MINUTES OF THE
REGULAR MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
SKOKIE PARK DISTRICT
AUGUST 18, 2026
6:30 P.M.

ATTENDANCE AT THE MEETING

Board Members Present:	President Elsa Fischer Vice President Ezra Jaffe Commissioner Susan Aberman Commissioner Antonia Kasalo-Terihaj Commissioner Courtney Williams
Others Present:	Executive Director/Secretary Michelle J. Tuft Superintendent of Business Services William 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 IT System and Support Manager Amanda Catania 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. Joel Gorenstein thanked the Board for listening to residents at last month's Board Meeting and for agreeing to include baseball in the Skokie Sports Park East design. He strongly requested that artificial turf be installed on the baseball field. Ms. Tuft stated that MWRD does not allow turf on leased sites and noted that most artificial turf contains PFAs. She said MWRD may consider turf if a PFA-free option is found. The option remains under consideration but is unlikely to move forward.

Mr. Dick Dorgan is dissatisfied with the proposed tax increase for residents. He spoke about the tax increase and wanted the board to know that it would be higher for some residents.

Mr. Jonathan Rich thanked the Board for its efforts on the proposed projects and for reconsidering the inclusion of a baseball field at Skokie Sports Park East. He asked that a home run fence be included for safety. He also encouraged multipurpose use of the fields and asked whether a second lighted baseball field could be added.

CONSENT AGENDA APPROVAL

Commissioner Aberman moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Vice President 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 Board Meeting of July 21, 2026, bills payable for the month of July/August 2026, Treasurer's Report, and Staff Reports.

REFERENDUM PRESENTATION BY LEGAL COUNSEL

Mr. Andrew Paine of Tressler LLP presented the dos and don'ts of referendum advocacy to the Board of Commissioners. He explained that commissioners may advocate for the referendum on their own time, and they are not able to use District resources. He also stated that employees may not engage in advocacy while working but may advocate on their own time away from the Park District.

APPROVAL OF MEDICAL, DENTAL, VISION, AND LIFE INSURANCE RENEWAL

Keli Stonitsch, Human Resource Director, requested approval of the Medical, Dental, Vision, and Life Insurance renewals. The cost of insurance is increasing and if the District remained on the current plan for 2027, the PPO increase would be 25.4%, and the HMO would be 15.8%.

To reduce costs, staff reviewed alternative PPO plan options through the IPBC and settled on the CBSIL BCO plan. Under this option, the PPO increase would be 16.9%, while the HMO increase would remain at 15.8%.

The deductibles on the PPO plan would be higher for two major providers: Lurie Children's Hospital and the University of Chicago Hospital. As a result, employees' out-of-pocket costs could increase.

The employees' costs for insurance will also increase. Employee contributions have not increased in many years but will increase a small percentage beginning January 1, 2027.

Staff recommends continuing with IPBC health insurance plans for 2027 with the new plans and rates.

Commissioner Williams said that companies are seeing increased employee insurance costs and complimented Ms. Stonitsch on her work securing the new insurance pricing.

Commissioner Williams moved to approve the IPBC for health, dental, vision, and life insurance for 12 months beginning January 1, 2027, with a monthly premium of $151,619 based on current census. Commissioner Kasalo-Terihaj seconded the motion. On a roll call vote, all Commissioners voted aye. Motion carried.

AUTHORIZATION TO DISPOSE OF FIXED ASSETS ORDINANCE #26-005

Mr. Guynn requested approval of Ordinance #6-005, Authorization to Dispose of Fixed Assets. The fixed assets are a truck, trailer, riding mower, and ballfield machine.

Vice President Jaffe moved to approve Ordinance #26-005 authorizing the disposal of fixed assets. Commissioner Kasalo-Terihaj seconded the motion. On a roll call vote, all Commissioners voted aye. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF SKATIUM COOLING UNITS INSTALLATION

Mr. Guynn requested the approval of installation of cooling units in the Skatium Ice Arena. Two new units will regulate the temperature in the compressor room and will prevent equipment damage.

Commissioner Aberman commented that the compressors have had one problem after another. Mr. Guynn agreed and said this should fix the remaining problem and will take two to three months to complete.

Commissioner Kasalo-Terihaj moved to approve the proposal of PremiStar for the Skatium Cooling Unites Installation for $74,095. Vice President Jaffe seconded the motion. On a roll call vote, all Commissioners voted aye. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF DR. BESSIE RHODES OSLAD GRANT PROGRAM RESOLUTION OF AUTHORIZATION

The Park District is submitting an Open Space Land Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) grant application for the Bessie Rhodes property. One of the requirements is approving a Resolution of Authorization.

