

**MINUTES OF THE
REGULAR MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
SKOKIE PARK DISTRICT
NOVEMBER 16, 2021
7:00 P.M.**

ATTENDANCE AT MEETING

Board Members Present:

President Susan Aberman
Vice President Michael Reid
Commissioner Minal Desai
Commissioner Ezra Jaffe
Commissioner Mary Oshana

Others Present:

Executive Director/Secretary Michelle J. Tuft
Superintendent of Business Services William G. Schmidt
Superintendent of Parks Corrie Guynn
Superintendent of Recreation Breanne Labus
Superintendent of Facilities Jon Marquardt
Executive Administrative Assistant Ann Perez
Director of Communications and Marketing Jim Bottorff

CALL TO ORDER

President Aberman called the regular meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners to order at 7:00 p.m., followed by the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

President Aberman said before proceeding with Citizen Comments, there was a need to have an executive session tonight and asked for a motion to amend the agenda.

Vice President Reid moved to amend the agenda to add a closed session immediately after the attorney's report for the purpose of discussing the potential purchase or lease of real property for the use of the District under Section 2(c)(5) of the Open Meetings Act and for the purpose of discussing setting the price for sale or lease of real property owned by the District under Section 2(c)(6) of the Open Meetings Act. Commissioner Jaffe seconded the motion. On a roll call vote, all Commissioners voted aye. Motion carried.

COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS

Fifty-one residents expressed their support and/or opposition of the proposed Seneca Park land swap. The residents voiced their support of the land swap saying it would be a benefit to the community, increase safety for the children at the basketball court and crossing the street, and provide easier access to Lubavitch Chabad for elderly and people with disabilities. Most residents in favor of the swap preferred Option 1 over Option 2.

The residents voicing opposition of the land swap had concerns about the safety of a parking lot, additional car traffic on the street, pollution, flooding issues, a perceived decrease in the value of their property, and the loss of green space and trees.

CONSENT AGENDA APPROVAL

Vice President Reid moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Jaffe seconded the motion. On a roll call vote, all Commissioners voted aye. Motion carried. The Consent Agenda consisted of the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of October 19, 2021; Minutes of the Board Workshop of October 26, 2021; Minutes of Public Hearing for the Seneca Park Land Swap of October 27, 2021; Minutes of the Public Hearing for Menominee Park Improvements of November 2, 2021; and Minutes of Public Hearing for Lorel Park Improvements of November 2, 2021; bills payable for the month of September/October 2021, Treasurer's Report, and Staff Reports.

APPROVAL OF 2021 TAX LEVY ORDINANCE #21-008

Treasurer Schmidt requested approval of the 2021 Tax Levy Ordinance #21-008. Mr. Schmidt said the Ordinance will be filed with the Cook County Tax Extension Office and is the same dollar amount the Board approved in resolution form at the October Board Meeting. Mr. Schmidt asked for any questions or comments and there were none.

Commissioner Oshana moved to approve the 2021 Tax Levy Ordinance #21-008 in the amount of \$8,377,000. This does not include debt service costs, or the loss and cost factor added by the County. Commissioner Jaffe seconded the motion. On a roll call vote all Commissioners voted aye. Motion carried.

President Aberman asked for a motion to adjourn to executive session.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Vice President Reid moved to enter executive session for the purpose of discussing the potential purchase of real property for the use of the District under Section 2(c)(5) of the Open Meetings Act and for the purpose of discussing setting the price for sale or lease of real property owned by the District under Section 2(c)(6) of the Open Meetings Act. Commissioner Desai seconded the motion. On a roll call vote, all Commissioners voted aye. Motion carried.

The meeting reconvened at 10:45 p.m. Upon returning from executive session, President Aberman continued with the meeting.

SENECA PARK LAND SWAP

Ms. Tuft provided the staff recommendation regarding the Seneca Park land swap to the Board and attendees. Staff recommends Option 2 and Ms. Tuft explained that staff preferred this option because it is a compromise for the opposing sides. In this option, fewer trees need to be removed and replaced, and the parking is moved further into the park, which will be less visible to neighbors who do not want to look at a parking lot. Option 2 also provides ADA accessibility and better access to the park for those who prefer to drive to the park. After Ms. Tuft finished explaining the staff's recommendation, President Aberman opened the meeting to Board discussion.

Commissioner Oshana expressed safety concerns regarding the proposed land swap. She said more information needs to be gathered before deciding on the matter. She wants to ensure that the proposed transaction is an improvement to safety and will serve a public interest. Legal counsel has been retained by the neighbors and for these reasons she must vote no on the proposal. She is willing to reconsider this transaction once the appropriate information has been gathered and due diligence is done to ensure the basic criteria is met, criteria such as does this transaction improve safety, does it serve public interest, and does it

benefit the core mission of the park district? She appreciated the time the residents took to come to the meeting and express their feelings and concerns.

President Aberman said it was a real struggle for the Board. The Board listened to both sides, and it is the Board's responsibility to hear the opinion of the residents of the community of Skokie. In the end as a Commissioner, her responsibility is to do what she feels is best for the park and the community as a whole.

Vice President Reid appreciates the passion on both sides. The Board took all of the comments into consideration, and it has been a struggle. The board gave their own opinions and discussed the issue as a Board and want to do what is best for all of Skokie, not just a particular neighborhood.

Commissioner Desai thanked everyone for coming. It was a difficult decision for all of the board members, and she wanted residents to know that the board considered the community as a whole.

Commissioner Jaffee did not comment.

