

**Minutes of the Waukegan Park District  
Special Meeting of the Board of Commissioners  
Special Recreation Program Advisory Committee  
February 9, 2015**

The Board of Commissioners of the Waukegan Park District met in a Special Meeting of the Special Recreation Program Advisory Committee on February 9, 2015 at the Douglas House, 732 North Genesee Street, Waukegan, Illinois.

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 6:07 pm by Bill Sarocka who directed a Call of the Roll.

**II. Roll Call**

Present: Julie Schneider, Manager of Special Recreation; Kari Robinson, Supervisor of Special Recreation; Maria Owens, Specialist of Special Recreation, Melissa Juarez-Ehlers; Mercedes Rivera; Janalle Roth Christian Torres, Tina Yurik and Maegan Ryles and Jessica Wengerski, Special Recreation interns.

Absent: Jay Lerner, Superintendent of Recreation, Executive Director Greg Petry, Dane Cruz, Deanna Guidry, Sharon Lambert, Susan Johnson, Chris Pace, and

Due to lack of a quorum, no official business was conducted.

**III. Review, Discuss, Decide**

**A. Fundraising Effort: Polar Bear Plunge Results**

Robinson provided a summary of the status and results of the financial support from Sponsors and the Pledge Plunge program. Certain monies are still looking to be submitted but it appears that proceeds from the 2015 Polar Bear Plunge will reach \$5,800 or more. It was reported in review of sponsorships secured that six past sponsors returned while the two that did not return were replaced with alternative businesses secured by Commissioner Terry Duffy. Robinson reported that Plunge Pledgers or Plunge Teams was up from the prior year but the financial donations they obtained were less than the prior year. Robinson highlighted the importance of securing and increasing the number of Pledge Plungers as the means of obtaining adequate financial support to the event. The returning Plunge Pledgers were unable to secure the same level of funding as the previous year. Robinson will survey plungers through the Polar Bear Plunge Facebook regarding interest in working to secure the \$50 minimum to earn either a limited edition towel or blanket instead of a sweatshirt for a third year in a row at the 2016 event. Limited discussion ensued with changing the date off of New Year's Day in hopes of securing more plungers. It was explained that this event was founded by the City of Waukegan as New Year's Day event. It is too well established to consider changing its date

and keeping the known theme of plunging into the New Year with a reason for freezin'. It was also explained that there is hopes of seeing registration increase as New Year's Day is connected to the weekend by being on a Friday in 2016. Past history has shown higher registration when it falls on a Friday – Monday date. It is only possible for Special Recreation to host this fundraising event with the support of the City of Waukegan.

Schneider provided a brief review that four front line registration staff was hired to work the event. This was well received and found to be a big plus by returning volunteers. The part time staff was more equipped to ensure that paperwork was completed thorough, monies matched the number of registrations and they were not overwhelmed with mass registrations coming in at one time. The final processing of paperwork done at the Belvidere Recreation Center following the event was handled with ease as completed paperwork was fully completed and easier to read.

#### **B. Confirm 2015 Meeting Dates**

Schneider reviewed the three proposed dates chosen for 2015; February 9, April 13, and November 2. She explained that Special Recreation is not anticipating any major projects or programs needing assistance from Advisory Members so proposed that the April 13 meeting date be cancelled. Schneider thanked all members for being available for council whenever the need has arisen throughout the year. At the conclusion of the meeting the Committee was questioned one last time to see if it was felt there was a need for the April 13 meeting. All Members reported that it was not necessary to have the April meeting if Special Recreation staff did not feel there was a need.

#### **C. Programming Updates**

##### **▪ HEART – Day Program Status:**

Robinson reported that the status of not being able to run the program due to lack of registrations had not changed. The program offering was dropped to one day a week for the Winter/Spring season and that did not solicit any registrations either. There is definitely a funding issue that staff has addressed by requesting a subsidization of the program in the 2015-2016 fiscal year budget. Continued research of alternatives to offer to parents or guardians is imperative for it to obtain registrations. Robinson reported that the Park District is growing closer to obtaining 501C-3 status that may open doors to pursuing grant funding or sponsorship from companies such as Abbvie and ULINE of one level or another. Committee Member Juarez-Ehlers pointed out that a grant is only a temporary fix. Schneider commented that she spoke with Tracey Crawford, Executive Director of NWSRA, regarding its cooperative efforts with Clearbrook to run their day program. Crawford said it was going well and invited Juarez-Ehlers and Schneider to meet with her to discuss the terms of the cooperative agreement and any regulations that it imposes on the programming. Juarez-Ehlers had asked if efforts were made to work with Zion to offer the program. Robinson responded that the program is open to any residents of SRSNLC. One of the interested

participants is a Zion resident. In addition, the bulk of Zion residents are tied to Northpoint and its services. Yurik offered to support in connecting with enrichment collaborative options by supplying the names and contact numbers of other day programs that Clearbrook is implementing. Special Recreation is encouraged to research for potential support or partnering with Clearbrook or another agency serving the area. Committee Member Rivera mentioned that the parents she has made efforts to connect with in the community haven't shown much concern or interest in finding programming for their children with a special need.

