MINUTES OF THE
REGULAR MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
SKOKIE PARK DISTRICT
JUNE 16, 2026
6:30 P.M.

ATTENDANCE AT THE MEETING

Board Members Present:	President Elsa Fischer Vice President Ezra Jaffe Commissioner Courtney Williams
Absent:	Commissioner Susan Aberman Commissioner Antonia Kasalo-Terihaj
Others Present:	Executive Director/Secretary Michelle J. Tuft Superintendent of Business Services William G. Schmidt Superintendent of Parks, Planning & Facilities Corrie Guynn Superintendent of Recreation & Facilities Breanne Labus Assistant Superintendent of Recreation Mary Amato Marketing and Communications Director Jim Bottorff Human Resource Director Keli Stonitsch Executive Administrative Assistant Ann Perez

CALL TO ORDER

President Fischer called the regular meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners to order at 6:30 p.m. and called for the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Mr. David Dalka addressed a safety concern involving the parking lot at Jane Stenson School. He urged the Park District to work with the school to install a stop sign or shift student loading from the east side of the building to the west side and discontinue use of the parking lot for that purpose. Ms. Tuft reminded Mr. Dalka that he has been redirected to School District 68 as drop-off and pick-up is a school-related issue.

Mr. Nate Lichtenstein thanked the Board for its service to the community. He said more than 530 people had signed a petition asking the Park District to purchase the Bessie Rhodes property and that he would provide a copy to the Board. He noted that the school, located near Timber Ridge Park, is an existing community asset and said the property could support senior and youth activities, arts and cultural events, educational programs, community meetings, and recreational opportunities for residents of all ages. He added that parks and recreation were the most frequently suggested uses for the property and urged the Board to keep the option of purchasing it open.

Mr. David Silverman stated he has been a Skokie resident for more than 35 years and raised four children near the Bessie Rhodes property. He urged the Park District Board and School Board to negotiate with School District 65 rather than have them sell the property to the highest bidder.

Ms. Melanie O'Callahan raised concerns about e-bikes and e-scooters in the parks, noting that statewide restrictions take effect July 1. She asked that signage be posted to reflect the new ordinance. Ms. Tuft responded that she expects to present the Park District ordinance at the July board meeting.

Mr. George Haus thanked the Board and urged them to remember their role as stewards of public open space and to consider acquiring the Bessie Rhodes property if the opportunity arises. He said adding the property to Timber Ridge Park would enhance the area, protect public land, and benefit future generations. He encouraged the Park District to submit a reasonable purchase offer to District 65.

Rabbi Svengle, a Skokie rabbi, said his congregation gathers informally at Timber Ridge Park and on the grounds of Bessie Rhodes School. He described the area as a community crossroads where people of different faiths and backgrounds come together on weekends in a beautiful natural setting, including Shabbat on Saturdays and gatherings by other faith communities on Sundays. He said future generations would benefit from the Park District's decision and thanked the Board for its time and service to the community.

Ms. Rachel Amrani said she values the Park District and believes purchasing the Bessie Rhodes property from the school district would be a worthwhile opportunity.

Mr. Steve Greenberg who lives across from Bessie Rhodes School and Timber Ridge Park and has coached baseball at several Park District fields, said he hopes the plans being considered for Skokie Sports Park East and Channelside Park could help shape future use of the Bessie Rhodes property. He suggested an indoor pickleball facility as a use for the site, noting it would appeal to both adults and children. He also said Skokie Sports Park East could benefit from a baseball diamond, as the community currently has only one such field and it is heavily used.

President Fischer thanked everyone for attending and sharing their comments. She said the Park District would welcome the opportunity to acquire Bessie Rhodes but noted the process is not simple. She said staff has been in contact with District 65. She added that District 65 has not yet decided whether to sell the property and is expected to consider the matter at its June 22 board meeting.

President Fischer encouraged those in attendance to share the same comments at the District 65 meeting.

Vice President Jaffe said District 65 must first decide to sell the property and has not yet done so. He hopes the school board makes a decision at the June 22 meeting and that, if the property is offered for sale, the Park District wants to be part of the process.

CONSENT AGENDA APPROVAL

Vice President Jaffe moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Williams seconded the motion. Commissioners Aberman and Kasalo-Terihaj were absent. On a roll call vote, all Commissioners voted aye. Motion carried. The Consent Agenda consisted of the minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of May 12, 2026, minutes of the Annual Board Meeting of May 12, 2026, bills payable for the month of May/June 2026, Treasurer's Report, and Staff Reports.

PUBLIC HEARING ON THE FY 2026-2027 TENTATIVE BUDGET AND APPROPRIATION ORDINANCE #26-003

Treasurer Schmidt stated that the law requires a public hearing on the tentative budget and appropriation ordinance presented in April. He explained that the ordinance must be available for public review for 30 days and published in the newspaper. He noted that it had been posted at District facilities and on the website in accordance with legal requirements. President Fischer then opened the public hearing, asked whether there were any questions, and hearing none, closed the hearing.

APPROVAL OF THE FINAL BUDGET AND APPROPRIATION ORDINANCE FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026-2027 ORDINANCE #26-003

Treasurer Schmidt requested approval of the Final Budget and Appropriation Ordinance for Fiscal Year 2026–2027, Ordinance #26-003. If approved, the ordinance will be filed with the county and will authorize the District to spend funds during the fiscal year.

