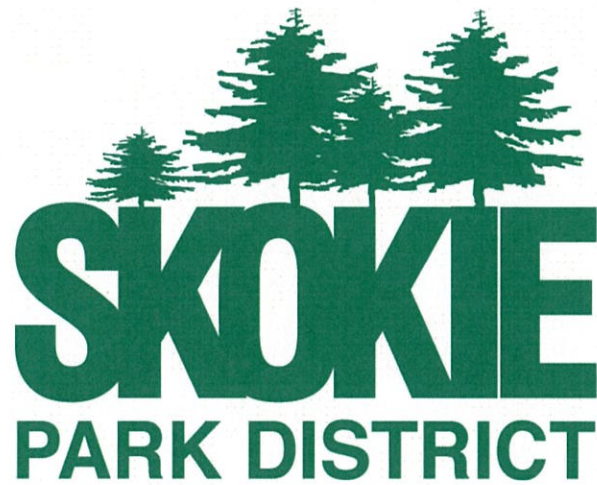


**EFFICIENCY REPORT FOR THE
SKOKIE PARK DISTRICT**



**APPROVED BY THE PARK DISTRICT'S
COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY
ON SEPTEMBER 17, 2024**



**SKOKIE PARK DISTRICT
EFFICIENCY COMMITTEE MEETING
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2024 6:00 P.M.**

AGENDA

- I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER
- II. REVIEW OF FEBRUARY 20, 2024 MEETING MINUTES
- III. REVIEW OF EFFICIENCY REPORT
- IV. PUBLIC INPUT
- V. APPROVAL OF FINAL EFFICIENCY REPORT
- VI. ADJOURNMENT

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 ●Inclusiveness



EFFICIENCY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
February 20, 2024
6:00 P.M.

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

Others Present: Executive Director Michelle Tuft
 Mr. Ross Mathee
 Mr. Richard Witry
 Executive Administrative Assistant Ann Perez

Absent: Commissioner Ezra Jaffe

President Reid called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and called for the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. Tuft asked for the approval of the minutes and Mr. Mathee made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 16, 2024, Efficiency Committee Meeting. Mr. Witry seconded the motion. On a roll call vote all voted aye.

Ms. Tuft said she made the changes to the efficiency report that were identified at the January meeting and asked if there were any corrections. Mr. Witry read the report and did not have any more comments. Mr. Mathee said the report update was extremely accurate and did not have any additional changes. The Commissioners did not have suggestions.

Ms. Tuft said there is a final meeting in September where the report can be reviewed one last time and then approved.

Ms. Tuft and Commissioner Aberman said they appreciated the resident's participation on the committee.

With no further comments or questions. The meeting adjourned at 6:06 p.m.

Susan Aberman
President

Michelle J. Tuft
Secretary

September 17, 2024

I. Purpose

The Skokie Park District (“Park District”) formed its Committee on Local Government Efficiency on May 16, 2023, to study efficiencies and report recommendations regarding those efficiencies and increased accountability pursuant to 50 ILCS 70/1, *et seq.* (the “Committee”).

II. Committee Membership

The Committee consisted of the following individuals:

Mike Reid, Skokie Park District Board President

Minal Desai, Skokie Park District Vice President

Susan Aberman, Skokie Park District Commissioner and President

Ezra Jaffe, Skokie Park District Commissioner and Vice President

Antonia Terihaj, Skokie Park District Commissioner\

Courtney Williams, Skokie Park District Commissioner

Richard Witry, Skokie Resident

Ross Mathee, Skokie Resident

Michelle Tuft, Skokie Park District Executive Director

III. Committee Meetings

The Committee met as follows:

Meeting Dates and Times

January 16, 2024 - 6:00 p.m.

February 20, 2024 – 6:00 p.m.

September 17, 2024 – 6:00 p.m.

Meeting Place

Weber Leisure Center

9300 Weber Park Place

Skokie, IL 60077

Minutes of these meetings are available on the Park District's website or upon request at the Park District's administrative office.

IV. General Overview of Governing Statutes, Ordinances, Rules, Procedures, Powers, Jurisdiction

The Park District was established by a referendum initiated and approved by the voters of the Park District in 1928. All Illinois park districts, including the Park District, are governed by the Park District Code, 70 ILCS 1205/1 *et seq.*

Having a separate and distinct taxing body for parks, recreation, and conservation within the local community, which operates apart from general purpose governments, is extremely beneficial to the community for many reasons, as detailed further in this report.

