



**MINUTES OF THE
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
PUBLIC HEARING ON IMPROVEMENTS AT TIMBER RIDGE PARK
PARK SERVICES
August 20, 2026 - 6:00 P.M.**

ATTENDANCE AT MEETING

Board Members Present: Vice-President Ezra Jaffe

Others Present: Executive Director, Michelle J. Tuft
Superintendent of Parks, Planning and Facilities Corrie Guynn
Superintendent of Business Services, Bill Schmidt
Office Manager Park Services, Anjum Hava
Horticultural Supervisor, Jim Hallm
Operations Supervisor, Jeff Hacker

CALL TO ORDER

Vice-President Jaffe called the public hearing of the Board of Park Commissioners for the improvements at Timber Ridge Park to order at 6:00 p.m. and led the recitation of the pledge.

INTRODUCTIONS

Vice-President Ezra Jaffe, Executive Director Michelle Tuft, and Superintendent of Parks, Planning & Facilities Corrie Guynn introduced themselves.

TIMBER RIDGE PARK PLAYGROUND REPLACEMENT AND PARK AMENITY UPDATES

Executive Director Tuft began the presentation by informing the public that the Skokie Park District and School District 65 have met regarding Bessie Rhodes School, and the Park District has expressed interest in purchasing the property. Superintendent Guynn stated that District 65 has not yet listed the property for sale, and it is expected to be several months before they are prepared to sell it. The District 65 board has instructed their staff to negotiate with two governmental agencies interested in the property, the Skokie Park District, and another agency.

Superintendent Guynn shared that the Park District is applying for an Open Space Land Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) grant that will help fund the purchase of Dr. Bessie Rhodes School and the surrounding property. The grant is funded through the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). The grant is a matching grant of up to \$1,125,000.

Director Tuft informed the public that the requirements for the grant application include developing a preliminary post-acquisition development concept, holding a public meeting to gather input from residents, and gathering letters of support. The deadline for the grant application is August 31, 2026.

Superintendent Guynn shared the boundary lines of the school and park district. He then shared the design concept for grant application purposes. The design included bike racks, picnic grove, recreation center, basketball court (full size), outdoor fitness equipment, a playground, a shelter with restrooms, a passive area with a reading lawn and game tables, a full-size soccer field, native plantings, and two parking lots.

Superintendent Guynn informed the public that the total cost of the project is estimated at \$7,724,500 and does not include the purchase price of the school.

Director Tuft asked the public to scan the QR code on the screen and prioritize the amenities from the design concept.

Director Tuft stated that if the Skokie Park District is awarded the acquisition grant, the District would also apply for an OSLAD development grant (\$600,000 matching grant) in the 2027 grant cycle with awards announced in the winter of 2028. The Park District would also seek funding from state legislators as part of state capital improvement budget.

Superintendent Guynn informed the public that the grant funding would determine the project budget, which will then dictate the final design. A second public hearing would be held to receive input on the final park design.

Director Tuft stated that if the Park District is not awarded the grant, it would still attempt to purchase the property. The scope of the project would likely be reduced and delayed. The District would also seek funding from state legislators as part of the state's capital improvement budget. And the District would likely apply for an OSLAD development grant.

Director Tuft encouraged members of the public to submit letters of support and informed attendees that letters would be accepted until 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, August 26, 2026. Vice President Jaffe also urged the public not to wait until the deadline, emphasizing that only six days remained. He encouraged everyone to submit their letters of support as soon as possible.

PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

A resident asked whether letters of support could only be submitted by individuals who attended the meeting or if anyone in Skokie could submit one. Superintendent Guynn clarified that letters of support may be submitted by anyone who lives in Skokie. Vice President Jaffe added that there are no age restrictions, so anyone in the household who wishes to express their support is welcome to submit a letter. Director Tuft noted that children may also write letters by hand, and a parent can scan and email the letters to Superintendent Guynn.

A resident inquired whether there would be sufficient parking available, particularly if a soccer field is included in the project, noting that parking is already difficult to find in the surrounding neighborhood. Superintendent Guynn stated that the soccer field should not overwhelm the available parking and that, based on the current design concept, there should be sufficient parking to accommodate the anticipated use.

A resident inquired whether District 65 is considering selling the property to a private developer. Director Tuft explained that a sale to a private developer would follow a different process, in which the price cannot be negotiated in the same manner as it can with a government agency. Vice President Jaffe noted that this matter would be more appropriately

discussed with the District 65 Board than with the Park District.

A resident and retired District 65 teacher expressed her appreciation for the Park District and all that it does at Timber Ridge Park. She stated that she is fully supportive of the project and hopes that District 65 will sell the property to the Park District. She added that she could not envision the property being better served by anyone other than the Skokie Park District.

A resident expressed concern about the future ownership of the property and emphasized his hope that it would be sold to an entity or individual with good intentions who would be considerate of and supportive of the surrounding neighbors. He stated that if the property were purchased by someone who does not have the best interests of the community in mind, it could have a significant negative impact on the neighborhood and the Skokie community. Vice President Jaffe acknowledged the concern and stated that this is a matter that should be discussed with the District 65 Board, as the Park District has no authority over who purchases the property.

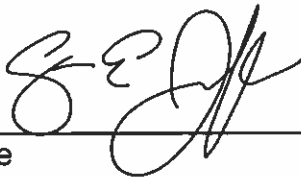
A resident raised concern about the limited timeframe District 65 has to sell the property, noting that, because District 65 needs funds, it may be motivated to sell the property quickly to help address its financial obligations. The resident also expressed concern that, because the Park District is a government entity that relies on grants and other sources of funding, it may take additional time to secure the necessary funding and move forward with a potential purchase. The resident asked what could be done to prevent another developer or entity from purchasing the District 65 property before the Park District has an opportunity to acquire it.

Director Tuft acknowledged the residents' concern and stated that the Park District has met with District 65 and informed them about the public meeting where the conceptual design would be presented and discussed with residents. She noted that District 65 is aware of the Park District's interest in purchasing the property and the steps being taken to position the Park District to acquire it.

Director Michelle Tuft asked all attendees to make sure they signed in and added their email address so they can receive updates on Timber Ridge Park.

ADJOURNMENT

Vice-President Jaffe thanked everyone for attending and providing input, and adjourned the meeting at 6:45 p.m.



Ezra Jaffe
Vice-President



Michelle Tuft
Executive Director

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