Leanna Hartung**

- Superintendent Hartung stated she hopes to have newly hired staff begin work on Wednesday. They are needed at the Cossitt location.

President Vear inquired on the status of staffing St. Francis. Leanna reported that they need to hire 3-4 additional staff in order to open BASE at St. Francis. She feels for the SFX families and does not want to open until we can commit to fully providing BASE.

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

- Superintendent Finn reported that he is excited to see good numbers for weekend rentals in October and November.
- Chris stated that there is a big basketball event at the rec center this weekend.

President Vear asked if rentals are close to pre-COVID numbers. Chris estimated that we are at 60-70%. We are still renting the playground to a single party at a time as opposed to multi-use. We used to have 3-4 parties sharing the playground at a minimal fee but suspended this with COVID. The higher single-user playground fee is compensating for the difference, and renters like the private use.

### **Park Foreman Claudia Galla**

- Foreman Galla reported that they received the soil testing results today from Advanced Turf and have a turf plan, which will be discussed in the next few days.
- Claudia stated the GIS program is up and running. She is getting accustomed to it and working out some bugs. We will be able to use it to set up pruning and removal this fall. Our outdoor spaces are set up in zones so it will be easy to use and track from year to year.
- She received a response from Morton Arboretum on their centennial tree

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planting initiative. She and Jenny will have a Zoom meeting with their lead coordinator at the end of the month.

President Vear stated that he ran into a friend that had questions on what pesticides or herbicides are used on outdoor areas that are not part of our fields. The friend picks and eats certain plants. Claudia answered that treatments are normally applied in mulch areas and fence lines, and prior to applications it is posted in the newspaper, on our buildings, and the ground is flagged. If he sees a post or flags, he should not pick plants for a while after.

### **Attorney Report**

Attorney Price stated he has been busy with swearing-in and open meeting changes. Labor shortages continue, and there is new highly technical legislation in Illinois regarding personnel policies which he will discuss with Director Bechtold. Regarding the individual that eats plants, he stated that studies indicate that using Roundup can save 15 man-hours, and we do not have the labor to discontinue treatments. We post our applications and cannot make promises concerning their use.

### **Treasurer Report**

None

### **Action Items**

None

### **Board Business**

#### **New Business**

*Election/ Appointment of Officer(s): Board Vice President and Board Second Vice President (if required)*

President Vear stated that currently Commissioner Lacey is the Second Vice President. The office of Vice President is open to anyone, including Commissioner Lacey. Commissioner Lacey stated that she would like to remain as Second Vice President.

Commissioner Lacey nominated Commissioner Opyd for Vice President, and he accepted the nomination. Commissioner Posey seconded the nomination, which passed unanimously by Roll Call Vote as follows:

AYES: Commissioners Lacey, Posey, Opyd, Vear  
NAYES: None  
ABSENT: Commissioner Lawrence

Director Bechtold congratulated Commissioner Opyd on his election as Vice President.

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### *Discussion and/or Approval of Committee Appointments:*

#### *Administration, Parks & Open Lands, Finance & Capital Projects, User Groups, Marketing & Social Media*

President Vear stated that he is currently the Finance chair, the User Group is vacant, Commissioner Opyd chairs Marketing, and Commissioner Lacey chairs Administration. He asked the current chairs if they were comfortable with and preferred staying on. Commissioner Lacey stated she would stay on as the head of Administration and looks forward to learning more about it.

Commissioner Opyd stated he is comfortable remaining as chair of Marketing but is also willing to adjust based on the skills of new Commissioners Posey and Lawrence. Commissioner Posey expressed an interest in Parks & Open Lands and asked for more details. Director Bechtold explained that under former Commissioner Jacobs there were 4-7 people on the committee. They assessed our parks and open lands and evaluated how we are doing with our outdoor spaces. There was additional discussion on the committees, which are formed by the Board. Supt. of Facilities Finn stated that it would not be a detriment to the district if the User Group is dissolved to address another area requiring attention. President Vear stated that Commissioner Lawrence is also interested in the Parks & Open Lands and recommended discussing the committees at the next board meeting and finalizing them at a later date.

