

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

SEPTEMBER 30, 2020

President Vear called the meeting to order at 5:30 P.M.

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

ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Executive Director Dean Bissias, Superintendent of Facilities Chris Finn, Superintendent of Recreation Kevin Miller, Superintendent of La Grange Fitness Jenny Bechtold, Recording Secretary Linda Muth

OTHERS PRESENT: Lacey Lawrence, Steve Konters, Elsa Fischer, Andy Dogan via Zoom, Lori Vierow, Sarah Dreier, Jeffrey Braun, Ray Ochromowitz, Bonnie Covelli, Darrell Garrison, Steven Halberg, Ron McGrath

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

Public Comments

None

Executive Session

At 5:32 P.M. Commissioner Jacobs motioned the Board convene to Executive Session pursuant to Item 3.2 Acquisition of Real Property, 5 ILCS 120/2 (c)(5). 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 5:41 P.M. the Board resumed the regular meeting.

Action Items

Motion to Approve Contract for the Purchase of Real Property

After Board discussion Commissioner Collins motioned to approve the contract for the purchase of real property 610 East Avenue for a price of \$965,000.

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Commissioner O'Brien seconded the motion which passed unanimously by Roll Call Vote as follows:

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

The Board briefly discussed why the acquisition of real property takes place in Executive Session, and that during the 45-day period of due diligence we can address any problems that may arise and can still walk away. Director Bissias stated that we will have \$27,000 coming back to the District because Brad is not taking a commission from this property.

The Board and Director briefly discussed the format for tonight's master plan presentations and questions. Commissioner Jacobs asked if the firms had looked at our current plan. Director Bissias did not know if they had but said that Planning Resources and JSD Professional Services had both contacted him previously and interviewed him.

Open Space Master Planning Interviews

Hitchcock Design Group Presentation

Lacey Lawrence, Hitchcock Design Group
Steve Konters, Hitchcock Design Group
Elsa Fischer, BerryDunn
Andy Dogan, Williams Architects, via Zoom

Hitchcock Design gave an overview of their team and their qualifications, noting that two members have local connections. Lacey Lawrence, who would be the project manager, is a resident of La Grange, and Steve Konters grew up in nearby Countryside and attended Lyons Township High School. They explained that this team was put together specifically for our project and that the 10-year plan they would create would be a strong guide with attainable goals and fiscally achievable, and that they have experience with other plans they have completed in our region.

Their approach to master planning is done in five phases. The first phase entails gathering and analyzing data. This includes site visits and inventories of all parks and facilities, and mapping benchmarks against state and national trends, as well as similar local communities. A detailed condition analysis of all structures would be created, considering accessibility and how the facilities align with current and future programming needs. Three years of program analysis would also be done, comparing current programs to demographics to determine program net. Recommendations to strengthen future programming would be provided, with comparisons to similar providers, and analysis of intergovernmental agreements.

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The second phase focuses on community engagement, which was not in our RFP request, but they have included it. It is important to understand community needs through in-person community workshops (with COVID safety guidelines), stakeholder meetings with PDLG staff, community stakeholder meetings (including affiliate groups) and surveying the public. People are increasingly engaged online during COVID, and online surveys would be utilized.

Idea generation is next in the envision phase, when the data obtained is used to determine how to address our needs with the resources we have. The next phase is prioritization with the Board, which leads to the final phase where a detailed, customized action plan is developed for the next 10 years, with a breakdown for each year and each quarter of each year. Steps for the completion of each project will be spelled out. The plan is a living document that can be revised in response to changes such as funding opportunities or partnerships. Their firm will come back for the first three years at no cost to us to review and revise the master plan as needed.

Hitchcock Design Group stated they are the best team for our project with senior leadership and knowledge and a cohesive team that will create a customized action plan that is not just visionary, but attainable. The presentation was concluded, and the floor opened to questions.

Commissioner O'Brien commented that the insurance certificate included in the written proposal is expired and should be updated. Commissioner Collins asked what the acceptable level of return for feedback is for La Grange, which has a population of about 16,000. He also inquired if the facilities analysis would provide recommendations for better utilization or improvements. Hitchcock answered that 300-400 responses is typical, with 400-600 common with online engagement, and that social media outreach can increase participation. Regarding facilities, they will look at alternatives to help us make our facilities work better for us and generate more revenue.

