



**MINUTES OF THE OF THE
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
PUBLIC HEARING ON SENECA PARK LAND SWAP WITH LUBAVITCH CHABAD
Weber Leisure Center
9300 Weber Park Place, SKOKIE, IL
OCTOBER 27, 2021 - 6:00 P.M.**

ATTENDANCE AT MEETING

Board Members Present: Vice-President Mike Reid
Commissioner Minal Desai
Commissioner Ezra Jaffe
Commissioner Mary Oshana

Others Present: Executive Director/Secretary Michelle J. Tuft
Superintendent of Parks Corrie Guynn
Office Manager Park Services Dima Kirland
Matt Brandmeyer, Village of Skokie

CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Jaffe called the public hearing of the Board of Park Commissioners for the Seneca Park Land Swap with Lubavitch Chabad to order at 6:34 p.m.

Commissioner Jaffe introduced himself, Vice President Mike Reid, Commissioner Desai, Commissioner Mary Oshana, and Executive Director Michelle Tuft.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TUFT OPENING REMARKS

Executive Direct Tuft explained some logistics:

- Superintendent Guynn will take everyone through the slide show which will explain in detail the proposed project.
- She asked everyone to hold their comments or questions until the end of the presentation. For the sake of time, when commenting or asking questions, she said that each person will be limited to approximately two minutes, and we would let them know when they had 30 seconds left. She also asked that repetitive comments be kept to a minimum.
- Executive Director Tuft provided some project history and addressed some misinformation regarding the proposed land swap:
 - History:
 - On June 21 a public hearing was held to discuss the proposed land swap.
 - At that meeting Lubavitch Chabad's proposed plan was presented.
 - The public asked questions and made comments.
 - The overall sense at the meeting was that the neighbors did not like the plan or aspects of the plan, so Rabbi Posner reimagined the land swap and that is what was presented tonight. Two options were presented.

- One option is a revision of the plan that was presented in June, meant to address some of resident's concerns.
- The second option is more of a compromise, also addressing some of the resident's concerns.
- Misinformation
 - The project is not a land grab. By State of Illinois Park District Code, the Park District can only exchange land of equal or greater value. Meaning, the Park District cannot sell park land, nor is the park district interested in selling any park land.
 - The Park will not and cannot shrink in size as a result of this project and may actually gain some square footage.
 - The Park Board would have to formally vote to approve the swap for this project to move forward, which will not happen this evening.
 - The Board would need to put this issue on the agenda and vote, at a monthly board meeting.
 - The board meetings occur on the third Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. in this room.
 - The next meeting is Tuesday, November 16, and that would be the earliest they would vote on this issue.
 - Be sure to sign in and include your email if you would like to be notified if the Board puts the item on the agenda. The agendas are also available on the Park District's website under the About SPD tab, SPD Business, Board of Commissioner's Business and Meetings.
 - Information regarding the proposed project will be placed on the Seneca Park page on the website, under the Parks tab, Seneca Park, no later than Friday.
 - Because the Park District and the Village of Skokie are separate governmental agencies with separate elected officials, Park District projects are not usually voted on by the Village. However, because this project includes relocating an alley, which is owned by the Village of Skokie, the Village will also need to approve aspects of this project. So, if the Park Board were to approve this swap, the project would then need to go to the Village of Skokie's Planning Commission for rezoning. Ultimately the Village Board of Trustees would also need to approve the project.

PRESENTATION

Superintendent Guynn presented the conceptual plans of Option 1 and Option 2. The presentation is attached and was posted to the Skokie Park District website the morning after the meeting.

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

General summary of residents' comments that are in favor of the land swap:

It is a positive change as it will not only benefit the synagogue visitors/attendees but also the neighborhood and the patrons of Skokie.

From looking at the plan for either option, the trees that will be removed are not in great health anyway, so it would not be an environmental hazard. It would be good to replace with healthier shrubs and trees.

Put a fence around the basketball court to prevent the balls bouncing outside of the park where it can be unsafe.