### *Discussion and/or Possible Vote on Authorization of Delegates/Alternates for the 2022 Annual IAPD Meeting*

Director Bechtold stated that action needs to be taken each year to name a delegate and alternates for the annual IAPD meeting. Staff recommends that Jenny serve as the delegate, Chris as first alternate, and Kevin as second alternate.

Commissioner Opyd motioned to authorize Jenny as delegate for the 2022 annual IAPD meeting, Chris as first alternate, and Kevin as second alternate. Commissioner Lacey seconded the motion which passes unanimously by Roll Call vote as follows:

AYES: Commissioners Opyd, Lacey, Posey, Vear

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Commissioner Lawrence

### *Discussion and/or Possible Vote on Endless Summerfest Special Event for 2022*

Director Bechtold stated that this is her first year being involved with the fest so she may not have a full view, but she reviewed what she observed starting May 1<sup>st</sup> and put together the data. Her memo indicates where we stand, and we have some options that need to be discussed. It is a very labor intensive event for the district, and it has become clear that LGBA's mission for this event is very different than ours. Our mission is to provide an event for the community while LGBA views it as a fundraiser for their organization.

President Vear stated that the report indicates our labor hours are close to

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1,000 and questioned how we could utilize those hours if we do not run the fest. Director Bechtold stated the 1,000 hours are just during the event, with an additional guestimate of 345 hours during the year. Staff did not track hours but estimates by the steering committee and finance dept. indicate a total number closer to 1,200. She indicated that we could use those labor hours for additional programming, including new nature-based options, as well as other special events being discussed. If you look straight at the numbers the decision is easy, and LGBA does not want any additional expenses.

Commissioner Posey stated that since she is a LGBA board member she will recuse herself from the conversation and any vote, and Attorney Price agreed it was appropriate.

Commissioner Opyd stated that the fest aligns with our mission and provides fun for the community, but he is concerned it is not fair and equitable. If it is a fundraiser for LGBA we should not use taxpayer dollars to fund business development, which is not our mission as a park district. He does not want to see it go away but he has a problem with this. President Vear stated it is not an insignificant cost by labor or dollar amount, and he likes the event as well. Attorney Price added that he has been over the contract, and it clearly states that all expenses are to be included. We are not looking to add exempt employees, just our \$4,000 out-of-pocket for hourly wages. It does not sound right for this important event to be on the brink for this amount. Director Bechtold stated that salaries have not been looked at before. Since we had not charged this expense the past six years, though the contract allowed for it, we felt a conversation with LGBA was warranted, and we were surprised with the outcome.

President Vear asked staff how they felt about spending their time on the event and whether it is worthwhile for the district in their eyes. Supt. of Facilities Chris Finn provided some background on the history of the fest. When we ran it as a one-day event on our own there was a lot of set up, and if it rained all the work was wasted. The current three-day event with LGBA is a lot of work and requires a lot of maintenance time for two weeks prior, but he sees it as a great event for the community. Supt. of Recreation Kevin Miller stated that the fest is a benefit to the community when you look at our mission statement, but there definitely could be some changes made. He does a ton of work on the fest from October through August and deals with volunteers, food vendors, teen workers, in addition to the event itself. He thinks the budget has been loose for the last few years, and we need to reign it in and do better with sponsorships. We have the opportunity to run it for another year with adjustments and see how it plays out, but he understands the Board must make the decision based on the numbers.