President Aberman asked for a vote. Commissioner Jaffe made the motion to approve Option 2 of the proposed land swap with Lubavitch Chabad, as presented at the October 27, 2021 Public Hearing, and direct staff and legal counsel to: (1) undertake the necessary steps and prepare the required documents to satisfy the requirements of the Park District Code, (2) obtain any required Village of Skokie approvals, and (3) present the final proposed swap and all associated documents to the Park Board for consideration and potential approval at a future meeting. Vice President Reid seconded the motion. On a roll call vote Commissioner Desai and Commissioner Oshana voted no. Commissioner Jaffe, Vice President Reid, and President Aberman voted aye. Motion carried.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Treasurer Schmidt discussed the six-month financial actuals ending 10/31/2021. He highlighted the operating funds, Fund 10, Fund 20, Fund 40, and Fund 55 explaining in detail the revenues and expenses in the various funds. Mr. Schmidt also provided a summary of the auxiliary funds.

Mr. Schmidt said he presented a lot of information and if any of the board members had questions to contact him. Commissioner Oshana said this was a very good synopsis of information. Ms. Tuft asked the Board if it would be satisfactory to present the financial reports on a quarterly bases and the Board agreed. The next financial report will be in February for financials as of January 1, 2022. Ms. Tuft thanked Mr. Schmidt for his hard work preparing the report.

No motion required, informational only.

APPROVAL OF TALKING FARM IMPROVEMENTS

Ms. Tuft discussed the Talking Farm's request for several improvements to the farm. Ms. Tuft said when the agreement was written it stated that future improvements required Park District approval and thus the proposal is before the Board for their consideration.

The original plan that was approved has several phases to the development of the farm. The following improvements/additions are planned for this next phase:

- New heated greenhouse (with propane)
- Redesigned Education Garden including a patio space with shade sails, new paving, a trellis tunnel, a seating ring, screening fence, stone planters, decorative fencing, crushed granite paving, vertical garden obelisk, and plant beds
- New sidewalks with ADA curb cuts
- New entry walkway with seating, light bollards, and plantings
- Painted crosswalks
- New identity feature
- New mulch pathway
- New concrete walk

Ms. Tuft said The Talking Farm would like to build a Welcome Center in a future phase and will need to fundraise for the construction of a building.

Ms. Tuft asked if the new Commissioners were familiar with the Talking Farm and said a visit could be planned. Commissioner Jaffe hasn't seen the farm and Commissioner Desai would like to be included in the visit as she has not been there in a while. President Aberman visits the Talking Farm weekly and said they really need a greenhouse. President Reid has not been there in a few years.

Commissioner Oshana asked if The Talking Farm could have composting available to the community. She said it would be a great opportunity to promote the district's sustainability efforts. Ms. Tuft will discuss with the Talking Farm.

Commissioner Desai moved to authorize the Talking Farm to proceed with improvements as listed above. Vice President Reid seconded the motion. On a roll call vote, all Commissioners voted aye. Motion carried.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The next regular meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners is Tuesday, December 21, 2021, at 7:00 p.m.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Vice President Reid is on a few different committees at the IAPD. The legislative committee is looking for additional resources for revenue and is asking for suggestions. The legislative breakfast is in limbo because they are not sure when the legislators will be in session. The Board volunteered to host a breakfast, but they are not sure of the legislative schedule. The legislative conference has been scheduled for March 8 and March 9. It was normally in late April/early May but has been moved earlier to coincide with the legislator's schedule.

Vice President Reid said the current bid limit is \$25,000. Forest preserve districts and conservation districts have moved their bid limit up to \$30,000. IAPD is working to increase the limit to the same for park districts.

Commissioner Oshana asked if there were any considerations for infrastructure. President Reid said if she had any questions, she could always contact Jason Anselment at the IAPD. He is very good at answering emails with quick responses.

Last week Vice President Reid had a Research Advisory Committee meeting, and they are trying to create another survey for park districts to see how people view their park districts and find out what they would like from their park district.

President Aberman said the Skokie Park District is now a Distinguished Agency. The Park District will receive their award at a luncheon on Monday, November 22. Staff will attend and President Aberman, who is on the committee, will also be in attendance. President Aberman was not involved in the evaluation process for the Skokie Park District.

President Aberman thanked everyone for trying to get to where they are tonight. It has been a very difficult time for staff and the Commissioners. She thanked everyone for their honest and hard work in that particular area.

DIRECTOR COMMENTS

Ms. Tuft said the IAPD/IPRA conference registration discount rate expires on December 13 and suggested Commissioners sign up prior to the date. Hotel reservations have been made. Commissioner Jaffe asked to be registered.

The Skokie Chamber of Commerce Legislative Breakfast is Friday, November 19 at 7:30 a.m. Ms. Tuft asked which Commissioners will be attending. President Aberman, Vice President Reid, and Commissioner Jaffe plan on attending. Commissioner Oshana will attend but will sit with Westfield. Commissioner Desai will let Ms. Tuft know by tomorrow.

Staff spoke with Superintendent Cindy Whittaker of School District 72 regarding a possible construction project that may impact Schack Park. They would like to redo their parking lot and add an addition to the building. If the school board approves the project staff will meet with the school district to work out construction details as they affect Schack Park.

Ms. Tuft updated the Board on the group of Devonshire residents who want a dog park at Devonshire Park. At the last meeting Ms. Tuft was asked to find out if the group would consider fundraising for the dog park. She did and they are interested. Ms. Tuft said the Board needs to think about this and the item will be placed on next month's board meeting agenda for discussion. Please call her if you have any questions or comments.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

NEW BUSINESS

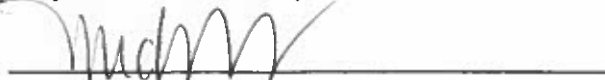
There was no new business.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Jaffe moved to adjourn the regular meeting. Vice President Reid seconded the motion. Motion carried. The regular meeting adjourned at 11:09 p.m.



Susan Aberman
President



Michelle J. Tuft
Secretary

December 21, 2021