

**Minutes of the Waukegan Park District
Special Meeting of the Board of Commissioners
Special Recreation Program Advisory Committee
November 12, 2015**

The Board of Commissioners of the Waukegan Park District met in a Special Meeting of the Special Recreation Program Advisory Committee on November 12, 2015 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.

II. Roll Call

Present: Jay Lerner, Superintendent of Recreation, Executive Director Greg Petry, Julie Schneider, Manager of Special Recreation; Kari Robinson, Supervisor of Special Recreation; Susan Johnson, Sharon Lambert, Melissa Juarez-Ehlers; Mercedes Rivera; Janalle Roth, Christian Torres, and Tina Yurik

Absent: George Bridges, Board of Commissioner, Chris Pace, and Maria Owens, Specialist of Special Recreation

Being that there was no quorum of the board, no official business was conducted.

III. Review, Discuss, Decide

A. Fundraising Effort: Polar Bear Plunge

Schneider and Robinson presented a copy of and reviewed all documents related to sponsorship, pledging, and volunteering for the Polar Bear Plunge. They announced that the final version of all documents will be available within the next week. Members asked to be emailed the final versions and they will print the number of copies they require. The Sponsorship Letter and EZ Tips information was printed and given to members to assist with their promotions. The time frame to begin promoting the event and securing financial support is behind due to the transition to the new RecTrac registration system. Registration is available 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. Robinson reported that we already received interest in Plunge Pledger or Plunge Team interest. Robinson reinforced the importance of securing Pledge Plungers as the means of obtaining adequate financial support to the event. Member Yurik reported that Matt D. is working again with the FOP to support is plunge pledge.

Schneider provided a brief overview of the decision to only offer the Registration/Changing Room tent again this year. Without the spectator tent it has also been determined a coffee/hot chocolate vendor will only be available should Ana's Eat and Treats like to be a vendor and deal with the logistical constraints of getting on and off the beach should the sand not be frozen. There were no complaints received after the 2015 event that served refreshments from a vendor truck parked in the lot. The vendor received little business and no profits to share with Special Recreation.

Robinson surveyed plungers through email, regarding interest in working to secure the \$50 minimum to earn a limited edition beach towel, duffle bag, winter hat or sweatshirt at the 2017 event. The majority of responses received were to offer the sweatshirt again.

B. Proposed 2016 Meeting Dates

Schneider reviewed the two proposed dates she chose for 2016; April 18 and November 14. She explained that Special Recreation is not anticipating any major projects or programs needing assistance from Advisory Members and only two meetings are required. A couple members stated that Thursday was a better day of the week for a November meeting. The date chosen to replace November 14 is Thursday, November 3.

C. Programming Updates

▪ Swim Lessons:

Robinson reported that the new Otters Swim lesson ran with 3 participants the first session and 5 in the second. Petry commented that with the new pool coming in 2016, it will open a whole new level of opportunities for lessons, fitness and warm water therapy type programs. Robinson agreed that the new pool will be a wonderful new avenue to pursue aquatic activities. Robinson also reported she continues to offer inclusion services for children that prefer the mainstream option over the Otters Swim lesson program.

▪ HEART – Day Program Status:

Schneider reported that the program was not offered in the fall season due to lack of registrations received after several seasons. Schneider reported that summer intern Abby Reier completed a grant application with the Christopher & Dana Reeves Foundation in hopes of obtaining financial support for the program. The grant awards will be announced in December 2015. Continued research of alternatives to offer to parents or guardians is imperative for it to obtain registrations. Member Juarez – Ehlers commented that she and Schneider met with Tracey Crawford, Executive Director and Julie Clausen of NWSRA, regarding its cooperative efforts with Clearbrook to run their day program. The visit was very informational and presented a number of pros and cons. Schneider reported that she had not made any additional steps to investigate developing a partnership day program at this time.

