

**Minutes of the Waukegan Park District  
Special Meeting of the Board of Commissioners  
Special Recreation Program Advisory Committee  
April 17, 2017**

The Board of Commissioners of the Waukegan Park District met in a Special Meeting of the Special Recreation Program Advisory Committee on April 17, 2017 at the Douglas House, 732 North Genesee Street, Waukegan, Illinois.

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 6:06 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; Melissa Juarez-Ehlers, Mercedes Rivera, and Christian Torres

Absent: George Bridges, Board of Commissioner; Greg Petry, Executive Director; Maria Owens, Specialist of Special Recreation; 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 2017 Polar Bear Plunge fundraising event. Proceeds totaled \$7,567. It was the best year outside of the year that the tents were donated. The success is attributed to more Pledge Plunger Teams and additional sponsorships being obtained.

Schneider reported that the George Bridge's 5K Run/Walk is being offered again prior to the Worldwide Day of Play and Fitness Expo Special Events on September 16. Jay Lerner confirmed that proceeds of the Run/Walk are being tagged to support the Special Recreation athletic and scholarship fund. Final details of the event are being are still in the planning stages but at this time will resemble that of the 2016 event. He also commented that for a first time event, they secured over 120 runners in 2016. Lerner expanded upon the GoWaukegan walk set for May 13. It is a kick-off event to promote the benefits of walking and is in collaboration with surrounding Lake County communities with the same initiative. Waukegan Park District is implementing and promoting monthly walking events for participation to assist in building up to the 5k Run/Walk. Program Advisory Members in attendance at the meeting committed to lending volunteer support to the event.

## **B. Camp Review:**

Robinson asked if anyone knows of or should discover low cost field trip ideas within 45 minutes to one hour of Waukegan, to please pass them on to her. She has now started the search of appropriate outings for the different camp groups. Schneider reminded Robinson of the accessible playground in Kenosha; Robinson reported she is scheduling a visit. Mercedes Rivera suggested roller skating. Juarez-Ehlers stated that The Center for Enriched Living had just completed a field trip to local roller rink that they had obtained Groupon Coupons to utilize. The facility did provide the “walkers” for unskilled skaters to use for stability. She is more than happy to share the contact information. She is not aware of the number of stability assist walkers that the facility or any local facility has. Members agreed that if they hear of or encounter any appropriate field trip locations they will let Robinson know.

## **C. Programs/Services**

### **▪ American Independence Parade & Festival – July 2:**

Schneider presented that the theme of for 2107 is going to be “Happy Birthday America and the Waukegan Park District.” Activities at the Festival are going to revolve around old fashion games and new technology presentation of drones. There has been the addition of an Old Time Baseball Game to wrap up the day at Groesche Field. Members were excited to hear of the game. The specifics on who is playing are not known but Schneider announced that the district is working with an organization that helps to organize old fashion baseball games.

### **▪ IAPD PowerPlay! Grant:**

Schneider was excited to relay that Special Recreation received the Illinois Association of Park District’s PowerPlay! Grant for \$1,000 again this year. She explained that the grant was written to implement a health, wellness and fitness component into all of the camps for the summer of 2017. This is a switch from all past grants that were designed to have the P2K2 afterschool program offered throughout the school year. It has been a struggle for years to get adequate registration numbers to run the program. Special Recreation will now have a “captive” audience and have the ability to reach 50+ campers as opposed to the 4-9 that have participated with the current grant implementation of P2K2. Robinson hasn’t determined if a camp staff will be utilized to plan and implement the activities or a staff will be hired to implement the program. She is not sure there will be interest to work a program with limited hours in the week. She will be reaching out to PE teachers to see if any of them may have an interest in implementing a health and wellness program to campers.

### **▪ Summer Programming:**

#### **○ Swim Lessons:**

Robinson reported that she is pleased with the success and satisfaction of participants that have been participating in the Otters program for children. For the summer she has offered the Swordfish

swim lessons program for 14 and older; it will be offered on Saturdays. The Otters program will have a second offering in the week on Thursday nights, thus offering two days a week for two sessions this summer.

○ **New Programs:**

Robinson reported that she is going to offer a Mid-day Play program on Tuesdays and Fridays once summer camp is over. Activities will be varied and include such things as sports of all sorts, cooking and crafts. Robinson also announced that she is offering alternative fitness programs such as Rhythm in Motion, a drumming program has been a big success, and will offer for the first time Water Blast. Her offering of a Fitness Fair that was to introduce yoga did not run. She invited the committee to provide any insight or ideas on alternative fitness activities that she would look into offering.