- **Elected, non-partisan, non-compensated board.** The Park District is governed by a board of five commissioners. Commissioners must reside within the boundaries of the park district and are elected at the Consolidated Election in odd-numbered years. Pursuant to state law, commissioners are non-partisan and serve without compensation.
- **Accessible and focused representation.** Having a dedicated board to oversee these essential facilities, programs, and services provides the community with increased access to their elected representatives and allows those elected representatives to remain focused solely on those facilities, programs, and services. This is contrasted with general purpose governments where elected representatives are responsible for broad oversight on a wide range of issues. This special purpose benefit is particularly advantageous when it comes to budget and finance oversight.
- **Increased transparency.** Having a dedicated unit of local government to provide park and recreation services also improves the relationship between the park district and its residents because of the transparency and openness related to the board and park district operations. Having detailed agenda and action items allows taxpayers to be better informed about the inner workings of their local government. When individual units of government are responsible for providing specified services like park districts, transparency is increased because action items and budget procedures are more detailed. Additionally, these items and budgetary decisions are subject to more scrutiny by locally elected officials than is the case with larger, multi-purpose governments with a multitude of departments.
- **Protection of revenues.** Because the Park District is a separate unit of local government, the revenues it generates can only be used for park district purposes. This assurance is contrasted with general purpose governments like cities, villages, and counties that provide a multitude of services such as fire, police, public works, economic development, etc., where revenues that are generated specifically for parks and recreation can be expended on these other services with limited, if any, input from voters.

- **Protection of assets.** Public parks and other real property owned by the park district is held in trust for the residents of the park district, and, subject to very limited exceptions, can only be sold or transferred if residents approve of the sale or transfer by a referendum. This is contrasted with general purpose units of government, which have authority to sell or dispose of property by a vote of the governing board.
- **Providing the Community More with Less.** The Park District does more with much fewer funding options. Unlike other units of local government that receive direct state funding, and income, sales, use, hotel/motel, motor fuel and other numerous taxes, the Park District's only tax revenues come from a modest portion of a resident's overall property tax bill. In fact, despite its limited funding options, the Park District share is only 3.7% of the local tax bill.
- The following chart shows the various taxing bodies in Skokie and the percentage of taxes per agency for Fiscal Year 2023-24:

Elementary School District	48.9%
School District 219	27.8%
Village of Skokie	5.0%
Cook County All	4.3%
Skokie Public Library	4.4%
Skokie Park District	3.7%
Sanitary District	3.2%
Oakton Community College	2.1%
Niles Township	.5%
Other	.1%
	100.00%

As part of good governance and implementing best practices in the management of day-to-day operations, the Park District has also adopted the following ordinances, rules, policies, and procedures:

- Board of Park Commissioners and Administrative Manual
- Conduct Ordinance
- Recreation and Facility Departments Manual
- Business Services Department Manual
- Park Services Department Manual
- Personnel Policy Manual for all Staff
- Skokie Park District Conduct Ordinance
- Safety and Crisis Plan Manual
- Volunteer Manual
- Comprehensive Master Plan
- Annual Report
- Program specific manuals:
 - Camp Staff Manual
 - SPACE (before and after-school program) Manual
 - Aquatics Manual

V. List of Shared Services and Partnerships

The Skokie Park District works diligently to provide the best possible programs, services, and facilities to the community at the least possible cost. One of the many ways the Park District achieves this goal is by partnering with neighboring park districts, school districts, other units of local government within or near the community, the State, non-profit organizations, and for-profit corporations. Below is a comprehensive list of the current partnerships, agreements, and other relationships that assist the Park District's mission of delivering the best possible services at the least possible cost to the community.

1. Membership in Maine Niles Association of Special Recreation

The Park District is part of the Maine Niles Association of Special Recreation (“SRA”). Special recreation associations are a form of intergovernmental cooperation among units of local government that are authorized under the Illinois Constitution, the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act, the Park District Code, and the Municipal Code. Their formation is rooted in a fundamental belief and recognition that “Recreation is for Everyone.” They are shining examples of local government efficiency.