The Park District does not currently have funds to buy the property, and the grant would help fund the purchase.

If the District receives the acquisition grant, additional community meetings will be held to seek input on the design, and the District would then apply for an OSLAD development grant.

Commissioners Williams moved to approve the execution of the OSLAD Grant Program Resolution of Authorization for the Dr. Bessie Rhodes School of Global Studies. Commissioner Aberman seconded the motion. On a roll call vote, all Commissioners voted. Motion carried.

REVIEW OF PRELIMINARY DESIGN OF TIMBER RIDGE PARK/BESSIE RHODES PROPERTY

Ms. Tuft shared the preliminary design concept for the Timber Ridge Park/Bessie Rhodes property. The concept includes retaining a portion of the building, the gymnasium, and cafeteria, and adding a shelter with restrooms, an outdoor basketball court, a walking path, and exercise equipment. A new larger playground would replace the three smaller playgrounds currently on site. The existing soccer field and two parking lots will remain.

The estimated development cost is $7.7 million, excluding the $4.5 million purchase price currently quoted by District 65.

A public input session will be held on Thursday, August 20. If the Park District acquires the property, a second public hearing will be scheduled. At the August 20 meeting residents will be asked to submit letters of support.

No motion, informational only.

REVIEW OF SPORTS PARK EAST FIELD DESIGN

Ms. Tuft reviewed the revised Sports Park East Field design with the Board, noting that the updated concept includes a baseball field. Staff completed an analysis of field use by the affiliates and rental groups and determined that an additional regulation sized field would be beneficial. Caleb Field is the District's only regulation field that is lit and it is booked nearly every evening. Staff believe the field would be well used at Skokie Sports Park East. The design also includes two cricket fields and a soccer field.

Vice President Jaffe asked if the baseball field could face south and Michelle said the actual layout of the fields will be examined and can be reconfigured if the project moves forward.

Commissioner Williams moved to include a regulation sized baseball field (90-foot bases) in the field design at Sports Park East and share it with the community. Commissioner Aberman seconded the motion. On a roll call vote, all Commissioners voted aye. Motion carried.

AUTHORIZATION FOR BUSINESS RELATED TRAVEL FOR PARK COMMISSIONERS

Mr. Schmidt requested the Authorization for Business Related Travel for Park Commissioners. Public Act 99-0604 and the District's Travel Policy Ordinance #16-014 require that Commissioner travel must be approved in advance by a roll call vote of the board.

Commissioners Fischer, Williams, and Kasalo-Terihaj will be traveling to the NRPA Conference in Philadelphia Pennsylvania September 29 through October 1, 2026.

Vice President Jaffe moved to approve business related travel for Commissioners Fischer, Williams, and Kasalo-Terihaj to the NRPA annual conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania September 29 – October 1, 2026. Commissioner Aberman seconded the motion. On a roll call vote, all Commissioners voted aye. Motion carried.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The next regular board meeting will be held Tuesday, September 15, 2026, at 6:30 p.m.

COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS

Vice President Jaffe asked Mr. Schmidt about the banking changes mentioned in the Treasurer's Report. Mr. Schmidt explained the cost savings.

Commissioner Williams reported damage to the pickleball nets at the Weber Leisure Center. Staff will investigate.

Commissioner Williams said she received a request for a tablet with a tripod allowing pickleball and tennis participants to record themselves. A tablet will not be purchased, but staff will look into the possibility of a tripod.

Commissioner Williams said a community member in her neighborhood complimented Circus Camp staff, and another person had a birthday party at Skokie Water Playground and said staff and the party were great.

Vice President Jaffe reported that disregarding the rotation rules at the Oakton pickleball courts is getting worse. Ms. Labus will have staff stop by if the time frame is identified. Ultimately, participants must self-police.

Commissioner Aberman said everybody loves the pool locker room, they look great.

DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

Ms. Tuft reminded the board that the public hearings for Lockwood Park and Shawnee Park are tomorrow at 6 p.m. and 7 p.m.

The public hearing for Timber Ridge Park is scheduled for Thursday at 6 p.m. at the Weber Leisure Center.

A facilitator for the board retreat has been hired. There was discussion regarding the date and Director Tuft will see if the facilitator is available on November 23 from 3 – 7 p.m.

Corrie said the annual Steps Challenge is scheduled September 14 through October 25 and invited Commissioners to participate.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Williams moved to adjourn the regular meeting at 7:46 p.m. Commissioner Kasalo-Terihaj seconded the motion. All Commissioners voted aye. Motion carried. The regular meeting adjourned at 7:46 p.m.

Elsa Fischer	Michelle J. Tuft
President	Secretary

September 15, 2026