

**MINUTES OF THE DECENNIAL COMMITTEE MEETING
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 5:30 P.M.

COMMITTEE

MEMBERS PRESENT: President Opyd, Commissioner Chvatal,
Todd Vancleave, William Lanspeary, Eric Wierab

ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Executive Director Jenny Bechtold
Director of Parks, Planning & Maintenance Blake Ertmanis
Direction of Recreation Kevin Miller
Recording Secretary Linda Muth

OTHERS PRESENT: Jim Boo
*Attorney Derke Price arrived at 5:51 P.M.

President Opyd announced the committee meeting and thanked the committee members for offering their time for the community.

Communications, Presentations & Declarations

Public Comments/Participation (Board Manual Section #152)

None

Approval of Committee Minutes

None

Action Items

None

Board Business

New Business

Discussion of Draft for Decennial Committee on Efficiency

Director Bechtold stated that the District cannot operate without committees and expressed her appreciation for the committee members stepping up. She provided background on the origination of the requirement for the Decennial Committee. A bill was originally submitted to form a consolidation committee and IAPD lobbied to protect park districts, and the result was that the committee turned into one focused on efficiency versus consolidation. Our

committee was formed in May and we have 18 months to complete our report with a deadline of November 8, 2024. It is required that the committee meet three times. This is a good opportunity to review how we are operating and highlight what we are doing well and to bring residents in to learn how we operate. She stated that she would review the draft report with an eye for looking for efficiencies.

Director Bechtold explained that the overview section of the draft report provides information on how the Park District was established and that it is non-partisan with a non-compensated Board. It details transparency, protection of revenues, protection of assets, and providing the community more with less. She stated that as part of good governance we also maintain procedures and policies manuals relating to ordinances, personnel, safety, and risk management, and have also completed a comprehensive master plan. We regularly consider how we can improve our transparency and what additional policies or procedures we may need. She offered to send the full board policy manual to any interested committee members.

Director Bechtold reviewed the next section which focuses on shared services and partnerships. She explained that we are a member of SEASPAR along with eleven other districts. They are a great organization and we levy taxes for them, and they help us by providing inclusion services for our programs and offering their own programs. We grant them use of our facilities, as do all members. It is a great way for us to extend our services without having our own specialized staff and is very efficient. She highlighted the District's cooperative programming with La Grange Park and Western Springs and the discounted pool pass rate offered with Hinsdale, as well as our gymnastics classes held at LTHS south campus. Jenny added that we have an IGA with District 102 for our before and after school program. We also have an IGA with the City of Countryside where we utilize their parks and fields in exchange for their residents receiving resident rates for our services. We recently reviewed our IGAs to verify they are mutually beneficial, and plan to expand in this area.

She reviewed the remainder of this section including the District's participation in the State of Illinois reduced pricing program and our partnerships with affiliate organizations. Sports affiliates include Little League, Babe Ruth, Celtics, and Lyons Township. We have relationships with non-profits including The LeaderShop, Interfaith Community Partners, and IPRA. We also partner with for-profit groups including LGBA, White Sox, and Meadowbrook Manner who gave us property to build a park. We have an informal cooperation with the Village of La Grange where they store vehicles in our facility and they assist us with general maintenance tasks. Jenny stated that we are adding a new sponsorship and marketing full-time position and their role will involve building new relationships and connections. She asked the committee to think about other entities, partnerships or IGAs they have seen in other places that would work in our community.

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Will Lanspeary asked if there was overlapping equipment used by us and La Grange public works that could be shared. Jenny answered that it would be difficult to share the seasonal equipment we need available on a daily basis but we do use their lifts. In the past Western Springs offered use of their tractor and we try to help each other but it is also a challenge to move the equipment.

Director Bechtold referenced Section VI detailing additional examples of efficient operations. Director Miller stated that we rely heavily on the use of volunteers and youth for special events and our basketball program. We had approximately 200 volunteers last year providing roughly 500 hours total. He stated that we employ youth for summer camp ranging from age 15 through college and also employ high school students as scorekeepers with six currently on staff. Jenny added that we often provide La Grange youth with their first employment opportunity.

Director Bechtold explained that we use Sourcewell for cooperative purchasing for reduced pricing. If they stock an item then we do not have to spend money on a bid process and we know we are getting the best price. She highlighted the collaboration between the many park districts in Illinois that share documents and policies so we do not have to reinvent the wheel. We also make our programs the best they can be to increase revenue so that we are not completely reliant on tax revenue.

Director Bechtold reviewed Section VII relating to transparency to the community. She stated that transparency is important to the Board and staff and in the last two years it has increased significantly. It is our practice to post relevant documents, board packets, meeting information, levies, and ordinance appropriations. The information related to the CMP was posted and the related meetings publicized. We also conduct surveys throughout the year for programs and interests.

Todd Vancleave referenced Section VI which states that PDLG is an economic engine for the community and generates money for the state, but questioned why we are not able to generate taxes from gas stations, etc. Jenny answered that this is due to park district code. Todd encouraged talking to legal and IAPD to see if that could change in the future.