By partnering together, local communities are able to deliver more successful program opportunities effectively and efficiently to community members who have special needs. Furthermore, by participating in the SRA, the Park District networks with seven local governments to provide many more program opportunities for community members who have special needs and offers a choice between participating in the SRA’s programs or in programs that are provided by the Park District.

The Park District and the SRA also achieve efficiency by utilizing existing facilities that are owned and operated by the SRA’s members, including the Park District. Utilizing these existing facilities allows the SRA to deliver services to its member communities at a lower cost. Currently the Park District provides the SRA access to the following facilities for their program offerings:

- Devonshire Cultural Center
- Devonshire Aquatic Center
- Oakton Community Center
- Sports Park
- Weber Leisure Center

The SRA also provides the support needed for participants with special needs who choose to register for the Park District programs or inclusive programming. The SRA collects information on the registered participant and determines what support is needed for that participant to be successful in this inclusive setting or the Park District program. This could include additional training of the supervisory staff, additional support staff, the use of adaptive equipment, behavior management, and/or other measures that will assist in the successful participation of this individual in the Park District program. Although success may not look the same for everyone, the SRA works with the Park District’s staff to ensure the best possible results for all the participants in the program. The Park District’s cost of providing these services would be much greater without its participation and partnership in the SRA.

In 2022, the Maine-Niles Association of Special Recreation (M-NASR) successfully served 529 people with disabilities in 341 programs; 119 Skokie Park District residents were served through these program offerings. Ninety-nine of these participants were serviced by M-NASR inclusion aids. Inclusion provides opportunities for individuals with disabilities to participate alongside their non-disabled peers in park district recreation programs.

The Skokie Park District is very proud of the ongoing collaboration with the M-NASR. By working cooperatively with other local governments, not only are we better able to collectively serve all citizens in the community, including persons with disabilities, but we are able to do so in the most efficient and effective manner possible.

2. Intergovernmental agreements with other park districts, forest preserve districts, conservation districts, or municipal recreation agencies.

- City of Evanston
 - reciprocal pool agreement
 - reciprocal dog park and soccer field agreement

3. Intergovernmental agreements with other units of local government

- Evanston/Skokie School District 65
 - Camp use
 - Shared playground
- Skokie Public Library
 - Camp Use
- Skokie School District 68
 - Camp use
 - After school clubs
 - Before and after care program
 - Shared playground
 - Shared soccer field
 - Emergency shelter agreement
- Skokie and Morton Grove School District 69
 - Camp use
 - After school clubs
 - Before and after care program
 - Park District parking lot use – staging for school pick-up/drop-off

- Fairview Skokie School District 72
 - Camp use
 - Before and after care program
 - Shared playground
- East Prairie Skokie School District 73
 - Camp use
 - Before and after care program
- Skokie School District 73 ½
 - Camp use
 - Before and after care program
 - Shared playground
- Niles Township High School District 219
 - Reciprocal facility use
 - Swim lesson program
 - Reciprocal field use
 - Fireworks location
- Village of Skokie
 - Storm water management tanks at nine (9) park locations (Devonshire, Seneca, Lockwood, Central, Lawler, Shawnee, Gross Point, Sequoya, and Navajo)
 - Special Event Cooperation, Backlot Bash, Fireworks, Festival of Cultures, National Night Out, and Hot Dogs in the Parks
- Skokie Public Library
 - Special Event Cooperation, Backlot Bash, Festival of Cultures
- Skokie United
 - Special Event Cooperation, Juneteenth, Dia de los Muertos

- Metropolitan Water Reclamation District
 - Channelside Pooch Park and soccer field use
 - Sports Park Golf Facility
 - Sports Park East fields
 - Hamlin Park

4. Intergovernmental agreements with the State of Illinois

- Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Grant (DCEO) – Laramie Park

5. Partnerships or agreements with athletic or similar affiliate organizations that operate sports or other leagues:

- Skokie Youth Baseball and Softball
- Skokie Baseball
- AYSO Soccer
- Skokie Tennis Association

6. Partnerships or other interrelationships with non-profits

- Loyola Academy for Dammrich Rowing Center
- Skokie Chamber of Commerce
 - Special Event Cooperation, Backlot Bash, Festival of Cultures, Wednesdays on the Green, Spring Greening
 - Facility use
- Skokie Valley Rotary Club
 - Provide space for annual pancake breakfast.
 - Provide Drop off locations for annual charity coat drive.
- Skokie Historical Society
- 4th of July Parade Committee

