

**MINUTES OF THE
REGULAR MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
SKOKIE PARK DISTRICT
July 20, 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
Marketing and Communications Manager Jim Bottorff
Rick Eskin, Skokie Resident
Leslie Riley, Skokie Resident
Gail Schechter, Skokie Resident
Al Gollub, Skokie Resident
Arthur and Lynda Rosenson, Skokie Residents
Deb Gassman, Skokie Resident
Tirso Olivares, Skokie Resident
Alejandra Garcia, Skokie Resident

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.

COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS

Ms. Leslie Riley, Ms. Alejandra Garcia and Ms. Gail Schechter addressed the board regarding Lubavitch Chabad's proposed land swap at Seneca Park. They voiced their concerns as residents not in favor of the land swap providing specific reasons why it was not in the best interest of the community. Ms. Deb Gassman expressed her appreciation to the park district for all the beautiful parks and programs. She is in favor of the land swap and feels it would make the area safer for traffic and parking.

Ms. Tuft explained that after the public hearing for the proposed land swap at Seneca Park held on June 21, 2021, the Board rejected the proposal, and it did not move forward. The park district has not seen a second proposal or plan for the land swap. If a second proposal is submitted a public hearing will be scheduled to receive input from residents.

Mr. Al Gollub asked the Board how far in advance residents would be notified if there is a second proposal for the land swap. Ms. Tuft explained the process. A new proposal would require a public hearing. The public hearing would be posted on the district's website and flyers would be distributed to the neighborhood informing them of the public hearing. After the public hearing, the board could put the issue on a regular board meeting agenda for a vote. At this time this is a moot point as the original proposal has been rejected.

Mr. Arthur Rosenson expressed his concerns regarding the tennis courts at Central Park. He said tennis lessons are scheduled for three hours on Saturday afternoons and asked if the lessons could be held at other parks. Ms. Tuft said staff will look into it but cannot guarantee that tennis lessons will not be scheduled at Central Park.

Mr. Rick Eskin read a statement on behalf of Steve Katz regarding the resurfacing of the tennis courts at Central Park in 2012 and 2017. The statement included suggestions to be considered before renovations to Central Park tennis courts take place.

President Aberman thanked the residents for their concerns.

CONSENT AGENDA APPROVAL

Commissioner Jaffe moved to approve the Consent Agenda; Commissioner Desai 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 June 15, 2021, minutes of the Public Hearing for Seneca Park of June 21, 2021, bills payable for the month of May/June 2021, Treasurer's Report, and Staff Reports.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE TRANSFER OF PROPERTY FROM THE SKOKIE PARK DISTRICT TO THE ILLINIOS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Tuft informed the board that the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) is improving Gross Point Road from Golf Road to Old Orchard Road. IDOT is acquiring park district property under eminent domain and is required to offer fair market value for the property. The acquisition consists of a small section of Weissburg Park at the corner of Grant Avenue and Gross Point Road which will be used to improve the turning lane. The second portion of the acquisition is for the park district property that Gross Point Road currently sits on, which was discovered during this process. IDOT is offering the park district \$15,000 for the property. Commissioner Jaffe asked how we knew that was a fair price. Ms. Tuft said they are required to offer fair market value and she asked the district attorney for his opinion, and he thought it was acceptable.

Commissioner Desai moved to approve the resolution authorizing the transfer of Skokie Park District property to the Illinois Department of Transportation. Vice President Reid seconded the motion. On a roll call vote, all Commissioners voted aye. Motion carried.

PARKS COMMITTEE CHAIR UPDATE

President Aberman appointed Commissioner Jaffe as the Parks Committee Chair for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2021-22. President Aberman explained the duties of the Parks Committee Chair to Commissioner Jaffe.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The next regular meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners is Tuesday, August 17, 2021, at 7:00 p.m.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Vice President Reid attended events over the weekend including the camp out and flea market at Oakton Park. He also attended the Sunday Sundown Concert at Devonshire Park the previous weekend. President Aberman attended the concert as well and said it was well attended and enjoyable.

Commissioner Desai asked who the contact was regarding an interested musical band for the Sunday concerts. Ms. Tuft responded they should contact Devonshire Cultural Center Manager Robin Horwitz. Musical bands for Backlot Bash should be referred to Superintendent Marquardt.

Commissioner Desai asked if National Night Out would be happening this year. Ms. Tuft responded no, the Skokie Police Department runs the event and decided not to hold it this year due to Covid-19.

DIRECTOR COMMENTS

Ms. Tuft said a new OSLAD grant cycle has opened and staff is going to submit an application for Central Park. Central Park is scheduled for renovation in the master plan for 2023-2024. The OSLAD grant requires a public hearing which was scheduled for August 10, 2021, at 6:30 p.m. at a location to be determined.

Ms. Tuft gave the board two options for the renovation, one option if the district receives an OSLAD grant and one if the district is not selected. If the district is selected for an OSLAD grant the renovation will include a playground renovation, improved basketball courts, widening of the pathways, a native plant area, new outdoor fitness equipment, ball field irrigation, and a splashpad. If the district is not selected for a grant, the project would likely be limited to a playground renovation and basketball court improvements, possibly pathways. Mr. Guynn said he would like to include new backstops in this option as well. Everyone liked the splashpad option. President Aberman suggested a sensory slide option and Mr. Guynn said he would look into it.

Ms. Tuft said the Friends of the Chicago River want to host a "Big Float" event at the Dammrich Rowing Center on August 22, 2021, from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. Ms. Tuft is working on a contract. Liability for this event is the responsibility of the Friends of the Chicago River.

OLD BUSINESS

President Aberman asked when towel service would return at Fitness First. Ms. Tuft responded after Labor Day.

Commissioner Desai asked about allowing alcohol at the Sunday Sundown Concerts. Ms. Tuft said Devonshire Cultural Center Manager Robin Horwitz is considering it for next year. Other events and suggestions were made for alcohol at functions and outside events. Mr. Marquardt said Sketchbook Brewery has expressed interest in having an event at Weber Park Golf Course.

NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Oshana suggested the board hold "Meet and Greet" events at specific community locations to interact with the community and find out their interests and needs. President Aberman said this was done before but there was not much interest. Ms. Tuft said

the “Hot Dogs in the Parks” events over the summer have provided an opportunity for board members and the community to meet. These events were not scheduled this year due to Covid-19 but will return in 2022.

The process for communicating with the public after public hearings was discussed. President Aberman suggested that an official statement be made after a public hearing is held and posted on the website so it can be shared on social media.

Commissioner Desai suggested a food festival at Skokie Sports Park East or Oakton Park. Ms. Tuft said both locations are difficult to reserve as there are many other activities and events being held at these locations. A food truck night at a park location was suggested as it would be easier to arrange.

Commissioner Desai suggested international movies as an idea for a drive-in movie or a movie in the park. Commissioner Oshana suggested we take movie requests from the community.

ADJOURNMENT

Vice President Reid moved to adjourn the regular meeting. Commissioner Desai seconded the motion. On a roll call vote, all Commissioners voted aye. Motion carried. The regular meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Susan Aberman
President

Michelle J. Tuft
Secretary