

**MINUTES OF THE
REFERENDUM PROSOSAL MEETING
SKOKIE PARK DISTRICT
JUNE 7, 2026
1:00 P.M.**

ATTENDANCE AT THE MEETING

Board Members Present: President Elsa Fischer
Vice President Ezra Jaffe
Commissioner Antonia Kasalo-Terihaj
Commissioner Courtney Williams

Others Present: Executive Director/Secretary Michelle J. Tuft
Superintendent of Business Services William G. Schmidt
Superintendent of Parks, Planning & Facilities Corrie Gynn
Superintendent of Recreation & Facilities Breanne Labus
Assistant Superintendent of Recreation Mary Amato
Marketing and Communications Director Jim Bottorff
Executive Administrative Assistant Ann Perez

CALL TO ORDER

President Fischer called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. and called for the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. Tuft asked staff and board members to introduce themselves.

PROPOSED REFERENDUM & CONCEPTUAL PLAN PRESENTATION

President Fischer and Executive Director Tuft presented information on the proposed bond referendum. Slides included Park District boundaries, property tax information, comparisons and tax impact analysis, recap of grant funds received since 2020, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) lease information and cost, community survey results, comprehensive plan analysis, conceptual renderings of the proposed projects at Sports Park East and Channelside South, project costs, information on Bessie Rhodes property, and a timeline of next steps.

Summary of Community Questions and Discussion

Fees and Affordability

- Community members asked what amenities at Sports Park East would be free. Staff explained that outdoor fields when not scheduled for programs, walking path, playground, and fitness equipment would generally be available for free, while open gym use would require a daily fee, and registered programs would continue to require fees.
- Questions were raised about resident discounts. Staff noted that Skokie residents typically pay 25% less than non-residents, although MWRD lease

requirements do not allow resident/non-resident fee differences for activities on MWRD property.

- Several attendees expressed concern about the cost of youth sports and recreation. Suggestions included expanding free or low-cost soccer opportunities, partnering with organizations such as AYSO, and exploring additional scholarship opportunities to help children participate.

Sports Park East Amenities and Operations

- Questions focused on field availability, facility hours, and programming. One resident requested extended walking track hours at Weber Leisure Center, while another noted difficulty finding soccer field time. Staff said they would look at providing more open time for youth use.
- Community members asked about field conditions, including artificial turf versus grass, drainage, irrigation, and lighting. Staff explained the project would include drainage, irrigation, and field lighting, and noted that the site is well suited for lighting because there are no nearby homes. Artificial turf is not allowed by MWRD.
- Additional questions addressed the environmental history of the property and existing Sports Park operations. Staff explained that MWRD remediated the former contaminated site. Weather conditions limit batting cage operations during wet periods.

Channelside South Park

- Questions were asked about parking, construction, and future programming. Staff highlighted existing parking, a possible shared parking agreement with a neighboring church, the anticipated 12–18 month construction timeline, and potential future uses such as relocating Summer on Broadway camp.
- Residents also suggested preserving views of the channel with picnic areas and expressed appreciation that the park would be dog-friendly and include solar panels.

Project Costs and Referendum

- Questions were raised about staffing costs, with staff explaining that only limited part-time staffing is anticipated and no significant increases in full-time staffing or benefit costs are expected.
- Staff also discussed why the projects are being considered now, explaining that the availability of the MWRD property created the opportunity and that voters will ultimately decide whether to move forward with development at both sites.

Future Planning

- Attendees were informed that community survey results would help guide revisions to the plans before the Board decides whether to place a referendum on the ballot. Several residents expressed support for the projects while encouraging the Park District to continue expanding affordable and accessible recreation opportunities.

Closing Comments

Ms. Tuft said the Park District subsidized camp scholarships over \$50,000 in 2025. She encouraged attendees that if they know of anyone who needs financial assistance, to direct them to the Park District. She also explained that the Park District works with Niles Township to subsidize camp fees for kids in the community.

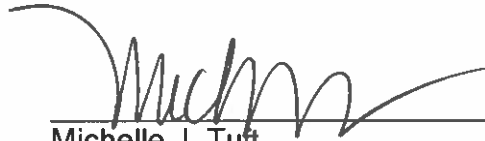
Commissioner Jaffe commented that several residents complimented the Park District's approach to public engagement, saying the presentation demonstrated transparency by sharing the full scope of the projects, explaining the survey process, and showing how community feedback has informed the plans. Some commented that it served as a model for how municipalities should involve residents in major projects.

President Fischer encouraged residents to visit the project website, review the information, and submit additional questions. She noted that staff will compile the questions received at both community meetings into a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document with responses to provide additional information and address common concerns.

The meeting adjourned at 2:16 p.m.



Elsa Fischer
President



Michelle J. Tuft
Secretary

June 16, 2026