7. Informal cooperation with other units of local government which save taxpayer dollars by eliminating redundancy.

- Niles Township – The township cooperates with the park district by offering fee assistance for childcare programs such as camp, daycare, and before and after care programming.
- Village of Skokie – shared equipment use, use of park for National Night Out, training opportunities at the district’s pools and Emily Oaks Nature Center pond, Backlot Bash, Festival of Cultures, Spring Greening, Skokie Pride, and Juneteenth event planning and/or support.

VI. Other Examples of Efficient Operations

Use of volunteers. One way in which the Park District reduces the burden on taxpayers is through the use of volunteers. Last year, 560 individuals volunteered 5,876 hours of service to the Park District.

Youth employment. The Park District is a major employer of youth in the community. Last year, the Park District employed 222 youth. Not only is this an efficient way to deliver services, but youth employment serves as a valuable training tool for the future workforce.

Joint purchasing (if not listed above). The Park District participates in joint purchasing cooperatives pursuant to the Governmental Joint Purchasing Act (30 ILCS 525/0.01 *et seq.*) thereby saving taxpayer dollars through economies of scale. These include:

- Sourcewell – Vehicle/Equipment, Playgrounds, Picnic Shelters, Staples Office Supplies
- State of Illinois Joint Purchase Program

Collaboration with other park districts on best practices. Because park districts are not in competition with one another, they are more willing than the private sector to share best practices. These best practices help to avoid unnecessary costs and deliver services more effectively and efficiently.

Reliance on Non-Tax Revenue. Unlike most local governments that rely on a wide range of sales, use, and income taxes, the Park District is not permitted to assess these types of taxes. Additionally, although the Park District is an economic engine for the community and generates much revenue for the state and the community in the form of hotel/motel, sales, and motor fuel taxes, the Park District does not receive any of these revenues. Also, unlike Illinois cities, villages, counties, and school districts that received billions of dollars in direct financial assistance from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), Park Districts did not receive any such direct federal aid. The Park District also does not receive state funding under the Local Government Distributive Fund (LGDF) or General

State Aid (GSA) that these same cities, villages, counties, and school districts receive through the State budget.

Instead, the Park District provides all of the programs, facilities, and services to the community with a very modest amount of property taxes and from **non-tax sources** such as memberships, program registrations, and other user fees as well as private donations and grants.

The Park District has been very successful receiving grant awards including Open Space Land Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) Grants, Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) Grants, and a Park and Recreation Facilities Construction (PARC) Grant. The grants supplement the Park District’s capital project fund, and without the funds the Park District would not be able to improve the parks and facilities at the accelerated time frame. The project, fiscal year award, and amounts include:

OSLAD grant – Laramie Park	2019	\$ 400,000
DCEO grant – Laramie Park	2019	\$ 200,000
Child and Adult Care Food Program Grant - TLC	2019-20	\$ 48,300
Action for Children Quality Improvement Grant - TLC	2020	\$12,000
Child Restoration Grant – Tot Learning Center	2020	\$ 188,706
	2021	\$ 339,275
Child Resource Improvement Grant – TLC	2021	\$ 12,000
PARC grant - Skatium Renovation	2021	\$ 2,500,000
Illinois Clean Energy Foundation – Emily Oaks	2021	\$ 23,955
Illinois Clean Energy Foundation – pollinator grant	2021	\$ 20,000
OSLAD grant – Central Park	2022	\$ 400,000
OSLAD grant – Lawler Park	2023	\$ 357,000
Illinois Arts Council Grant – Festival of Cultures	2023	\$ 7,150
	2024	\$ 9,100
Quality Improvement Grant – Tot Learning Center	2023	\$ 9,000
Smart Start Transition Grant – Tot Learning Center	2023	\$ 44,000

VII. Transparency to the Community

The following information about the Park District may be obtained by citizens in the location listed.