Commissioner Opyd asked if there was a measurable difference between the two survey options of statistically significant and engagement surveys. Hitchcock explained that the statistical survey is a random sample where they try to reach all demographics, and the online engagement survey is open for everybody. The engagement survey can dig deeper into hot topics and based on the responses, you can ask follow up questions. Special interest groups may push the word and change the dynamic of online responses, which will be considered. He also asked if the six-month project timeline would be affected by COVID. They answered that it would not, but that factors that could impact the timeline include survey delays during the holidays and board meeting schedules.

Commissioner Jacobs asked if the statistically valid survey is done by mail and whether it is worth the cost, and how our web site would be used. Hitchcock

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answered that it is a mailing, but there are options for the recipient to reply online or via a phone survey. They can track responses and weigh them differently if a group sways the answers. For online purposes, they can create a web page using their platform but branded as PDLG, with options to allow the public to weigh in with comments, an idea board, specialized widgets, ability to "like" comments on our programs or facilities, and customized tabs. The link would be hosted by Social Pinpoint.

Director Bissias stated that the cost of this project is high, and the District has been affected by COVID. He asked if payment could be split between the current and next fiscal year. Hitchcock was agreeable and indicated that if price was a challenge, they are open to negotiating the scope to get to a budget that fits our needs.

Supt. of La Grange Fitness Jenny Bechtold asked how survey results will be mitigated with COVID going on and the waters navigated in this environment. Hitchcock responded that this is brand new territory, and we could address it head on by asking specific questions related to peoples' changes in thoughts and desires pre and post COVID. Park districts may also fill gaps created by COVID in childcare, local youth sports and parents looking for activities close to home. Hitchcock will balance COVID's effect on responses with a trends analysis; what people say they want is not always what they do.

Supt. of Facilities Chris Finn asked what plans Hitchcock has completed in the last 2-3 years that are comparable to La Grange. They referenced examples in their written proposal and added that they completed a plan for Brookfield in 1995 and updated it based on changing demographics.

President Vear asked which plan they have completed is the most successful and what makes it a success. He also inquired if they have other proposals pending. Glenview Park District was named as a full-service plan they completed which required working closely with financial staff on projected revenue challenges and opportunities. They are currently wrapping up a project in Algonquin, have no other proposals out, but are tracking a potential RFP for DeKalb.

President Vear asked if additional consultants would be used for the project, whether schools would be surveyed, and if they would create advertising options. Hitchcock explained that they have assembled a team for us and would not bring in additional consultants unless we requested it. They added that during community outreach, schools would be included as stakeholders, but to target young people they could hold outdoor conversations or hold Zoom workshops. They will also work to help us create our message and branding which we could put out in flyers, signs, web blasts and through our affiliates.

Commissioner Jacobs asked if Hitchcock had reviewed our current master plan and how it would inform what they do, and whether they would evaluate our

financial audits. They replied that they will look back to understand the points of that document and validate if items should stay or go. If requested, they can do program analysis financials.

JSD Professional Services, Inc. Presentation

Lori Vierow, JSD Professional Services

Sarah Dreier, JSD Professional Services

Jeffrey Braun, Cody/Braun & Associates

Ray Ochromowitz, Executive Decisions Consulting

Bonnie Covelli, Pathways Resource Group

JSD Professional Services gave an overview of their team and each members' qualifications. They have written over 40 comprehensive plans and are currently working on a park project nearby in La Grange Park. They have the experience needed to work with us. Sarah Dreier was involved with our previous plan and Jeffrey Braun was the architect for our recreation center. JSD is a multidisciplinary group and customizes their work for every community.

They began by explaining their project approach, which begins with inventory and assessment, when they will meet with key staff and the Board, review goals and the public input strategy, and dive into all existing documents. They will walk through all park sites, looking for opportunities for improvement, with an eye for the community demographic profile and any underserved areas. Our offerings will be compared to private entities and other park districts, as well as NRPA national standards. This information will allow them to set a baseline as a point of reference and enable us to respond to changing needs. Every building will also be walked with staff to review all conditions and discuss potential future use. A detailed report will be prepared by the architect which will include specifics, including electric and plumbing systems, and the remaining life and replacement schedule for building items. They will also evaluate whether expansion is needed.

