



**Skokie Park District
FINANCE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday March 13, 2024**



The Finance Committee Meeting of Wednesday, March 13, 2024, was called to order by Finance Chairman Ezra Jaffe at 6:02 p.m. In attendance were Commissioners Aberman, Jaffe, and Vice President Desai. Staff in attendance included Executive Director Michelle Tuft, Superintendent of Business Services William Schmidt, Superintendent of Recreation Breanne Labus, Superintendent of Parks and Planning Corrie Guynn, Assistant Superintendent of Recreation Mary Amato, Marketing and Communications Manager Jim Bottorff, Business Manager Laura Le, and Assistant to the Director Dima Kirland.

Budget Introduction

Director Tuft opened the meeting with an introduction and explained the highlights and challenges in preparing this year's budget. This year's budget includes the rearrangement of classes within the Recreation fund to reflect programming and management leadership. Funding capital projects continues to be a priority. Three playgrounds, Seneca, Lawler, and Pawnee Parks will be replaced in FY 2024-25. Staff have done a remarkable job putting this together.

Mr. Schmidt highlighted the general assumptions in the budget book. Assumptions include:

- A utilities increase.
- A health insurance increase
- A 4% salary pool increase.
- A minimum wage increase, which has a district wide affect throughout all programs.

Each specific program area includes written assumptions.

Budget Presentation by Fund

Mr. Schmidt started with a summary of the funds, operating, auxiliary, and capital, showing the addition or deletion to fund balances. This budget shows an increase to the total fund balance at the end of fiscal year 2025. Commissioner Jaffe requested that staff add the balance of the outstanding debt at the end of the year. Mr. Schmidt will send these balances under a separate cover this year and will include the amounts in future presentations.

Mr. Schmidt highlighted the Corporate Fund, fund 10, administration area. After answering questions, Mr. Schmidt introduced Jim Bottorff, Marketing and Communication Manager.

Mr. Bottorff presented a detailed explanation of the Marketing and Sponsorship activities. Mr. Bottorff highlighted the increase in sponsorship dollars. There are more sponsors with smaller dollar amounts. Mr. Bottorff went through the fundraising process and how those dollars are transferred to various areas. Mr. Bottorff explained that since the

pandemic the district has reduced printing costs and is using Facebook and other social media to promote programs. This will continue in the fiscal year 2024-2025. Budgeted in the fiscal year 2024-2025 are two new electric signs replacing the signs presently located outside of the Weber Leisure Center and at Oakton Park. After all questions were answered, Mr. Bottorff introduced Corrie Guynn, Superintendent of Parks, and Planning.

Mr. Guynn went through revenues and expenses at Park Services. The highlights of the Park Service's budget included increases in minimum wage for part-time salaries and an increase in landscaping supplies. Mr. Guynn also mentioned that all open full-time positions will be filled and hiring seasonal workers will return to pre-Covid levels. Improvements at POOCH Park, if approved by the City of Evanston, are also included. Commissioner Jaffe asked about the increasing fees at POOCH Park. Mr. Guynn explained that once the capital improvements are completed, the district will raise fees. Commissioner Jaffe also asked about a memorial wall for dogs at Pooch Park. Mr. Guynn said it is in the works. After answering questions, Mr. Guynn introduced Superintendent of Recreation Breanne Labus and Assistant Superintendent Mary Amato.

Mrs. Labus and Mrs. Amato presented the Recreation Fund which includes Administration, Camps, Devonshire Cultural Center, Oakton Community Center, Childcare, Special Events, and Festivals. Administration is where property taxes are collected. Expenses include the cost of the administrative staff and allocations. Property taxes collected here help fund other areas within the Recreation Fund. Camps were presented next and are showing a nice return. Mrs. Amato discussed Devonshire, Oakton, and Childcare (Tot Learning Center and the SPACE program), citing the difficulty of staffing. Mrs. Amato discussed a new hiring incentive program that offers different tiers of cash bonuses for camp staff.