Document	Location(s) Available (website, administrative offices, county clerk, state website, etc.)
• Annual tax levy	Website, administrative office, county clerk
• Annual budget and appropriation ordinance	Website, administrative office, county clerk
• Agendas and minutes	Website, administrative office
• Compensation Information	Website
• Comprehensive Plan	Website
• District Goals	Website
• Comptroller’s annual finance report (AFR)	Administrative office, county clerk
• Annual audit	Website, administrative office, county clerk
• Bids, Proposals and Legal Notices	Website
• FOIA Information	Website
• IMRF Employer Coast/Participant Information	Website
• Statement of Receipts and Disbursements	Administrative office
• Conduct Ordinances	Website
• Capital improvement plan	Website
• ADA transition plan	Website
• Environmental Policy	website
• Scholarship Information and Application	website

The Park District offers residents many opportunities to provide feedback. These include:

- The board of commissioners meets once each month. Residents may provide public comment at every meeting.

- The Park District's annual Budget and Appropriation Ordinance is available in tentative form at least 30 days prior to its adoption at an open meeting of the Park District board. Additionally, at least one public hearing is held prior to final action, and notice of the hearing is published in the newspaper at least one week prior to the hearing.
- The Park District's annual property tax levy is approved at an open meeting of the Park District board in accordance with the Open Meetings Act. The Park District follows all public notice and hearing requirements under the Truth in Taxation Law prior to the adoption of this annual tax levy.
- Residents may contact or request information from the Park District by phone at 847-674-1500 or email at info@skokieparks.org.
- The Park District has representation on community organizations and boards including; Maine Niles Association of Special Recreation Board, Executive Director; Skokie Valley Rotary, Executive Director; Skokie Chamber of Commerce Board, Executive Director; Community Schools Steering Committee, Superintendent of Recreation; 4th of July Parade Committee, Horticulturist Supervisor; Skokie United, Assistant Superintendent of Recreation; Skokie Kiwanis, Superintendent of Parks, Planning and Facilities.
- The following surveys have been sent to residents in the past five years:
 - 2021 Camp Survey
 - 2022 Camp Survey
 - 2023 Camp Registration Survey
 - 2022 SPACE (before and after-school care) Survey
 - 2022 Pool Survey
 - 2023 Camp Survey
 - 2023 Pool Survey
- The following public hearings or similar meetings where community input was obtained were held in the past 5 years:
 - Pooch Park Improvement Public Hearing January 23, 2024
 - Pawnee Park Playground Improvement Public Hearing August 2023
 - Native American Park Name Listening Session June 2023
 - Oakton Park Pickleball Improvements Public Hearing March 2023

- Lawler Park Improvements Public Hearing September 2022
- Schack Park Sports Courts Improvements Public Hearing August 2022
- Menominee Park Improvement Public Hearing November 2021
- Lorel Park Improvements Public Hearing November 2021
- Seneca Park Land Swap Public Hearing October 2021
- Central Park Improvements Public Hearing August 2021
- Seneca Park Land Swap Public Hearing June 2021
- Shabonee Park Improvements Public Hearing February 2021
- Hamlin Park Improvements Public Hearing February 2021
- Playtime Park Improvements Public Hearing February 2021
- Pohatan Park Improvements Public Hearing February 2021
- Peccia Park Improvements Public Hearing February 2021
- Gross Point and Navajo Park Improvements Public Hearing March 2020
- Tecumseh and Carol Park Improvements Public Hearing March 2020
- Skatium Facility Renovation Public Hearing December 2019
- Chippewa and Mulford Park Improvements Public Hearing July 2019
- Laramie Park Renovation Public Hearing July 2019
- Dogs in Parks Hearing March 2019

VII. District Awards and Recognition

The District's achievements have been recognized in numerous ways.

- Joint Distinguished Accredited Agency 1997- present
- Two board members are Illinois Association of Park District Master Board Members
- Illinois Park and Recreation Association Champions for Change award recipient 2020
- Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting, Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA), received annually since XXXX
- Twenty-three staff are Certified Park and Recreation Professional or Certified Park and Recreation Executives.
- ArbNet Arboretum Level 1 accreditation for Weissburg Park 2023
- ExceleRate Illinois Gold Rating Tot Learning Center 2023
- Illinois Park and Recreation Association Agency Showcase Second Place Website 2023
- National Aquatics Professional of the Month Award, Aquatics and Special Facility Manager
- Skokie Fine Arts Commission's Award for Artistic Excellence, Devonshire Cultural Center Staff.

