

**MINUTES OF THE  
REGULAR MEETING OF THE  
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS  
SKOKIE PARK DISTRICT  
SEPTEMBER 19, 2023  
7:00 P.M.**

**ATTENDANCE AT MEETING**

Board Members Present: President Mike Reid  
Vice President Minal Desai  
Commissioner Susan Aberman  
Commissioner Ezra Jaffe

Others Present: Executive Director/Secretary Michelle J. Tuft  
Superintendent of Business Services William G. Schmidt  
Superintendent of Parks, Planning & Facilities Corrie Guynn  
Superintendent of Recreation Breanne Labus  
Assistant Superintendent of Recreation Mary Amato  
Director of Human Resources Stephenie Gualano  
Marketing and Communications Director Jim Bottorff  
Executive Administrative Assistant Ann Perez

Absent: Commissioner Mary Oshana

**CALL TO ORDER**

President Reid called the regular meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners to order at 7:00 p.m. President Reid called for the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

**CITIZEN COMMENTS**

No citizen comments.

**PUBLIC HEARING ON THE BOND ISSUE NOTIFICATION ACT**

President Reid called the Public Hearing on the Bond Issue Notification Act to order at 7:01 p.m. He asked for any comments regarding the General Obligation Alternate Bond sale, Series 2023B. There were no comments or questions. President Reid closed the Public Hearing at 7:02 p.m.

**ADOPT A PARK**

Executive Director Tuft welcomed and thanked the participants of the Adopt A Park program. Ms. Tuft said Superintendent Guynn selected the most active participants in the program and wanted to thank them for their commitment to their selected park.

Mr. Guynn thanked Mr. Steven Lichtermon representing Orchard Village for adopting and maintaining Oakton Park and Laramie Park weekly. It has been a huge help having them clean these two highly used parks.

Mr. Guynn thanked Mr. Omar Khan representing the Douglas Center group for adopting and maintaining Lauth Park and the Muslim Community Center for adopting and maintaining Lockwood Park. Mr. Khan introduced his wife, Afreen Papa who is the Co-Chair for the Health and Wellness Committee for the Muslim Community Center. Mr. Guynn said adopt a park program keeps the higher used parks cleaner and looking nice, and it much appreciated by staff.

Ms. Tuft said the district really appreciates it when the community helps clean the parks. Certificates were awarded by President Reid and pictures were taken.

Mr. Khan and Mr. Lichtermon thanked the board for recognizing their organizations' efforts.

### **CONSENT AGENDA APPROVAL**

Commissioner Jaffe moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Aberman seconded the motion. On a roll call vote, all Commissioners voted aye. Commissioner Oshana was absent. Motion carried. The Consent Agenda consisted of the minutes of the public hearing for Pawnee Park of August 9, 2023; minutes of the regular meeting of August 15, 2023; bills payable for the month August/September 2023, Treasurer's Report, and Staff Reports.

### **PERSONNEL POLICY UPDATES**

Director of Human Resources Gualano presented the proposed personnel policy changes. The proposed changes will help with staff recruitment and retention. She surveyed several area park districts to determine how our benefits compared, and the proposed changes will help align Skokie with other area park districts. The survey was sent to 34 local park districts.

The policy changes requested are:

- Remote Work Policy – The policy will define remote working. Some staff have been working remotely since COVID without a formal policy.
- Paid Holidays – Juneteenth will be added as a paid holiday for full-time staff.
- Personal Days – One more personal day will be added for full time employees to use on days that are not district designated holidays, or for personal reasons.
- Sick Leave – Full time staff will now have 12 days a year for sick leave, raised from seven.
- Childcare Discounts – Discounts will be increased to 50% for Tot Learning Center, Devonshire Preschool, and SPACE for full-time and IMRF employees. The 50% discount will also be extended to any staff working at these programs; employees must work a minimum of two days to be eligible for the discount.
- Social Equity Policy – This is a formal policy to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Overtime/Compensatory Time/Flex Time – These policies were further defined to eliminate old language that was confusing.

Ms. Gualano discussed each policy change in detail and asked for questions. Commissioner Jaffe asked if job performance will be considered for those requesting to work remotely. Ms. Gualano said that job performance is considered. Ms. Aberman said that the discounts will help attract employees.

Commissioner Aberman moved to approve the policies as proposed, effective October 1, 2023. Vice President Desai seconded the motion. On a roll call vote, all Commissioners voted aye. Commissioner Oshana was absent. Motion carried.

### **APPROVAL OF THE PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT PURCHASE FOR LAWLER PARK**

Mr. Guynn requested approval of the playground equipment purchase for Lawler Park. The playground will be purchased through the same manufacturer as the Pawnee Park playground and the district will receive a discount for purchasing two. Mr. Guynn reminded the board that Lawler Park received an OSLAD grant and that it includes a zipline that was requested by residents at the Public Hearing. The other two parks with ziplines are located in the south and central portions of Skokie and Lawler Park is located at the far north side of Skokie.

Commissioner Aberman moved to approve the bid from BCI Burke for the playground equipment at Lawler Park for a total of \$147,390.22. Commissioner Jaffe seconded the motion. On a roll call vote, all Commissioners voted aye. Commissioner Oshana was absent. Motion carried.