Mrs. Amato said that the toddler two room was reopened at Tot Learning Center which will help with revenue, especially after wage increases and the conversion of six part-time positions to full-time positions. Vice President Desai asked if they are hiring additional staff for SPACE was assured they are always looking to increase staffing. Commissioner Jaffee asked about Devonshire Cultural Arts revenues increase for fiscal year 2024-2025. Two additional shows were added to the budget. Mrs. Labus then covered Special Events, and Festivals highlighting music from the bands booked for the upcoming Backlot Bash. With all questions answered, Mrs. Labus moved on to the Revenue Facilities Fund.

Mrs. Labus, and Mrs. Amato informed the commissioners that they conducted a wage analysis to ensure wage equity across the district. The discrepancy in wages was especially apparent at the Skatium, Tot Learning Center, and Devonshire. Salaries were adjusted for the end of this fiscal year and the next.

Mrs. Labus presented the Sports Park East budget which included field permits and program registrations. These revenues, and a portion of the Athletic Director's salary, moved from the Athletic budget to Sports Park East. Mrs. Labus turned the program back to Mr. Guynn.

Mr. Guynn covered the Dammrich Rowing Center, which is budgeted to make a profit. He also discussed golf operations at Sports Park and Weber Park Golf Course which are all budgeted to make a profit. A new indoor simulator (The Bunker) was introduced in fiscal year 2023-2024 and will be enhanced in fiscal year 2024-2025. Alcohol sales

should continue to be successful in 2024-2025. Mr. Guynn also covered Aquatics at Devonshire Aquatic Center, swim lessons, and Skokie Water Playground. The 2024-2025 pool season was very successful. Swim Lessons finally returned to Niles North in March 2023 and are budgeted in fiscal year 2023-2024. After answering all questions, Mr. Guynn turned the program back to Mrs. Labus.

Mrs. Labus presented the Weber Leisure Center budget which includes Fitness First. Fitness First membership is rebounding, and staff are optimistic this trend will continue. Ms. Labus presented the Skatium assumptions and budget. The Skatium will be back in full force and classes are filling. There is still a boiler issue at the Skatium, but the Skatium renovation project is complete.

Mrs. Labus presented Athletics Camps and Athletics. Athletic camps registration continues to trend upwards and additional contractual camps will be offered. Additional Directors were added to camp sites. Revenues will increase in lessons and leagues due to the ever-popular pickleball. A full-time athletic supervisor was added and will be dedicated to racquet sports.

Mrs. Labus discussed Emily Oaks Nature Center. Birthday parties are growing. Growing Sprouts, the center's preschool program will be adding a full-day option. The birthday parties and full-day preschool will help increase revenues. The salary and benefit increases are due to adding a full-time office supervisor and a full-time equivalent maintenance position, as well as budgeting to be fully staffed with program naturalists and land management staff.

The Skokie Heritage Museum has a new manager that is doing a wonderful job increasing rentals and adding innovative programs. The main expense increase at the museum is from transitioning the part-time coordinator to a full-time position for six months. The increase will only happen if programming continues to grow.

Mr. Schmidt covered the auxiliary funds; Special Recreation, IMRF, Liability, Social Security, Audit, and Debt Service. The major highlights were the fund balances.

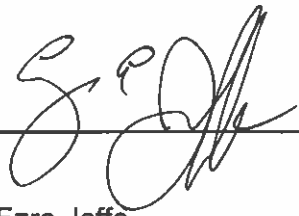
Mr. Schmidt then introduced Mr. Guynn who presented the Capital budget and explained the large list of projects in three funds, 11, 12 and 20.

Ms. Tuft thanked the staff and Board for their time and described the procedural next steps for approval.

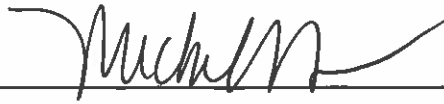
Ms. Tuft asked the commissioners if staff could discontinue putting together the PowerPoint presentation. It seemed like the commissioners preferred referencing the books. They all said they would rather use the books and the presentation wasn't necessary.

It was the consensus of the Finance Committee to prepare a Tentative Budget and Appropriation Ordinance for approval at the March 19, 2024, meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners so it can be on public display for the thirty-day period required to meet the legal requirements.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned by Commissioner Jaffe, Chairman Finance Committee, at 7:55 p.m.



Ezra Jaffe
Chairman Finance Committee



Michelle Tuft
Executive Director, Secretary

April 19, 2024