VIII. Benefits and Services

The Park District serves the entire community from the youngest child to the oldest adult and all ages in between. It does so in a variety of ways.

1. Facilities

The Park District offered the following facilities to the community last year:

- Dammrich Rowing Center
- Devonshire Aquatic Center
- Devonshire Cultural Center
- Emily Oaks Nature Center
- Oakton Community Center and Exploritorium
- Skatium Ice Arena
- Skokie Heritage Museum and Log Cabin
- Sports Park Golf Facility (driving range, batting cages and mini golf)
- Skokie Water Playground
- Tot Learning Center
- Weber Leisure Center and Fitness First
- Weber Park Golf Course
- Garden Plots
- Outdoor exercise equipment
- 42 parks including playgrounds, basketball, tennis, pickleball, baseball/softball, picnic shelters, spray ground, Futsal, Bocce, and zip lines, etc.

2. Programs

In 2023, the Park District offered 1,987 unique activity types with 56,646 sections available. Enrollment per season is as follows:

- Spring: 3,685
- Summer: 10,897
- Fall 5,520
- Winter: 4,987
- Ongoing (occur across multiple seasons): 1,349

Program types include:

Athletics

- Archery
- Baseball
- Basketball
- Cricket
- Fencing

- Figure Skating
- Flag Football
- Golf
- Hockey
- Martial Arts
- Pickleball
- Rowing
- Soccer
- Softball
- Swimming
- Table Tennis
- Tennis

Childcare

- Before and After School Care
- Devonshire Preschool
- Tot Learning Center Day Care
- School Days Off Programs

Cultural Arts

- Circus
- Cooking
- Dance
- Fine Arts
- Language
- Music
- Theatre

Early Childhood

Exercise and Fitness

Historical Programming

Programs for Homeschoolers

Dog Training Classes

The enrollment figures above do not include daily attendance figures (from 2022) as follows:

- Pools: 100,500+
- Exploritorium: 39,654
- Fitness First: 185,432
- Skatium Ice Arena: 205,000+
- Skokie Sports Park: 157,000+

- Weber Park Golf Course: 7,000+

Attendance at free special events such as the Festival of Cultures, Backlot Bash, 4th of July Fireworks, Movies in the Park, Skokie Spring Greening, Skokie Pride, Skokie Juneteenth celebration, and the Summer Concert Series are not included in the figures above.

Additional Services

The Park District provided the following additional services to the community.

- Composting locations in cooperation with the Village of Skokie
- Spring Greening recycling event in cooperation with the Village of Skokie and the Skokie Chamber of Commerce
- Bike Safety Day in cooperation with the Village of Skokie

3. Other Benefits

While the Park District is a special purpose district, its impact on the community is multi-faceted and far reaching. For example, the Park District's parks, recreational programming, and other opportunities improve the community's overall physical and mental health and wellness, thereby reducing health care costs. Before and after school and summer programs offer safe, convenient, and affordable childcare options for working families during critical times when school is not in session. These opportunities also help reduce juvenile crime.

The Park District's open space and trees help improve air and water quality and mitigate flooding. The numerous flower beds and native planting areas beautify the village. The District prioritizes planting native species. Native areas attract pollinators such as bees, butterflies, and birds. In 2023 the District planted 174 trees throughout its parks.

IX. Recommendations for Increased Accountability and Efficiency

1. Intergovernmental Fees and Charges

One opportunity for efficiency would be the elimination of fees and charges assessed by other units of government. By way of example, below are amounts that other units of local government charge the Park District even though the Park District's taxpayers are also taxpayers of these other units of local government. Such fees and charges, and the bureaucracy that accompanies them, inhibit the park district's ability to deliver programs, facilities, and services at the least possible cost.

- Water Utility Fee
- State and local liquor license
- Background check fees (and checking minors)
- Police fees for special events

Other units of local government should recognize that intergovernmental fees often lead to inefficiency in the expenditure of taxpayer dollars through extra bureaucracy and administrative costs. In many cases, the unit of government assessing the fee ultimately benefits from the project or event, meaning it can recoup its costs through the extra sales tax or other revenue that will be generated. Where such fees are absolutely necessary, general-purpose units of government should offset the fee by crediting the park district for all benefits they will receive from a project, event, or property. For example, open space that is protected and maintained by the Park District helps mitigate stormwater management costs, so assessing stormwater management fees on the Park District not only leads to inefficiency, but it is also shortsighted.