▪ **Family Programming- Family Dance**

Robinson questioned the committee on their thoughts of offering a family dance in one of two ways. At a fee of approximately \$12+ dollars per family member hire a DJ or do our own in-house DJ and it would cost around \$7 per family member. Discussion revolved around different means to obtain an appropriate and extended music offering and do our own in-house Disc jockeying dance. Committee Member Roth offered to check with her son who has a good friend that is a DJ. There is hope this individual may give a reduced price or even volunteer to DJ the dance for free. All agreed food and refreshments should be provided at the dance.

**D. Strategic Plan Goals related to Special Recreation -New Waukegan Park District Strategic Plan Initiatives**

Schneider reported that staff recently submitted their proposed 2015-2016 goals based upon the new Waukegan Park District Strategic Plan. Goals have not yet been approved but the following are initiatives that the Special Recreation Program Advisory Committee Members may be able to provide input and support to achieving over the next year.

- Developing and offering an Open House for families to complete the yearly paperwork and two seasonal registrations.
  - Members suggested that these Open Houses be offered at the Field House Sports and Fitness Center.
- Develop a working relationship with the Waukegan School District to support referrals for inclusion services and special recreation programs.
  - Robinson reported that she is actively involved with the Summer Collaborative Enrichment Committee. She is working with Janine Gruhn to secure afterschool camp space at the school and on how to address personal care needs. The school is required to provide these services with the nursing care on staff that Special Recreation cannot. The logistics of how to successfully inform and educate the families on the topic is being researched.
  - Member Yurik stressed the importance of being invited to man a table during teacher conferences to capture the appropriate participant base as well as develop a connection

of support between the school and Special Recreation programs and services.

- Developing and offering 3 resource nights for families.
  - Owens reported that she is looking to bring in guest speakers to address topics of importance to families that have a member with a disability.
  - Member Yurik stressed the importance of having a secured “audience” to ensure that Community Alternatives Unlimited (CAU), PACE transportation services, Legal in the area of guardianship and Social Security service representatives would be willing to come out and educate families.
  - Juarez-Ehlers looked to ensure that the cooperative districts of SRSNLC are on board and that bilingual staff be available to help translate at the resource events.
- Develop and offer swim lessons for children through adults with disabilities while maintaining inclusion services in WPD swim lessons.
  - Robinson reported that she is now placing inclusion aids on a regular basis for several children each season. Of these, several are functioning at a much lower level and the service is more of a 1:1 separate from the group lesson.
  - Teens and adults with a disability can only be served during the summer season because the pool being used at the Kiley Developmental Center is too small with not enough room to serve older individuals.

#### **E. Camp Space**

Robinson opened discussion on suggested locations to seek in-kind or rental space to house the summer teen camp. The schools, public and private are not an option unless it is the High School. They are not allowed to have students or campers older than 12 in the schools that house the elementary age children. The churches researched in the past offer Vacation Bible School (VBS) and would not allow camp in the facility for the full week of VBS. Other churches visited did not have appropriate space options or were closed to providing space on any level. Members brainstormed the following list of churches to research: Church of Joy that is now housed in the old YMCA and St. Dismas. In addition Committee Member Juarez-Ehlers will get the name of the church in her neighborhood on Kellogg and Roth will get the name of the church on York house and Green Bay Rd. It was also suggested that staff seek support of participant’s families to reach out to any churches they may have an affiliation. Member Yurik offered to reach out to St. Dismas for input on possible space availability.

#### **F. Review purpose of Program Advisory Committee**

Schneider supplied everyone with the Recreational Program Advisory Committee Guidelines for review. Once reviewed by members it was determined that the committee and members have been fulfilling its

purpose not only by attending meetings but by the support that all members provide throughout the year in council and resources whenever called upon individually.

**G. Priorities for Next Meeting**

- Polar Bear Plunge Sponsorship, Pledge Plunger and Volunteer recruitment
- Status and support required of Strategic Plan Initiatives related to Special Recreation
- Results of a call to potentially obtain new advisory members.

**IV. Closed Session**

There was no closed session

**V. Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 7:05pm

**Respectfully submitted,**

Julie Schneider  
Manager of Special Recreation