**Fall Activity Ideas:**

○ **H.E.A.R.T:** Robinson expanded upon the fact that she that she will be offering the H.E.A.R.T day program again this Fall. She has high hopes it will actually obtain sufficient registration to run based upon the number of active participants that will graduated this spring and to date do not have a job or workshop placement come fall. Robinson has initiated a meeting with the Transition Coordinator of Waukegan Public Schools. It is her hope that she is invited to a meeting they may be having with parents so she can inform them of the program. Juarez-Ehlers once again, invited Schneider and Robinson to visit The Center for Enriched Livings newly remodeled facility and to visit its day program as well as the ELA program that NSSRA offers in cooperation at its facility.

▪ **Family Programming**

- Robinson has begun offering in the SRSNLC brochure a description of the family and special event programs that are listed in the Waukegan Park District brochure. They are advertised inclusive opportunities that are family friendly. It has been noted that some families and local group homes have registered and attended the programs.
- Robinson reported that the Family Zumba program has run for several seasons now and is well liked by those attending. The present program has lower than normal registration but she does not feel that the numbers will not go back up in the future. She will continue to offer this family fitness program.
- The first ever, Splash Bash will be offered in the summer. It is going to be an after-hours event held at the new Aquatic Center at the Field House. The program will be open to families with a member that has a special need. The activity will have exclusive use of the pool and meeting room. This will create an environment that is welcoming and understanding of participants and any unique needs or behaviors that may be displayed.

- Robinson is also looking to offer Splash Socials each month on a different day of the week. She is looking to see if and where interest, as well as availability of family participation may be.

#### **D. Strategic Plan Goals related to Special Recreation**

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

- **Management of Special & General Recreation:**

Schneider presented that over the last year in taking on the management of both areas there has been the effort to brainstorm and initiate partnerships between departments of the district and within the community. Starting with the summer season, Special Recreation and General Recreation staff will be partnering with Cultural Arts to present **“Meet Me in the Parks”** at select parks that the Arts N’ Parks program is being implemented. A second initiative that is being coordinated with the Parks Department and Waukegan Public Schools (WPS) end of year Pavilion & Green Space rentals. Staff is obtaining a list of school park rentals. They will then reach out to the school to present having recreation staff come to the park and present a variety of activities. The program is being called **“Recreation Recess.”** Thirdly, Schneider presented that Cultural Arts staff has touched base with the **Roberti House and Beacon Place** to see about partnering. There are hopes of providing Arts programming along with recreation activities to these agencies. It would be an opportunity to help enhance their existing programming, establish an awareness of the park district while providing to the community in a geographic area seen as underserved by the district. Juarez-Ehlers is going to forward contact that maybe a good resource for Special Recreation to develop a partnership.

- **Focus Group Meetings:** Robinson conducted a youth program survey with participants and parents in attendance at the first season of the Time to Spare Bowling Jr. program in Winter. The survey was 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. Robinson received some good feedback that she will be utilizing in her program planning. Robinson is also looking to meet with parents of the WPS Transition program before the end of the school year. Her hope is to obtain information on programs and service interests to the young adults and inform them of the H.E.A.R.T day program being offered in fall.

- **Health and Wellness Nights:** In the absence of Maria Owens, Schneider presented that Owens plans to offer two health and wellness nights in the next year. At the end of the summer season she is planning to have a nutritional specialist educate on nutrition and health impact. A second wellness night is being planned for spring 2018. This evening program entails having the Lake County Health Department present on key topics such as hygiene, wellness check-ups, and school

physicals. Overall they will learn of the services available to residents that they may not be aware of.

- **Skill Based Sports Programming:** Robinson reported upon her initiative to expand upon Special Olympic sports to include skills in conjunction with team sports offerings. All team sports now have the option of a skills program registration. It is opening an avenue for age advancement and skill development of younger athletes to move toward team sports when they are of an appropriate age and skill set. It has also allowed for a sport to be offered when registration for a team has fallen below the minimum needed to compete. Robinson also reported that she was invited to a meeting with the WPS and learned of its new initiative to offer Special Olympics in the schools. She has offered to remain involved in the process to assist as appropriate and needed.

**E. Priorities for Next Meeting**

- Polar Bear Plunge planning and implementing
- 5K Run/Walk support and planning to be forwarded as known leading up to the event on September 16.
- Results of implementation of PowerPlay! Grant
- Report on results of the 5K Run/Walk and proceeds obtained
- Status and support required of Strategic Plan Initiatives related to Special Recreation
- Status of H.E.A.R.T day program

**IV. Closed Session**

There was no closed session

**V. Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 7:10pm

**Respectfully submitted,**

Julie Schneider  
Manager of Special Recreation