Governmental units should be discouraged or prohibited from charging more than their out-of-pocket costs associated with the activities covered by a fee that is assessed to another unit of local government with the same taxpayers. Put another way, one unit of local government should not profit by charging another. Eliminating local permit fees is a way to reduce administrative costs. Local government best serves the people when it cooperates and works together. Some communities recognize this and do not charge fees to other units. All communities should be encouraged to follow that model to receive the best results for local taxpayers and to promote governmental efficiency.

2. Inefficiency of Other Governments

The Park District is also negatively impacted by the inefficiency of the state and other units of local government.

- Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity grant delays
- Metropolitan Water Reclamation District slow review process

3. Unfunded Mandates

Unfunded state mandates are another cost driver. While the Park District recognizes that there are benefits to some of these mandates, modifications could help alleviate some of the burden to the park district.

- a) **Non-resident FOIA Requests.** In 2023, the park district received 43 FOIA requests. Often the individuals/businesses submitting the FOIA requests are from outside of the park district boundaries, and they appear to be serving a specific agenda, rather than assuring better local government. Only three of the 43 were from Skokie residents.

Under current law, resident taxpayers end up footing the bill for these non-resident or commercial requests. In order to help alleviate the burden for these non-resident requests the law could be amended to: (1) add a requirement that non-residents identify/explain the purpose of the request for information; (2) add a time limit on how far back a non-resident can request information; (3) staff time and costs could be included in the amount that is reimbursable for non-resident and commercial requests; (4) move back the deadline for non-resident requests 10 business days so that the park district does not have to delay services to its residents in order to comply with a non-resident request.

Sunshine laws are supposed to protect taxpayers by allowing them to shed light on any issue that is not exempt from FOIA. However, local government can be burdened by having to drop everything to rearrange priorities to meet FOIA deadlines, particularly if it has limited resources. Since local residents ultimately bear the expense of complying with FOIA, treating resident and non-resident requests differently would be justified.

b) Criminal Background Checks. All park districts are statutorily required to conduct criminal background checks on all employees pursuant to Section 8-23 of the Park District Code. The background checks must be done through the Illinois State Police (ISP). Last year, the park district spent \$ 4,360 for criminal background checks. The Park District does not recommend eliminating this mandate because it is necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of children and other park district patrons. However, the State should explore ways in which it could improve the current system and make it less costly for park districts to comply with the law.

The mandate also raises the fundamental question as to why one layer of government is forced to charge its taxpayers to comply with a State mandate when the State made the determination to impose the mandate. Put another way, if the State has determined that criminal background checks are necessary for public safety, the State should assist with compliance.

The Park District recommends studying whether there can be a more efficient background check process implemented through the ISP to reduce the time and expense it takes for background checks. Another suggestion is for ISP to waive the fee for checks on minors or waive all fees for name checks. If there is a "hit" from a name check, the fee could be charged for the more costly fingerprint check. Since it is a state mandate, perhaps the fee structure for park districts should also be reviewed to determine whether the fee being charged exceeds the actual cost of doing the check and, if so, perhaps the ISP could consider reducing its cost to local governments.

c) Prevailing Wage. One way to reduce the burden on local government staff is to limit the prevailing wage requirement to larger capital contracts. This would free up tracking of the paperwork on small repairs and projects. One reason for creating a threshold requirement is the cost of the administrative burden relative

to the cost of the actual project. For example, eliminating prevailing wage on smaller projects, e.g., those less than \$50,000, will result in more local bids and decrease the overall cost for these smaller public works projects.

d) Newspaper Publication. The newspaper is no longer the most effective way to provide notice. Websites are cheaper and reach more people. Permitting the park district to post the information on its website in lieu of newspaper publications would reduce costs.

4. Opportunities for Savings such as Energy Efficiency Projects, Joint Purchasing

- Solar panel installation at Devonshire Cultural Center.
- Solar panels planned at Weber Leisure Center/Skatium Ice Arena.

Dated: _____ [INSERT DATE FINAL REPORT APPROVED BY EFFICIENCY COMMITTEE]

Signed: _____ [CHAIR'S SIGNATURE]