Director Bechtold addressed Section VII relating to awards and recognition and stated that there are various opportunities to highlight the District. In 2020 we were named the best park district by the Suburban Life Readers' Choice and we were named the best indoor playground by Kids List. We receive the certificate of achievement for excellence in financial reporting every year from GFOA (Government Finance Officers Association). We also received accreditation awards from PDRMA for meeting the requirements related to their inspections. We are learning about a new process that PDRMA is establishing.

Jenny highlighted the staff and stated that our director of recreation was

named the 2014 young professional of the year by SSPRP. She detailed numerous staff credentials and certifications and indicated that we would like to expand in this area.

Director Bechtold referenced the benefits and services detailed in Section VIII including the list of all facilities and parks and a comprehensive list of programs we offered in the last calendar year. She stated that recreation and fitness promote physical activity and well being and our community events foster a sense of community among our residents. We practice environmental conservation of green spaces which enrich lives and provide social interactions to bring people together, as well as providing stress relief and enhancing property values. This supports our primary mission of improving residents' quality of life.

Will Lanspeary stated that the list of other benefits in the report is fantastic. Todd Vancleave questioned the percentage of classes that were not executed during the year due to low enrollment. He also asked if we have a state or county mandate of what percentage of land is supposed to be used for park district purposes and if the District has a goal for the amount of land or recreational space we would like to have indoors and outdoors. He added that space like the indoor playground is fantastic for winter months and inquired if we considered expanding.

Director Bechtold explained that it is difficult to expand since La Grange is a landlocked community and acquiring new property is expensive. She stated that we always maximize our space, and that this could be a goal in our park planning. We are also evaluating the space used by our affiliates that is often requested but not used.

Director Miller provided details on program statistics. He stated that during the winter/spring 2023 season, 234 programs ran of the 312 offered for a success rate of 75%. There were 2,353 participants with an average of 10 per class. In summer of 2023 we offered 309 classes, excluding summer day camps, and 215 ran for a success rate of 70% with an average of 7 participants per class and total participants of 1,556. We offered 286 classes in fall of 2022 and 207 ran for a success rate of 72%. There were 1,972 participants and an average of 9.5 per class. President Opyd asked if the benchmark has been 70% and Kevin confirmed that 70% is the industry standard. He added that we have increased our success rate by cutting programs that are inefficient and offering what the community wants. Todd inquired if it is financially viable to average 7 per class among 1,556 participants. Kevin answered that it depends on the program and class type. Ninety-seven percent of our programs are contractual so it depends on what the instructors provide. For example, a music class of six participants only requires one adult.

Director Bechtold reviewed Section IX addressing recommendations for increased accountability and efficiency. She stated that opportunities include

working closer with the Village of La Grange and reducing third party fees. The Village is very accommodating and our permits are free but when they use a third party we pay the fees. We paid for fire and police support at the Summerfest this year and incurred fees for background checks and a liquor license. We would like to reduce these expenses. Another challenge is the inefficiency of other governments including the delay in property taxes due to Cook County, which puts pressure on us to subsidize funds until we receive them. We were also awarded a PARC grant in 2015 that was delayed until 2017. Unfunded mandates such as FOIA requests and newspaper requirements incur fees, and prevailing wages are a large expense.

Jenny stated we will explore additional opportunities including increased transparency on our website and social media, considering an IGA with District 105, planning energy efficient projects, and continuing to utilize energy procurement agreements. She added that the entire report is up for review by the committee and we welcome all feedback with a focus on how we can increase our efficiency.

Eric Wierab commented that the list of unfunded mandates is a small dollar amount and program expenses are \$600,000, and he would like to get a sense of scale moving forward. President Opyd stated that for programming, the money that comes in pays for it. If programs do not run we will not lose money or have expenses for them, so the 70% allows us to offer innovative programs. Director Bechtold added that the participant average for classes can include classes of 25 or a new class that we hold at lower numbers to get it to run. Eric encouraged looking at the budget overall to identify the big movers.

Discussion and/or Approval of Meeting Schedule

President Opyd stated that the next committee meeting is in February and the meeting schedule needs to be approved for the February and March meetings. Will stated that February works but the proposed March date may be difficult. Todd indicated he had no issues with the dates.

Old Business

None

Public Comments

Jim Boo, 1327 Mason Drive, La Grange, stated that he has been a resident since 1994 and has never heard of this committee. He questioned if it is based on Governor Pritzker thinking it is needed. He does not see the use of this and we should send him a letter stating that we do not need another committee. Less committee meetings are less employees attending, and it is an increased expense. If he were on the Board he would write to him to say we are doing fine on our own.

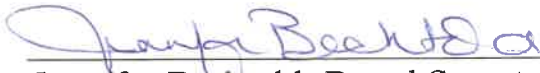
Committee Comments

None

Adjournment

President Opyd asked for a motion to adjourn. The motion was so moved by Commissioner Chvatal at 6:09 P.M., seconded by Todd Vancleave and passed unanimously by Voice Vote.

Brian Opyd, President

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jennifer Bechtold", is written over a horizontal line.

Jennifer Bechtold, Board Secretary
Approved February 12, 2023