The JSD public involvement strategy begins with meetings with residents and key stakeholders to gather opinions and ideas, and to let them know they will be heard. COVID guidelines will be followed, and additional avenues include Zoom, YouTube, Livestream, Facebook, with web pages for comments. They also like to have pop-up events to get feedback, such as setting up a table at our Trunk or Treat event. The needs assessment survey would be sent out twice via direct mail to a random sample for a statistical evaluation. They would then invite all the public to participate, including Countryside and our neighborhood network area, separating the data pool to look for trends between both. Input from the community is crucial, including all participants, staff, the Board, and program partners. All this data will be analyzed along with program data and demographics to create a 3-5 year trend history, noting that 2020 was affected by COVID. A tailored assessment of our recreation

programming would be done including success rates and comparisons to local and national standards, examining them to maximize revenue, and exploring current trends and cutting-edge programs. Societal changes will be considered to generate new program ideas. Past examples of this include programming to address latch-key kids, obesity, and environmental concerns. Contractor agreements, pricing strategies and our refund policy will also be examined. JSD will generate recommendations from all the data and provide costs for all of them, along with a priority list, including funding options such as grants and sponsorships. GIS mapping will be used, and a draft of the master plan will be created for the District to review, which they will modify based on our input to create the final plan. They have relevant experience with plans developed for Lockport and Bloomington. Their team members have sat on both sides of the table and they have the knowledge and resources to complete this project. The presentation was concluded, and the floor opened to questions.

Commissioner Opyd asked what the correlation is between the two types of surveys, statistical and general. They replied that generally the public sample includes more park district users, while the statistical sample provides more information from users and non-users to see what types of services they want. They run the data to compare and cross tabulate.

Commissioner Jacobs asked about the survey mailings and number of public meetings to be held. They answered that 3,000 random households would receive a postcard announcing the survey and a second mailing with a survey reminder. Multiple meetings will be held with focus groups, stakeholders, the Board, and staff without the director present. Questions are repeated for all the groups.

Commissioner Collins commented that Jeffrey Braun worked on our recreation and fitness centers and asked if his view would be less objective since he is in our facility often, and whether a fresh set of eyes is better. Jeffrey responded that JSD will look at everything together with a team approach and fresh eyes. He also inquired how the random households are determined for the statistical survey. They said the process depends on the list they use. If the address list is from public works, they would use every second or third house. If a mailing service is used the sample is literally random.

Commissioner O'Brien stated that he appreciated the reference to our Trunk or Treat event.

Supt. of La Grange Fitness Jenny Bechtold asked how they will navigate with the pandemic to make sure survey results are not skewed. JSD answered that it is a great time to do a survey. COVID is keeping many people at home and creating changes that make them want to share their opinions and ideas, and there is a desperate need for them to have recreation during the pandemic. Online survey options will promote participation.

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Supt. of Recreation Kevin Miller asked what the benchmark for success is for surveying 3,000 random households. They replied that the rate is typically 10%-20% and can be higher with social media promotion.

Director Bissias commented that COVID has affected our District and asked if a split payment between two fiscal years would be possible, possibly beginning the project in December and finishing in May, and JSD answered that it was fine.

President Vear asked which of their previous master plans was most successful and how that success is measured. They said the Lockport bicycle plan was a great success. The city council was discussing goals at the same meeting the plan was approved, and it was implemented immediately. Crystal Lake was also a success with the vast amount of data generated from the large number of parks and facilities and was a learning experience. He also asked if JSD always uses the same outside consultants, and why their current ones were chosen. It was explained that the same team is not used every time, and that in this case the members have all worked together before in different roles and are familiar with our district. He inquired how a land-locked community such as La Grange could be compared to NRPA standards and towns of similar population that have more green space. They answered that they have worked with other land-locked communities such as ours. An NRPA baseline is determined, but they also consider public input, state guidelines, and tailor to what our community wants. President Vear also asked if schools would be surveyed. JSD said that they would be included in focus groups but are not normally surveyed. Input from District 102, the City of Countryside and SEASPAR would definitely be solicited.