There was discussion on evaluating sponsorship efforts between LGBA and the Park District. Commissioner Posey asked for clarification on the Park District staff cost and whether the \$4,000 was for overtime. Director Bechtold

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explained that the cost is for full-time non-exempt staff for the time it takes to set up and they are physically pulled away from their regular duties. The set up and take down time is an expense. Attorney Price added that the \$8,000 becomes \$4,000 for each party because it is divided by two as a recognized expense. Director Bechtold stated that LGBA indicated that the \$4,000 expense would bring down their revenue and make the event not worth it for them, but we need them to be willing to include all expenses. She is meeting with the Village this week to see if they would be willing to help with set up.

Attorney Price stated that if we terminate the contract, it should be done by October 31<sup>st</sup>. After that date we would forfeit our steering committee fund portion. If we go forward and include the \$8,000 expense and LGBA will not pay their \$4,000 share when we invoice them, the contract is unclear on which party is terminating.

President Vear stated that staff seems supportive of the event, but the budget must change dramatically so the district does not lose money. The community center and other areas need attention, and this takes away from those projects. There was discussion on potentially scaling back some amenities for the event, as well as increasing sponsorships. Director Bechtold stated that we could also consider running only the carnival, which generates a good amount of money. Discussion ensued regarding the Windy City contract for the carnival, which the District and LGBA are both party to, and Attorney Price stated this creates dysfunction of who is cancelling for what reason.

President Vear, Commissioner Opyd, and Commissioner Lacey discussed next steps and agreed that Director Bechtold should move forward in meeting with LGBA and the Village, and that the fest budget must be revised with our full-time non-exempt labor included as an expense. Director Bechtold stated that if LGBA decides to cancel the contract we could move to take over the carnival, but the district cannot take over the fest alone without their 150 hours of volunteers. She will bring this back to the Board at the next meeting. Commissioner Opyd cautioned that the carnival numbers were double this year but might not be sustainable. President Vear stated that we would like to have a zero negative return on the event. Attorney Price stated that it must be made clear to LGBA that moving forward we intend for our costs to be included as a direct expense as in the agreement. If they want their take to be \$15,000 it can be solved with ticket prices, sponsorships, and other revenue sources.

### **Old Business**

#### **Committee Reports**

##### *Administration Committee*

Commissioner Lacey had no report at this time.



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### *Parks and Open Lands*

Committee is currently unassigned.

### *Finance & Capital Project Committee*

President Vear had no report at this time.

### *User Group Committee*

Committee is currently unassigned.

### *Marketing/ Social Media Committee*

Commissioner Opyd had no report at this time.

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

None

## **Board Comments**

None

President Vear announced that the Board is going to executive session and the public may rejoin the meeting afterward.

## **Executive Session**

At 8:31 P.M. Commissioner Lacey motioned the Board convene to Executive Session pursuant to Item 12.3 Setting the Price of Real Property 5ILCS 120/2 (c)(6). President Vear seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by Roll Call Vote as follows:

AYES: Commissioners Lacey, Vear, Opyd, Posey

NAYES: None

ABSENT: Commissioner Lawrence

At 8:36 P.M. Commissioner Opyd motioned the Board arise from Executive Session and Commissioner Posey seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by Voice Vote.

The Board resumed the regular meeting at 8:36 P.M.

## **Action on Items Discussed in Executive Session**

*Approval of Eminent Domain with State of Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) for the Temporary Construction Easement on 610 East Avenue Property in the Amount of \$9,250*

President Vear stated that the item under consideration is the Approval of Eminent Domain with State of Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) for the Temporary Construction Easement on 610 East Avenue Property in the Amount of \$9,250 and Commissioner Lacey so moved. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Opyd, which passed unanimously by Roll Call Vote as follows:

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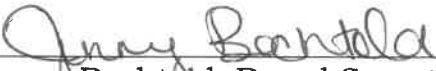
AYES: Commissioners Lacey, Opyd, Posey, Vear  
NAYES: None  
ABSENT: Commissioner Lawrence

**Adjournment**

Commissioner Posey moved for adjournment at 8:39 P.M. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lacey and passed unanimously by Voice Vote.



Robert Vear, President



Jenny Bechtold, Board Secretary  
*Approved November 8, 2021*