Commissioner Williams moved to approve the Final Budget and Appropriation Ordinance #26-003 for fiscal year 2026-2027 in the total amount of $36,213,262, including the five-year Capital Development Plan totaling $9,975,932. Vice President Jaffe seconded the motion. Commissioners Aberman and Kasalo-Terihaj were absent. On a roll call vote, all Commissioners voted aye. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF ELECTRICITY PURCHASE CONTRACT

Treasurer Schmidt said the contract with CPV Retail to supply electricity to the District's 29 facilities will expire on December 1, 2026. He explained that EnerNova Partners obtained bids from suppliers and identified an 18-month contract at a lower rate than the District's current agreement. He asked the Board to approve an 18-month contract with NRG Business Marketing LLC, to be billed through ComEd.

Vice President Jaffe moved to approve an eighteen-month purchase contract for electricity supply with NRG Business Marketing LLC beginning December 1, 2026, for all twenty-nine facilities of the Skokie Park District at a fixed rate cost of $0.0449/KWh. Commissioner Williams seconded the motion. Commissioners Aberman and Kasalo-Terihaj were absent. On a roll call vote, all Commissioners voted aye. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF PERSONNEL POLICY REVISIONS

Ms. Stonitsch, Human Resource Director asked to approve three updates to the Personnel Policy Manual.

The first proposed revision would require an employee to pay a $30 fee if a payroll check must be reissued because the original was lost or the employee failed to provide updated direct deposit information to the Human Resources Department. The Park District is charged $30 for each reissued check, and the employee would be responsible for that cost if the revision is approved.

The second revision formalizes the District's current practice of paying part-time and full-time employees time and a half for work performed on a holiday.

The third change formalizes the State of Illinois requirement that new hires be reported within 20 calendar days of their first day of work, reflecting a practice already in place.

Commissioner Williams moved to approve the changes to the Park District's Personnel Policy Manual. Vice President Jaffe seconded the motion. Commissioners Aberman and Kasalo-Terihaj were absent. On a roll call vote, all Commissioners voted aye. Motion carried.

APPROVALOF METROPOLITAN WATER RECLAMATION DISTRICT LEASE

Ms. Tuft said the District has been working to finalize a lease for all Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) properties, including the newly added Channelside South site. She explained that when the new property became available, MWRD asked that all properties be combined into a single 50-year lease, and the Park District agreed. The properties include Channelside Park, Channelside South Park, Sports Park and Sports Park East, and Hamlin Park. The lease has been reviewed by MWRD's attorneys and the Park District's attorney and has already been approved by MWRD. If approved by the Board, the lease will be signed and extended for another 50 years at a cost of $10.

Ms. Tuft noted that the lease includes a clause allowing MWRD to reclaim a property with one year's notice. She said MWRD has not exercised that right in the past and currently has no planned use for this property.

Commissioner Williams moved to approve the 50-year lease agreement with the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District. Vice President Jaffe seconded the motion. Commissioners Aberman and Kasalo-Terihaj were absent. On a roll call vote, all Commissioners voted aye. Motion carried.

REVIEW OF FINAL STATUS OF 2025-2026 DISTRICT GOALS

Ms. Tuft provided a recap of the District's 2025–2026 goals and noted that staff had done an excellent job completing them. Vice President Jaffe asked about swimming at District 219, and Ms. Tuft said the District must request use each year and that availability depends on the school's schedule and activities.

Commissioner Williams want to commend the staff on completing a substantial amount of the goals.

No motion required, for informational purposes only.

REVIEW AND APPROVALOF 2026-2027 DISTRICT GOALS

Ms. Tuft explained that board approval of the goals is required for IPRA/IAPD Distinguished Agency accreditation.

Vice President Jaffe asked if additional camera installations in the parks were included. Ms. Tuft said the District is installing a camera at Gross Point Park and will use its effectiveness to determine future installations. Thus, plans are not included in the goals for 2026-27.

Commissioner Williams moved to approve the 2026-27 Park District Goals. Vice President Jave seconded the motion. Commissioners Aberman and Kasalo-Terihaj were absent. On a roll call vote, all Commissioners voted aye. Motion carried.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The next regular and annual board meetings will be held Tuesday, July 21, 2026, at 6:30 p.m.

COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS

Vice President Jaffe said he attended the Juneteenth event and noted that attendance seemed somewhat light, though the program was meaningful. Ms. Amato said attendance grew as the event progressed and that the committee is considering a smaller area to create a fuller atmosphere. She added that Skokie United organizes the event, selects the date, and has scheduled next year's event for June 16.

President Fischer also thought the event was great.

President Fischer is going to defer the conversation about the Board Retreat for the July board meeting.

DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

Ms. Tuft noted that the Fourth of July parade was approaching and asked which Commissioners planned to participate. President Fischer, Vice President Jaffe, and Commissioner Williams said they would ride in the parade.

Ms. Tuft said that, at National Night Out, Rabbi Posner of Lubavitch Chabad will oversee preparation of the kosher hot dogs to ensure they are prepared properly. Halal hot dogs will also be served.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

ADJOURNMENT

President Fischer thanked everyone for coming to the meeting.

Commissioner Williams moved to adjourn the regular meeting at 7:25 p.m. Vice President Jaffe seconded the motion. Commissioners Aberman and Kasalo-Terihaj were absent. On a roll call vote, all Commissioners voted aye. Motion carried. The regular meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Elsa Fischer
President

Michelle J. Tuft
Secretary

July 21, 2026