Petry questioned members on the impact they had noted with the hold on monies from the State. Yurik and Juarez-Ehlers stated that it has impacted many families and services families had been receiving have been stopped or reduced considerably. Roth stated that her son had not yet been impacted by the budget freeze as he receives social security support. She did state that it would be appreciated if a leisure education program were available at Countryside Lakeside Center for additional program experiences. Juarez-Ehlers stated that she was pretty confident Lakeside is under a tight budget at present so not sure of any level of financial expenses they would be able to fund toward a leisure education program. After the New Year and hearing of results of the Christopher Reeves grant submitted, Schneider will look at partnerships or the potential support or partnering with Clearbrook or another agency serving the area.

- **Summer Activity Ideas**

Robinson asked that if anyone has free or low cost field trip ideas she is always looking for new locations for camp to visit. Schneider reported that she had shared that Kenosha has a fully accessible playground which Robinson is planning to have camp experience. Juarez-Ehlers had suggested that Center for Enriched Living would be interested in participating in a cooperative type activity such as drama. Robinson was open to the new opportunity to form a cooperative/joint program.

- **Family Programming**

Robinson reported that the Family Zumba program has run for several seasons now and is well liked by those attending. She also announced that she obtained a Zumba Instructor Certification and is now the instructor for the fall season. This now reduces the expense of paying an instructor.

Member Roth asked if there are still any plans to try and offer a family dance. Robinson commented that there are possible plans and she is still considering options to reduce expenses by not having to hire a DJ. Instead Special Recreation is looking for options to obtain appropriate music to play in lieu of a DJ for an in-house event.

Robinson reported that the Family Bowling program continues to run and is enjoyed. Roth asked if it could possibly be offered later in the day on a Saturday or maybe even a Sunday. Robinson stated that there are restrictions on offering it later in the day because birthday parties trump our program and most parties have the cosmic bowling. The birthday parties may also be an issue if offered on a Sunday as well. Robinson noted the suggestion and will be looking into different locations of offering the event. Brunswick has new party booking procedures which have been difficult for Robinson to maneuver through recently.

D. Strategic Plan Goals related to Special Recreation

Schneider reported that staff has been addressing several goals in the past several months.

- Developing and offering an Open House for families to complete the yearly paperwork and two seasonal registrations.
 - Schneider reported that Maria Owens has scheduled December 15, 2015 from 4:30-6:30pm and January 7, 2016 from 5:30-7:30pm to have “One Stop Shop” nights for families to complete all necessary registration paperwork.
 - Owens is also working with Community Alternatives Unlimited (CAU) to have an informational and workshop night in March 2016. This workshop would allow families to learn of and begin paperwork to obtain services for their family member with a disability. The bulk of families not aware of or receiving benefits are those that have been out of school for a few years now. Robinson reported that it is now State law that families receive this information at IEP meetings. Recently the Waukegan Public Schools offered a resource night for families. Yurik provided Schneider with a contact name and number of a CAU staff that should be a good contact to finding and securing an appropriate CAU representative to come to her workshop in March. Yurik and Juarez-Ehlers stated they would be more than happy to assist on the night of her scheduled workshop should their schedules permit.
- 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. Robinson was able to offer an after school summer camp program to six children this past summer which, was double from the previous year.
- New RecTrac Registration
 - Robinson reported that the new registration program is active for the Park District. Due to the date differences with SRNSLC programs Special Recreation will not go live until November 30. Robinson is looking to members Rivera, Johnson and Roth and a couple of other families to be Special Recreation “test pilots” for the new on-line registration process. Members have been informed that they should go on-line to set up their account so that when programs are live for Special Recreation they can go in and register for programs of choice and report back on how smooth the process worked for them.

E. Camp Space

Robinson reported that camps have grown over the past two years. It was very beneficial to have the space at the school for the afterschool camp program. The half day camp for the young children was moved to the Field House and it proved to be a good move. The TNT teen camp did well at its new location at the Belvidere Recreation Center. She announced that she is always looking for any leads on potential in-kind space to house a camp should the numbers grow any larger.

F. Priorities for Next Meeting

- Polar Bear Plunge review
- Camp planning and space needs
- Status and support required of Strategic Plan Initiatives related to Special Recreation- One Stop Shop review
- Results of Christopher Reeves grant
- Status of Pool development

IV. Closed Session

There was no closed session

V. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:03pm

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Schneider
Manager of Special Recreation