Commissioner Jacobs asked if the project would be shared with the community online. JSD answered that they will work directly with our web admin staff to create a new tab for the plan or set up a separate web address as a link. All the documents such as concept plans and PowerPoints would be there, and information is always current and updated as it evolves. The draft plan can be posted, and comments solicited, and they can create graphics that we can use on posters and postcards.

Supt. of La Grant Fitness Jenny Bechtold asked if JSD had reviewed our current plan and how it would affect the new plan. They indicated they have read it, Sarah worked on the prior plan, and they will look at all our old documents and files.

Planning Resources, Inc. Presentation

Darrell Garrison, Planning Resources

Steven Halberg, Planning Resources

Ron McGrath, TRIA Architecture

Ray Ochromowitz, Executive Decisions Consulting

Darrell Garrison thanked the Park District for the opportunity to be here and stressed that their plan would be carefully crafted and custom designed. He noted that it was late in the evening and hoped to energize the presentation. Their team members were introduced, with the Park District included as an important part of the team. Team member Ron McGrath lives in nearby Western Springs and is very familiar with the western suburbs.

Planning Resources' vision is to engage, inform, inspire, and improve the quality of life of the Park District and the community we serve, including Countryside, with whom we have an intergovernmental agreement. They presented a customized, updated logo they created for the Park District to reflect a brand recognizing that we are one district serving multiple communities - ONE Park District of La Grange.

They explained that their systemic approach has five phases. The first phase is evaluation, when a comprehensive inventory will be done. All parks and facilities will be visited with an eye for what is good, what is not so good, and what image is presented. The second phase is engagement, which is a team effort with our District, their team, and the community. Envisioning is next, which includes brainstorming with staff, the Board and the public as we look forward. Assessment of the information gathered follows, and then the final planning phase begins where it is all put together in an action plan.

Data collection will include demographics and a community profile, using census data and 2019 DCEO data. NRPA standards and IDNR standards will be used for benchmarking, which may be used for grant applications. A market analysis will determine what else is going on in the area, such as at the Max in McCook, to avoid using our resources on duplicate services. Local school and church amenities will also be considered, and a GIS data analysis completed. A thorough analysis will be done of our parks and facilities. The plan they will create will be a dynamic document that can change, with pieces added and removed as needed, like a 3-ring binder.

Demographics indicate that in our area there is a racial transition taking place, with more diversity moving westward from the city [of Chicago]. They will look for any deficiencies that may exist in parks and services, taking into account the east vs. west mentality that may exist in La Grange. Their evaluation will include our village and park district boundaries, including Countryside. The population of La Grange shows numbers growing in the 5-17 year old group and a decline in seniors under age 65. They will use metrics such as EAV data, census data and median ages to determine benchmarks, and compare

local trends to state and national trends.

During the engagement phase a two-pronged approach will be used with internal sources that include their team and our Board and staff, and external sources for feedback. External feedback will be complicated by COVID, but they will safely meet with live groups and offer Zoom options. They want the public to meet the planners and put their faces and names together, so they can contact them. They will engage with other groups like South Suburban, key players like special interest groups, and engage schools and students. Planning Resources will provide content for our social media platforms and continue to engage the community throughout the process.

To determine what the community needs and wants, a statistically valid community wide survey will be conducted by mail with a random sampling of 5,000 households. It will also be offered online as a non-statistical survey with responses evaluated differently. The online survey can limit responses by IP address to restrict duplication. Paper surveys will be provided over the counter at our location and others such as the library and Countryside city hall, to gather as much input as possible. Hard copies will be coded so they cannot be duplicated.

A programming analysis will be performed using indicators including success/cancel rates, participation data, three-year trends and their causes, national trends, average class size, equity for those that cannot afford services, and SWOT analysis. Pricing strategies to enhance revenue can be developed that do not increase program fees, and new program ideas generated.

