



**Skokie Park District
FINANCE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday April 2, 2025**



The Finance Committee Meeting of Wednesday, April 2, 2025, was called to order by Finance Chairperson Ezra Jaffe at 6:30 p.m. In attendance were Commissioner Fischer, Commissioner Terihaj, and Vice-president Jaffe. Staff in attendance included Executive Director Michelle Tuft, Superintendent of Business Services William Schmidt, Superintendent of Recreation and Facilities Breanne Labus, Superintendent of Parks, Planning and Facilities Corrie Guynn, Marketing and Communications Manager Jim Bottorff, and Business Manager Laura Le.

Budget Introduction

Director Tuft opened the meeting with an introduction and explained the highlights and challenges in preparing this year's budget. This year's budget includes the rearrangement of classes within the Recreation fund to reflect programming and management leadership. Funding capital projects continues to be a priority. Six playgrounds, Gleiss, Lauth, Lee-Wright, Lyons, Onondowa'ga and Terminal Parks will be replaced in fy 2025-2026. Staff have done a remarkable job putting this together.

Mr. Schmidt highlighted the general budget assumptions that include:

- A utilities increase.
- A health insurance increase.
- A 4% salary pool increase.
- A minimum wage increase, which has a district wide effect throughout all programs.

Each specific program area includes written assumptions.

Budget Presentation by Fund

Mr. Schmidt began with a summary of the funds, operating, auxiliary, and capital, showing the addition or deletion to fund balances. This budget shows a small decrease to the total fund balance at the end of fiscal year 2026. Mr. Schmidt provided the projected outstanding bond balance as of April 30, 2026, as requested by Vice-President Jaffe. Mr. Jaffe asked if the bond interest rates were fixed or floated. The bond interest rates are fixed.

Mr. Schmidt highlighted the Corporate Fund (fund 10) administration area. After answering questions, Mr. Schmidt introduced Jim Bottorff, Marketing and Communication Manager.

Mr. Bottorff presented a detailed explanation of the Marketing and Sponsorship activities. After all questions were answered, Mr. Bottorff introduced Corrie Guynn, Superintendent of Parks, and Planning.

Mr. Guynn went through revenues and expenses at Park Services. The highlights include increases in minimum wage and the introduction of touch-a-truck birthday parties

at the Park Services' facility. Mr. Guynn also mentioned that all full-time positions will be filled, and two new positions will be added in fiscal year 2025-2026.

Commissioner Jaffe asked about the fee increases at Pooch Park. Mr. Guynn explained that the capital improvements are complete, and the district is now raising fees. Commissioner Jaffe also asked about a memorial wall for dogs at Pooch Park. Executive Director Tuft said it is in the works. After answering questions, Mr. Guynn introduced Superintendent of Recreation and Facilities Breanne Labus.

Mrs. Labus presented the Recreation Fund which includes Administration, Camps, Devonshire Cultural Center, Oakton Community Center, Childcare, Special Events, and Festivals. Administration is where property taxes are collected. Expenses include the cost of the administrative staff and allocations. Property taxes collected here help fund other areas within the Recreation Fund. Camps were presented next and are showing a nice return. Mrs. Labus discussed Devonshire, Oakton, and Childcare (Tot Learning Center and the SPACE program).

Mrs. Labus said that the toddler two room reopened at Tot Learning Center, which will help with revenue, especially after wage increases and the conversion of six part-time positions to full-time positions. Commissioner Jaffe asked about Devonshire Cultural Arts revenues increase for fiscal year 2025-2026. Two fewer shows were budgeted for fiscal year 2025-2026. At Devonshire Preschool a 2–3-year-old room was added. Mrs. Labus then covered Special Events and Festivals.

The Sports Park East budget was covered and includes field permits and program registrations. The revenues are lower than fiscal year 2024-2025 because of the rental revenue generated from the Bounce House City Special Permit.

Mr. Guynn covered the Dammrich Rowing Center, which is budgeted to make a profit. He also discussed golf operations at Sports Park and Weber Park Golf Course which are all budgeted to make a profit. Adult beverage sales should continue to be successful in 2025-2026. Expansion of the grass tee areas, the additional eight Trackman monitors, and the new concrete tee expansions predict an increase in revenues in fy 2025-2026. There will be 65 hitting stations up from 40 a few years ago. The number of rounds increased in fy 2025-2026 from fy 2024-2025.

Mr. Guynn also covered Aquatics at Devonshire Aquatic Center, swim lessons, and Skokie Water Playground. The 2024-2025 pool season was very successful. Swim Lessons finally returned to Niles North in March 2023 and are budgeted in fiscal year 2025-2026.

Mrs. Labus presented the Weber Leisure Center budget which includes Fitness First. Fitness First membership is rebounding, and staff are optimistic this trend will continue. Ms. Labus then presented the Skatium budget. Hockey is predicted to rebound in 2025-26 as registrations declined in 2024-25.

Mrs. Labus presented Athletics Camps and Athletics. Athletic camps registration continues to trend upwards and additional contractual camps will be offered. Revenues will increase in lessons and leagues due to the ever popular pickleball. A full-time athletic supervisor was added in fy 2024-2025 and is dedicated to racquet sports.

Mrs. Labus discussed Emily Oaks Nature Center. Birthday parties are growing. The salary and benefit increases are due to budgeting to be fully staffed with Program Naturalists and Land Management staff.

The Skokie Heritage Museum is increasing rentals and adding innovative programs. A substantial portion of the work at the museum, archiving and maintaining the catalog, does not generate revenue but takes up a tremendous amount of staff time.

Mr. Schmidt covered the auxiliary funds; Special Recreation, IMRF, Liability, Social Security, Audit, and Debt Service. The fund balances were highlighted.

Mr. Guynn then presented the Capital budget and the large list of projects in three funds, 11,12 and 20.

Ms. Tuft thanked the staff and Board for their time and described the procedural next steps for approval.

It was the consensus of the Finance Committee to prepare a Tentative Budget and Appropriation Ordinance for approval at the April 22, 2025, meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners so it can be on public display for the thirty-day period required to meet the legal requirements.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned by Commissioner Jaffe, Chairperson Finance Committee, at 8:19 p.m.



Ezra Jaffe
Chairperson Finance Committee



Michelle Tuft
Executive Director, Secretary

April 22, 2025