### **APPROVAL OF THE PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT PURCHASE FOR PAWNEE PARK**

Mr. Guynn requested approval of the playground equipment purchase for Pawnee Park. The equipment, which includes the swings, is being purchased through a Sourcewell cooperative contract with BCI Burke. The discount of \$4,366 will be received for combining the purchase of this equipment with the Lawler Park playground equipment.

President Reid commented that he saw the best turnout for the public hearing at Pawnee Park with about twenty people in attendance. He liked the idea of holding the public hearing at the park.

Vice President Desai moved to approve the bid from BCI Burke for the playground equipment at Pawnee Park for a total of \$73,672.28. Commissioner Jaffe seconded the motion. On a roll call vote, all Commissioner voted aye. Commissioner Oshana was absent. Motion carried.

### **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

The next regular meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners is Tuesday, October 17, 2023, at 7:00 p.m.

### **COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

Commissioner Aberman asked staff and the board to consider purchasing the Bessie Rhodes School property. The Park District already owns adjacent property and asked that it be looked into. Commissioner Jaffe read an article that there are delays with the fifth ward school opening and Bessie Rhodes School will not close until the 2025-2026 school year. Mr. Guynn said the park district maintains the three playgrounds and one of the three playgrounds is on the plan for replacement, but the district will have to wait and see what happens.

Commissioner Jaffe said the newly designed Central Park playground is great. Ms. Tuft said we have received many compliments. Commissioner Aberman asked how the splash pad works. Mr. Guynn explained how it works and said the sign explaining it to the public is not posted yet.

Vice President Desai discussed an email she received regarding Ms. Swift at Meyers School SPACE. Ms. Desai's children had her as a teacher and she was phenomenal. Assistant Superintendent Amato suggested honoring Ms. Swift with a certificate of excellence at the November board meeting. Commissioner Aberman suggested inviting the SPACE teachers and students from Meyers School to attend the meeting.

President Reid said he has never seen such a good turnout for a re-opening of the park like he saw at Central Park. He complimented all of the staff that were there that day.

President Reid read about the upgrades that were done at the Tot Learning Center. His son and daughter-in-law have a son in infant care and were thrilled when they saw the new upgrades.

#### **DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS**

Ms. Tuft gave an update on the status of the pickleball courts at Oakton Park. The project is behind schedule due to the delay in getting the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District permit and rainfall issues. Staff were hopeful that they would open in the fall, but they will more likely open in the spring.

Ms. Tuft said the district finally received the funds from the Skatium insurance claim in the amount of \$268,000.00. Commissioner Aberman thanked staff for their perseverance. Commissioner Jaffe asked how that compared to the total claim and it is \$1,000.00 less, which was the deductible. President Reid said that it was tremendous.

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

Commissioner Jaffe asked if the board could get a summary report on the Backlot Bash. Ms. Tuft said expenses are still coming in. Revenues are in and staff will have a report for the November board meeting. Expenses went up in every category and staff are looking at different ways to curb some expenses for next year. Backlot is a community event, and the hope is it to break even. We had a great year with the second highest revenue behind 2019. Now that Ms. Labus has completed a full year of planning and running the event, she will have more insight into where money can be saved. Ms. Tuft

said there was a Backlot Bash re-cap meeting earlier today that generated a lot of discussion.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

Commissioner Jaffe asked about the process for developing Skokie Sports Park East. He asked if there was a timeframe. Ms. Tuft and Mr. Guynn will first determine who to bring in as the project consultant. Once a consultant is hired meetings will begin. Ms. Tuft said by December there should be a determination made for the architect. Commissioner Jaffe said we need to ask to extend the lease for Skokie Sports Park as the lease expires in 2032 and Ms. Tuft agreed.

Commissioner Aberman asked about the Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Tuft said it is due in 2025 and we will need a comprehensive survey.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Commissioner Aberman moved to enter into Executive Session to discuss Executive Session minutes, semi-annual review of the minutes and to authorize the destruction of executive session recordings pursuant to Section 2(c)(21). Commissioner Jaffe seconded the motion. On a roll call vote, all Commissioner voted aye. Commissioner Oshana was absent. Motion carried.

### **ACTION TO BE TAKEN FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION**

The regular meeting reconvened at 7:57 p.m.

Commissioner Aberman moved to approve the Executive Session Minutes of April 20, 2023. Vice President Desai seconded the motion. On a roll call vote, all Commissioners voted aye. Commissioner Oshana was absent. Motion carried.

Following the review of executive session meeting minutes dating from January 2004, Commissioner Aberman moved to release the minutes from April 20, 2023, and to have those remaining minutes not previously released remain closed because the need for confidentiality still exists as to all or part of the minutes. Commissioner Jaffe seconded the motion. On a roll call vote, all Commissioners voted aye. Commissioner Oshana was absent. Motion carried.

Commissioner Aberman moved to approve Ordinance # 23-007 authorizing the destruction of verbatim recordings for the closed session meetings of November 16, 2021, January 18, 2022, and March 15, 2022. Vice President Desai seconded the motion. On a roll call vote, all Commissioners voted aye. Commissioner Oshana was absent. Motion carried.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Vice President Desai moved to adjourn the regular meeting. Commissioner Aberman seconded the motion. All Commissioners voted aye. Commissioner Oshana was absent. Motion carried. The regular meeting adjourned at 8:01p.m.

  
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Mike Reid  
President

  
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Michelle J. Tuft  
Secretary

October 17, 2023