



**MINUTES OF THE  
PARKS COMMITTEE  
OF THE  
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS**  
Park Services  
7500 Frontage Road, Skokie, IL 60077  
**Tuesday, November 12, 2019 – 6:00 P.M.**

**ATTENDANCE AT MEETING**

Board Members Present: President Mike Reid  
Vice President Khemarey Khoeun  
Commissioner Susan Aberman  
Commissioner Minal Desai

Staff Present: Supt. Of Recreation & Facilities Michelle Tuft  
Superintendent of Parks Corrie Guynn  
Emily Oaks Facility Manager Lee Hansen  
Landscape Supervisor Steve Ames  
Park III Specialist Jim Hallm  
Office Manager Park Services Dima Kirland

**CALL TO ORDER**

Parks Committee Chair Khemarey Khoeun called the meeting to order at 6:12 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Vice President Khoeun asked staff to begin the presentation

**CHIPPEWA PARK AND MULFORD PARK PLAYGROUND CONSTRUCTION UPDATES**

Superintendent of Parks Guynn reported that both playgrounds are open and highlighted the new features of each. Much of the work was done by staff except for concrete work and the installation of the playground structures. Updated features to both parks included concrete pads, benches and water fountains. Landscape of the sign beds was updated and staff also seal coated the path at Mulford and installed the safety surfacing. Pictures of the old and new parks were presented. Commissioner Aberman asked how benches are dedicated and donated. Benches are part of the donation program although few are donated as they are expensive. Dedication plaques can be included with the bench donations. Mr. Guynn and staff are currently working on creating a more formal procedure for bench donations.

**LARAMIE PARK PROJECT UPDATE**

Mr. Guynn met with Wheeling Park District staff concerning their artificial turf site and received valuable input.

Mr. Guynn discussed the following features planned for Laramie:

- Rubber spiked bases.
- Lighting for all the courts, LED lights on four posts.
- Alternate 1 - widening the path to 8', adding the path to connect to existing.
- Alternate 2 - paving the parking lot
- Playground equipment features
- Swings
- Synthetic turf playground surface (tested by Mr. Guynn and Ms. Tuft at the Deerfield Park District)
- Exercise equipment

### **POTENTIAL NATIVE/POLLINATOR/NO MOW AREAS**

Mr. Guynn reported the District has native/pollinator/no mow areas at Central Park, Park Services, Tot Learning Center, Devonshire, Weber and the Oakton parking lot islands. Staff is working on identifying additional areas to do the same. Some sites for consideration are Hamlin Park, Peccia Park, Weber Park Golf Course, Oakton Park and Sports Park. This practice saves maintenance costs and is environmentally sound. It takes a few years to get the plants established and maintenance is required. Staff is also beginning to install signs in these areas for educational purposes.

### **REVIEW OF PARK MANAGEMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

Mr. Guynn reviewed the existing policy and practices of the District. The District follows the Illinois Department of Agriculture guidelines and also has additional guidelines such as 24-hour notification before and after spraying. There is a threshold for weather conditions (too windy, too hot, etc.) when application cannot take place. Seventeen staff members are certified. Twelve out of the 17 have a higher classification which means additional education and licenses. A form is filled out for every application and a log is maintained.

Landscape Supervisor Steve Ames provided background on recent safety concerns regarding the use of glyphosate, more commonly known as Roundup. Mr. Ames presented information he learned from attending a turf industry seminar at the Chicago Botanic Garden. There have been numerous studies performed on the safety of using glyphosate, the vast majority of which conclude that it has extremely low toxicity and is very safe when used according to directions. Recent concerns stem from one study that did not follow accepted scientific protocol. Mr. Ames provided a chart that indicated the current stance of environmental agencies around the world concerning glyphosate. Mr. Ames highlighted the significant amount of training and testing that staff receive prior to becoming licensed operators by the Illinois Department of Agriculture. He also stated that the District follows all guidelines for proper mixing rates and application procedures when using glyphosate or any product. Glyphosate has been used for 40 years and continues to be an important herbicide, especially for the agricultural industry. Based on testing and toxicity levels, glyphosate is considered a safe herbicide. The largest risk factor is to the applicator, as they are handling the product in a concentrated form. The EPA categorizes glyphosate as a low risk product.

Commissioner Aberman asked about a recent report of finding Roundup in Cheerios. Mr. Ames explained how trace amounts of herbicides can be found in some food products due to various agricultural practices.