The facilities assessment will entail looking at every square inch at every building, and include what image is projected. There will be meetings with staff for input on maintenance, mechanicals, and needs. A spreadsheet will be created to identify all items including code failures, safety hazards, and priority items, along with cost estimates. Projects will also be sorted in groups that allow cost to be economized. This is a living document that will be done in Excel, rather than a proprietary software, so that we can easily change it ourselves.

The master plan Planning Resources creates for us will identify short term, intermediate, and long-term goals. It will be flexible to adapt to ever changing needs, and they will return in a year to meet with us to reassess the plan. Their qualifications include 120 years of experience between their team members, and experience working with similar communities, such as the Pleasantdale Park District. Pleasantdale's service area also includes several communities and they created their master plan, as well as working with them on three projects included in the plan. Planning Resources was also involved with one of our previous studies done at several of our parks. Historically, they have prepared 60 different master plans including 18 parks and recreation plans, and they recognize that each plan is unique. The presentation was

concluded, and the floor opened to questions.

Director Bissias stated that the District's finance have been affected by COVID and asked if Planning Resources would be open to starting the project in December and completing it in May so that payment could be split between two fiscal years. They replied that they would work on the project scope with us and be flexible with the payment schedule. They also explained that timing will be important to avoid complications with the holidays, the election, weather and COVID. They spoke of a contract they received just before Thanksgiving in Muenster, Indiana. To start the project and beat the winter weather their team responded immediately and completed an inventory in 36 hours.

Commissioner Jacobs inquired how COVID will be factored into the trend analysis. They responded that it will be noted in the 10-year graph, just as other anomalies would be, such as a new facility opening. They will do a standard assessment on programming, but also include the impact of COVID, and what may change long term because of COVID, and how it has changed human behavior. Virtual programs may remain more pronounced.

Commissioner Jacobs also commented that the surveys were listed as an optional add on, with a statistical survey, but asked if a non-statistical survey would be included in the scope. They answered that they are offered separately in their RFP because they were not sure of our preference. They plan to hold a 2-day "meet the planners" event to engage the public and let them know how important their input is. They will incorporate virtual and in-person alternatives, and there is an option for 24/7 online updates and real time feedback.

Commissioner Opyd asked if they had seen any trends in facility use or programs in the last couple of years that were a surprise. They indicated that they had, for example pickleball, which was brought back to the area by snowbirds. Nature based programming has also become popular and holding programs outdoors. E-sports is also a new trend.

Supt. of La Grange Fitness Jenny Bechtold questioned what kind of follow up is offered after the plan is complete. They answered that they will come back in a year for a review, and that they want to become our go-to for answers and resources.

Supt. of Facilities Chris Finn asked how much staff would participate in the process. Planning Resources replied that staff is vital and would be involved from beginning to end, including front line staff in particular. Staff will also identify stakeholders and form the steering committee, and their input is key on current programming challenges. This will be a team effort and our ideas will not be disregarded.

President Vear inquired which of their recent master plans was most successful and how success is judged. Their plan for the Bloomingdale Park

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District was cited. Bloomingdale's newly appointed executive director was the director of parks at the time of the plan and said that it was a Godsend, and after nine years they are still following the plan.

There were no additional questions and President Vear thanked Planning Resources for being here tonight.

Public Comments (Board Manual Section #152)

None

Board Comments

President Vear noted the late hour and encouraged everyone to take the time before the next regular board meeting to consider tonight's master plan presentations.

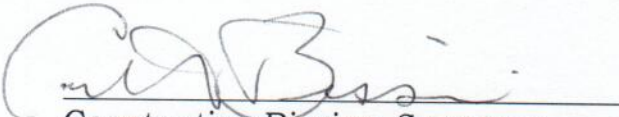
Commissioner Opyd congratulated the Board on passing the contract tonight, which is monumental. He thanked Dean and the staff for a great job. All the commissioners expressed agreement.

Adjournment

Commissioner Collins moved for adjournment at 9:17 P.M. The motion was seconded by Commissioner O'Brien and passed unanimously by Voice Vote.



Robert Vear, President



Constantine Bissias, Secretary

Approved 10/12/2020