

**Minutes of the Waukegan Park District
Special Meeting of the Board of Commissioners
Special Recreation Program Advisory Committee
April 18, 2016**

The Board of Commissioners of the Waukegan Park District met in a Special Meeting of the Special Recreation Program Advisory Committee on April 18, 2016 at the Douglas House, 732 North Genesee Street, Waukegan, Illinois.

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 pm by Melissa Juarez-Ehlers who directed a Call of the Roll.

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; Melissa Juarez-Ehlers, Mercedes Rivera, Christian Torres and Chelsea Prater, Intern

Absent: George Bridges, Board of Commissioner; Greg Petry, Executive Director; Susan Johnson, Sharon Lambert, Chris Pace, Janalle Roth and Tina Yurik

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 on the final proceeds of the 2016 Polar Bear Plunge fundraising event. Proceeds totaled \$7,355. It was the best year outside of the year that the tents were donated. The registration fees were raised by \$5 for both the pre-registration and day of registration. It is felt this increase was a big contributing factor to the overall success of the proceeds earned.

Schneider informed the committee that the Waukegan Park District is celebrating its 100th Anniversary on December 26, 2106. The entire year of 2017 will be utilized to highlight the Centennial Celebration. Robinson and Schneider reported that they will promote the Centennial Celebration at the 2017 Polar Bear Plunge. The details have not yet been finalized. There was discussion revolving around having the Plunge Pledge initiative remain at \$50 with the goal to obtain 100 Plunge Pledgers or raising the Plunge Pledge total to \$100+. Those that secure the \$100+ would receive an additional incentive gift such as a towel or duffle bag and a coffee mug.

Schneider reported that a 5K Run/Walk is being added to the Worldwide Day of Play and Fitness Expo Special Events on September 17. Proceeds of the Run/Walk are being tagged to support the Special Recreation athletic and

scholarship fund. Program Advisory Members in attendance at the meeting committed to lending volunteer support to the event.

B. Camp Review:

Schneider reported that space for the summer camps offered by Special Recreation is set for 2016. Robinson presented the facility changes made to reflect the changes needed to coincide with the Waukegan Public School summer school schedule. The Half Day Happenings camp is being held at Bevier Center from 2:30-5:00pm. There is hope that families who have a child with a special need interested in an afterschool camp experience will register for the program. At present it does not appear that Special Recreation will be able to secure space in a school. The school district is not offering the enrichment program this year to the general education students.

In an effort to reduce expenses and address the large subsidy to the Special Recreation camp budget, all Special Recreation camp offerings have been reduced from eight weeks to six this summer. Schneider explained she conducted a survey among the Chicagoland Special Recreation Associations to gather input on the number of camp weeks their respective association provides. The majority of weeks is six with some going eight and only one providing nine or ten weeks.

C. Programs/Services

▪ RecTrac on-line registration:

It was explained that the transition to RecTrac has provided Special Recreation families the opportunity to register on-line for programs with the exception of camps and overnight trips. Some “hiccups” have been encountered along the way and staff is still learning about all the amenities the system has available. It is a good system that staff feels once a full year of brochures seasons has achieved, the full potential of its operations will be understood and implemented with a level of ease.

▪ Fall Activity Ideas:

- **Swim Lessons:** Robinson reported that the new Otters Swim lesson ran in the Fall with 5 registrants and the Winter and Spring season ran with 3 participants. As a whole, 9 different children were served. Robinson is pleased with the success and satisfaction of participants so she is offering two days a week for two sessions this summer. She is also looking to provide adult lessons starting in the Winter season once the new aquatic facility is up and running. Robinson is also researching some aquatic fitness training or certification she can pursue in preparation to offer fitness programming in an aquatic setting.
- **Centennial Theme:** Schneider announced that within the year of 2017, the recreation department will be looking for ways to promote and acknowledge to 100th anniversary of the park district.

- **IAPD PowerPlay! Grant:**

Schneider reported that she received the Illinois Association of Park District's PowerPlay! Grant for \$1,000. The P2K2 afterschool program will be brought back for the 2016/2017 school year.

- **Family Programming**

Robinson reported that the Family Zumba program has run for several seasons now and is well liked by those attending. She will continue to offer this family fitness program.

Consideration is being given to offering two different, one time, fitness programs naming it; Fitness Fair. One option is yoga and the other is a family dance night. The option of obtaining appropriate music to play in lieu of a DJ, to save expenses, is being investigated.

Schneider inquired for input of any known local organizations that may like to partner to offer some family programming. No one had an answer at this time but would keep it in mind and share should something be brought to their attention.

D. Strategic Plan Goals related to Special Recreation

Schneider reported that staff has recently established new goals to address in the next fiscal year.

- **Centennial Celebration:** As mentioned previously within the meeting, the district as a whole will be looking at ways to present and acknowledge the 100th anniversary. The year of celebration will start with the fireworks scheduled to take place on December 26, 2016.
- **Management of Special Recreation and General Recreation:** Schneider announced that starting May 1, she will be taking on the management of Special Recreation and General Recreation. Jay Lerner confirmed that her new title will be Manager of Recreation. The change will allow for unity and team initiative to be developed in the area of family, early childhood-teens, special interests, and small special events and how it does and can include Special Recreation.
- **Focus Group Meetings:** Robinson will be conducting program surveys to the adult, teen and younger groups. The survey will be designed to identify what programs and services being offered are done well, what could be done better or be enhanced and what isn't being done that should be.
- **Resource Nights:** Owens has confirmed that Social Security and Pace bus are willing to come to present on its respective services in the upcoming fiscal year.

Owens also reported that the workshop with Community Alternatives Unlimited (CAU) which was scheduled to present in March, was

cancelled by CAU. The representative scheduled to present went out on medical leave. There was a large fee attached to arranging for another representative to be scheduled. Owens noted that she was going to connect with CAU in the near future in hopes that something could be rescheduled. Committee member Juarez stated that she would forward the contact information for Ed McManus. McManus is retired from the Department of Human Services and now running a consulting business. Juarez felt he may be willing to present for free or at a very low fee. She was complimentary of his knowledge and willingness to educate and help families that have someone with a disability. Juarez stated the McManus has a daughter with special needs so is empathetic to the struggles families encounter and consults on how to maneuver the system and plan for the future.

- **Skill Based Sports Programming:** Robinson reported upon her initiative to expand upon Special Olympic sports to include skills in conjunction with team sports offerings. Active team athletes are aging and younger or new athletes are not registering. The younger athletes that are participating are too young or lacking the skills to compete against the older teen and adult athletes in the team sports. There is hope that by offering skills programs, a younger group of individuals will be secured to participate on a regular basis. In addition, it will open an avenue for age advancement and skill development to move toward team sports when they are of an appropriate age and skill set. A connection was made in fall of 2015 with an elementary school physical special education teacher. The teacher expressed an interest in offering special Olympic sports to her students through the Leisure Education program. This interest was not moved forward for a number of reasons within the school year but would be a good starting point to pursue again.

E. Priorities for Next Meeting

- Polar Bear Plunge planning and implementing
- 5K Run/Walk support and planning
- Status and support required of Strategic Plan Initiatives related to Special Recreation
- Status of Pool development/opening

IV. Closed Session

There was no closed session

V. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 6:44pm

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Schneider
Manager of Special Recreation