

**Minutes of the Waukegan Park District
Special Meeting of the Board of Commissioners
Special Recreation Program Advisory Committee
November 3, 2014**

The Board of Commissioners of the Waukegan Park District met in a Special Meeting of the Special Recreation Program Advisory Committee on November 3, 2014 at the Douglas House, 732 North Genesee Street, Waukegan, Illinois.

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 pm by Melissa Juarez-Ehlers who directed a Call of the Roll in the absence of Commissioner Bill Sarocka.

II. Roll Call

Present: Jay Lerner, Superintendent of Recreation; Julie Schneider, Manager of Special Recreation; Kari Robinson, Supervisor of Special Recreation; Maria Owens, Specialist of Special Recreation; Jessica Hyzy, Special Recreation intern; Melissa Juarez-Ehlers; Mercedes Rivera; Janalle Roth and Tina Yurik.

Absent: Commissioner Bill Sarocka, Executive Director Greg Petry, Dane Cruz, Deanna Guidry, Sharon Lambert, Susan Johnson, Chris Pace, and Christian Torres

III. Review, Discuss, Decide

A. Fundraising Effort: Polar Bear Plunge Planning

Schneider brought copies of and reviewed all documents related to sponsorship, pledging, and volunteering for the Polar Bear Plunge. The time frame to begin promoting the event and securing financial support starts now. There was an explanation of the process to present Donation Cards to businesses, completion of the Donation Card, collection of the donation money, and ways to post the card as recognition of the support were explained. A review of past businesses that supported the effort was also presented. Robinson reported that we already have people wanting to sign up as a Pledger or Plunge Team and gave a report on the sponsors that have been confirmed. Robinson reinforced the importance of securing Pledge Plungers as the means of obtaining adequate financial support to the event. Schneider reported that Committee Member, Chris Pace tried to sit outside of the Jewel on Lewis Avenue and collect donations but was met with little success. Schneider also brought copies of the Volunteer Agreement and Polar Bear Plunge Recruiting forms. She requested that if an individual is interested in volunteering that they be sure to date the Volunteer Agreement form for January 1, 2015 or it will have to be resigned and dated to be valid in the New Year. Schneider provided a brief overview of the change being made to provide only the Registration/Changing Tent in 2015. There were no complaints received after the 2014 event that the

Refreshment Tent was closed due to the layer of ice covering the sand inside the tent. The cost savings of providing only one tent will help with the overall proceeds earned from the event.

B. Programming Updates

▪ HEART – Day Program Status:

Robinson reported that when people inquired about the price they automatically said they couldn't afford it. There is definitely a funding issue that staff will have to start researching for alternatives to offer to parents or guardians. Based upon research conducted to plan the program, there should be a break even expectation. Committee Member Yurik asked if there was a grant available to help supplement the cost. Committee Member Juarez-Ehlers pointed out that a grant is only a temporary fix. Juarez-Ehlers and Schneider are looking to meet with other Special Recreation Associations offering a day program to discuss the terms of outside funding that they may be receiving or utilizing. Yurik offered to supply 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. Juarez-Ehlers asked Yurik for a specific name of someone to contact and she told her to go directly to Sheila. Juarez-Ehlers commented that she has worked with Sheila in the past and knows how to contact her if needed. Committee Member Roth asked if once the program gets off the ground, will there be a bi-lingual staff working the program to help translate and build a bridge of trust with the Latino population. Robinson responded that there is always effort made to secure bi-lingual staff. There is no guarantee of receiving an application of a qualified bi-lingual person. 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

Robinson reported that the one family program that is very successful for a multitude of seasons now is Family Frames. Another one that's gone well for two seasons now is Family Zumba. It has been a free program but to help offset the expense of the program, starting in January, we are going to continue to subsidize it through the Memorial Endowment fund but it will have a \$5/person fee. A family cook off program that was designed to help teach the whole family to cook and eat healthy was offered but unfortunately it did not get the minimum registration required to run. Special Recreation also tried to offer a family movie night. This program was designed to provide a family-home atmosphere that would accommodate the more sensory sensitive needs of some participants. Unfortunately it did not meet the minimum registration either. Committee Member Roth suggested incorporating a family dance program and to offer it on different days and times to see if an attractive day and time would be discovered. Robinson reported that for years now she has been scheduling a family and friends game night at the conclusion of a sports team season. They had just participated in a family basketball

game the other night that was a lot of fun. Robinson stated that she would continue with an open mind to offering family programming, and are always looking for more program ideas.

C. Strategic Plan Goals related to Special Recreation

▪ Market Retention Plan

Schneider reported that in the area of financial support to the families facing financial hardships or difficulty, Special Recreation has been investigating different avenues to provide free, low cost, and affordable options. She also stated that outside of camps, participants have stopped requesting scholarship support. Instead they have dropped or reduced their participation of programs. The following is a bulleted list of what has transpired over the past year.

- Special Recreation evaluated pricing of programs and cut some fees to properly address the non-transportation fee vs transportation fee and dinner and movie night out cost
- Robinson will be looking to award bonus bucks to the repeat athletes that they could use towards the next sport. She is going to assess some sort of incentive for the spring sports programs.
- Robinson implemented a sibling(s) half price registration fee which has allowed youth programs to run that have had to be cancelled in the past
- Robinson is going to “change up” the programs offerings to directly address the specific activity requests she has received
- Schneider noted that even without the grant P2K2 afterschool program has continued to be offered and run successfully with financial support of the Memorial Endowment fund
- Special Recreation, during the strike, whipped together a camp for participants at a cost of \$5 per day with a consistent registration of 6 participants
- It is noted that youth participation can be directly tied to students directly involved in Leisure Education programs as well as the P2K2 Afterschool program

D. Priorities for Next Meeting

2015 Meeting dates were tentatively set. All meetings are set with 6:00pm start time. The dates are as follows:

- **Monday, January 12, 2015. Alternate February 9**
- **Monday, April 13**
- **Monday, November 2**
- Researching utilizing a bus company for camp transportation: Schneider proposed the idea of utilizing a bus system to help with transportation for camp in the summer and asked other's to provide any contacts or experience they may have encountered in working with bus companies. The priority request led to a brief discussion. Committee Member Roth mentioned that there is only one bus company still in Waukegan and they may give a discount for special

recreation because we would only need the small buses. She also mentioned that the Durham bus company supports the Zion School District. Roth also suggested checking with local church that has its buses. Committee Member Rivera suggested checking with Countryside – Lakeside Association as they do a lot of work with special needs schools. Member Juarez-Ehlers pointed out that a lot of schools run their own bus services which may or may not be easy to coordinate.

- Purpose of Special Recreation Program Advisory: Juarez-Ehlers purposed it may be time once again to revisit the purpose of our Program Advisory Committee. What can/should the committee be working on and what more can its members be doing.
- Membership: Schneider reported that it is time to remove members that have not shown interest or have not been actively participating. A call to provide names and contact numbers for potentially new advisory members was presented.

IV. Closed Session

There was no closed session

V. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 6:50pm

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Schneider
Manager of Special Recreation