Emily Oaks Nature Center Manager Lee Hansen reported on the challenges of managing the Nature Center, especially the aquatic areas on the site. Staff and volunteers have been actively restoring Emily Oaks since 1988, working on bringing it back to good health. These efforts have doubled the diversity of the site. However, the battle of keeping invasive species

out never ends. Garlic mustard and cattails can be controlled mechanically. This method is done by staff and volunteers by manually pulling out the invasive species. Buckthorn is also removed mechanically and then the remaining stumps are individually painted with glysohate.

There are plants that can't be controlled by mechanical means such as common reed, an invasive species that grows along the CTA line, and can be seen along highways. It spreads by underground roots and when pulled, it breaks off and regrows from these roots. Reed canary grass grows fast and each plant produces thousands of seeds. If the plants are allowed to take over, then the diversity and value to wildlife will diminish.

The product used at Emily Oaks is Aqua Neat which can be used in aquatic settings without harming wildlife. Once dry, it is non-transferable and no broadcast spraying takes place. Staff uses appropriate personal protective equipment. Emily Oaks Nature Center also keeps well documented record of all applications.

There are three cautionary levels of labels, **caution**, **warning** and **danger**. Common household products that have a **caution** label include vinegar and Dial antibacterial soap. Lysol and car wash soap fall under the **warning** label. Clorox, Drano and windshield washer fluid have a **danger** label. Glyphosate products are labeled either **caution** or **warning**. Aqua Neat is labeled **caution**, which is the lowest designation.

### **COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS**

Superintendent of Recreation and Facilities Tuft explained that the purpose of this meeting was to provide an overview of the District's landscape practices including its use of Roundup.

Commissioner Aberman inquired about information staff received from the Park Ridge Park District. Mr. Guynn reported that Park Ridge contracts out mowing operations to enable them to mow more frequently. Mowing more frequently helps control the growth of weeds. They have increased their use of organic weed controls; organic products tend to be expensive and not nearly as effective. Landscape Supervisor Ames reported on experimenting with half a dozen organic products. The organic products were somewhat effective in certain conditions, however they usually had to be applied twice and often did not entirely kill the plant but temporarily stunted it. Mr. Guynn said one issue Skokie has using organics is the large number of parks in Skokie compared to Park Ridge. Skokie has many more areas to treat and effective control could not be met with current staffing levels. Park Ridge reduced their use of Roundup but not have eliminated it.

Sports Park East was discussed. When preparing the field at Sports Park East, staff cut down existing plants, applied glysohate to eradicate weeds, applied soils and bio solids, and then seeded the area with a special seed blend. Temporary irrigation was installed. Park Ridge has experienced pushback from the use of bio solids on their athletic fields.

Vice President Khoeun heard comments from the public that the District used Roundup at the garden plots. Ms. Tuft said that Roundup is not used on the garden plots. Roundup is mainly used on tree-rings and ornamental beds and not in the garden plots or playgrounds.

The potential new garden plot location was discussed, Ms. Tuft needs to get information on the status of this site and will report back to the Board. Staff does not anticipate using Roundup on the proposed garden plot area. The area will be tilled several times to establish the soil.

The District cares about aesthetics and more importantly the health of plants. Staff is wood chipping around trees to protect trees from physical mower damage and to reduce weeds and root competition. Staff is also diligent about plant selection ensuring that plants are adapted for this area. Plant varieties are also selected that support wildlife. Roundup is never used on trees. Staff uses many alternative practices such as aeration to help increase turf vigor and makes use of two types of aerators that help develop strong turf that can out compete the weeds.

Vice President Khoeun asked how the District can measure its progress in terms of being green. She is aware the District attempts to minimize the use of chemicals and that we have progressive policies and procedures. Is it a public relation issue that we get bad publicity? Do we need to better educate and inform the public?

Mr. Guynn stated that public relations can be difficult. If turf maintenance practices change and weeds take over, another group may then complain about the condition of the parks.

Commissioner Desai asked about applications on athletic fields. Landscape Supervisor Ames used Laramie as an example. Laramie gets treated twice per year and not necessarily the entire field, sometimes just spot treating. The District purchased aerators in the last couple of years which helps reduce chemical treatments. Commissioner Desai suggested the public needs to be better informed.

Vice President Khoeun suggested bringing in an outside consultant to evaluate District practices. Ms. Tuft agreed that staff can investigate this and possibly hire a consultant to evaluate/audit the District's practices. Everyone agreed that an audit would be beneficial and may show the District is above average in green practices.

All agreed that informing the public would be another beneficial tool. The 'green page' on the District website should be updated and improved.

The Board would like this work to be completed by April for approval of any changes for policies and procedures.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Chairman Vice President Khemarey Khoeun adjourned the meeting at 7:55 p.m.

---

Vice President Khemarey Khoeun

---

John Ohrlund, Executive Director

#### **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 ●Inclusivity