Adding the parking lot would make it safer than parking on the street. People are parking in both directions on one side of the street, it is even messier when the weather is bad.

Either option would be good for the neighborhood. If the court is moved to the middle, that will prevent the balls from bouncing to the alley.

The parking lot makes a lot of sense. It would prevent accidents happening from parallel parking and protect young children and seniors crossing the street in a heavy traffic area.

Rabbi Posner has been a good neighbor and he is extending his kindness by trying to find a solution to please the neighbors. The parking lot would prevent the congestion on the street during events and provide safety. It is selfless of the Rabbi to have this plan and spend a lot of money to come up with a solution for the synagogue and neighborhood.

Neighbors that live across the street welcome the change for the safety.

It will not bring additional traffic or congestion, it is safer to park in a parking lot than parallel parking, especially for the elderly.

Change is understandably difficult for many people. Currently there are parking lots near many parks. Parking lots make it easier for people that are visiting the park, i.e., moms with strollers. There will be enough greenery and shrubs around the parking lot for the neighbors that are worried about looking out to a parking lot.

A parking lot would make it so much easier and safer for moms with strollers.

One thing that is more important than green space is the spirit of humanity.

Green space would not be lost if there is a parking lot built, green space would be added where the house is located.

Summary of general residents' comments that are not for the land swap:

There was the question of why there weren't studies done for other parking options such as using the Dollar Tree parking. Rabbi explained that he approaches the neighboring businesses to use their parking lots when there are events at the synagogue and is sometimes granted use, but usually outside of that business's hours of operation. Executive Director Tuft said the synagogue could approach the businesses to see if they would like to conduct studies on neighboring parking lots. The rabbi is looking for a better and long-term solution. Another question was why not use the property the synagogue purchased as a parking lot. The rabbi said the Village of Skokie recommended the land swap.

This land swap could be setting a precedent. This would be degrading parks and green space. Executive Director Tuft explained that every situation is different. Whatever request is presented to the Park District, like this request, must go through the public process before it is approved or denied.

Contrary to other beliefs, this will have an environmental impact, it would damage park space which goes against the sustainability District policy.

Residents that live across the street and down the street said they never complained about the street parking used during the synagogue events. They would rather have that than the parking lot.

Residents that are directly across the street from the park do not want to look at a parking lot. They are alright with people parking on the street.

There was a concern about security around the parking lot. Executive Director Tuft said there would be safety lighting added to the new parking lot.

A resident stated that the land swap doesn't align with the District's mission.

Consider the noise that would funnel through the alley.

There will be an impact on things like water run-off and pollution from adding a parking lot.

A resident was involved in an accident last year where he was t-boned from someone coming out of the alley. The daycare center crosses the alley when they use the park and adding a parking lot to the alley would cause more congestion and make it unsafe. It is not difficult to find street parking on Karlov and Keystone.

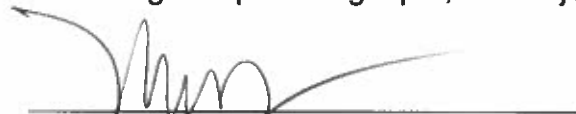
Executive Tuft stated this is the Park District's process to engage the community and get additional comments. If you have additional questions, you can always contact us, Superintendent Guynn's email is on the website. The board will decide if they are going to put the item on the November agenda. If you signed in with your email, you will be notified. Agendas are always on the website a week before the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Ezra Jaffe thanked everyone for attending and providing input, and adjourned the meeting at 7:43 p.m.



Susan Aberman
President



Michelle Tuft
Secretary

November 16, 2021

Vision Statement

The Skokie Park District envisions a community where all of its residents enjoy a high quality of life through leisure time pursuits, beautiful open spaces, and first-rate facilities.

Mission Statement

The Skokie Park District will realize its vision through teamwork, community partnerships, sound fiscal management, and creativity in every area of its operation.

Core Values

The Skokie Park District will fulfill its mission through:

●Commitment● Integrity● Innovation● Service ●Openness ●Environmental Stewardship ●Inclusiveness