

**Minutes of the Waukegan Park District
Special Meeting of the Board of Commissioners
Special Recreation Program Advisory Committee
October 30, 2017**

The Board of Commissioners of the Waukegan Park District met in a Special Meeting of the Special Recreation Program Advisory Committee on October 30, 2017 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 George Bridges who directed a Call of the Roll.

II. Roll Call

Present: George Bridges, Board of Commissioner; Errick Beverly, Superintendent of Recreation; Julie Schneider, Manager of Special Recreation; Kari Robinson, Supervisor of Special Recreation; Maria Owens, Specialist of Special Recreation; Melissa Juarez-Ehlers, Jean Kulczyk, Mercedes Rivera, Janalle Roth and Christian Torres

Absent: Jay Lerner, Executive Director; Susan Johnson, Sharon Lambert and Tina Yurik

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

III. Review, Discuss, Decide

A. Programs / Services

▪ **Aquatic Programming Status and Ideas**

- **Swim Lessons:** Robinson reported that she is pleased with the success and satisfaction of the number of registrants that have been participating in the Otters program for children, as well as the Swordfish swim lessons program for 14 and older.
- **Splash Socials:** With the opening of the Aquatic Center at the Field House in December 2016, Robinson reported that monthly swim socials have been offered. They are off to a slow start but some have been run with low numbers to provide the opportunity to those families interested.
- **Special Olympics (SO) Swim Team:** Robinson has surveyed active participants to obtain the level of interest in participating in a Swim Team as well as participants' ability to swim a full lap. In response to the interest, she has reserved pool space and has plans to offer a SO Swim Team in Winter 2018. Robinson is also seeking a qualified individual to coach the team. She has swim stroke skills but not training on coaching of individuals to complete. If anyone knows of someone that has interest and the ability to coach please let her know. One of the 2018, Spring interns for Special Recreation comes with extensive aquatic background so will be utilized to assist with this new program implementation.

- **Family Programming**

- **Advertising:** Robinson reviewed the initiative she began a year ago of posting 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 as inclusive opportunities that are family friendly. It has been noted that some families and local group homes have registered and attended these programs. She also reported that she now plans the Special Recreation schools off program to be offered in conjunction with the General Recreation programs. If registration does not meet minimum then inclusive services are offered to mainstream the participants in with the General Recreation program. It was suggested by Committee Member, Jean Kulczyk to allow for sibling registration. Robinson reported that this has been an opportunity offered in the Special Recreation day camps in the past and is addressed and considered on an individual basis should the interest or need be presented.

- **Valentine's Gala:** Schneider reported that with the initiative to address blended families the traditional Father Daughter Dance and Mother & Son date night dances have been merged into the Valentine's Gala to be offered on February 17, 2018

- **Winter/Spring Programming Updates**

- **Valentine's Day Dance** – 2018 will be the second year the Round Lake now hosts the Valentine's Dance. The Cooperative Special Events for SRSNLC have been reviewed as a whole. A couple of the dances have shown a trend of low numbers so are being eliminated and merged into the Zion Social Club dances that are offered on the first Friday of each month.

- **Bowling Tournament** – Robinson reported that in the review of Cooperative Special Events, Waukegan determined that the event participation has remained low for several years and that 70% of attendees are from outside agencies. This event is being disbanded on a trial basis for 2018.

- **Family Splash Bash replacement program:** The first ever, Family Splash Bash was offered in the summer. Unfortunately it was cancelled due to below minimum interest. It was to be offered as an after-hours event held at the new Aquatic Center at the Field House. The program was open to families with a member that has a special need. The activity had reserved exclusive use of the pool and meeting room. This was to create an environment that is welcoming and understanding of participants and any unique needs or behaviors that may be displayed. The concept is now being planned as a Cooperative Event with SRSNLC as a Family Splash Bash in Spring 2018. Outside Special Recreation Agencies are also being invited in hopes to reach minimum to run the program. There are a multitude of benefits to the families which will be highlighted in the promotions.

- **H.E.A.R.T:** Robinson expanded upon the fact that she has been promoting the H.E.A.R.T day program again this Fall. She has received 3 applications but is still short 3 applications to obtain sufficient registration to run the program. Juarez-Ehlers also suggests that a date be picked to start the program and run under minimum if necessary. The concept that if you “offer it and they will come.” She reported that CEL is now opening its third site and participants are coming from around neighboring counties. It was suggested that Robinson connect with the Waukegan Public Schools transition team and ask to be invited to parent meetings to promote the program. Juarez-Ehlers stated that Illinois Imagines is back and it would be a good place to have help promote the program. The Committee was asked by Robinson if anyone was aware of the number of days it has been taking to place individuals into a workshop/day program option. The average was reported to be 180 days and that is dependent upon the functioning level of the individual and if funding was being provided by the State or families for the individual with a special need. Committee Member, Janalle Roth and Juarez-Ehlers pointed out the importance of getting families to complete the process to be put onto the PUNS List. Juarez-Ehlers once again, invited Robinson to visit The Center for Enriched Livings (CEL) newly remodeled facility and to visit its day program as well as the ELA program that NSSRA offers in cooperation at its facility. Committee Member, Kulczyk offered the suggestion to develop a connection with CASA and its work with foster children. Often times if the CASA case worker presents the programming options available to support the child and foster family the judge can order that funding be provided.

B. Strategic Plan Goals related to Special Recreation - WPD Initiatives

- **Focus Group Meetings: Youth interest survey results:** 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. Parents requested more bowling and yoga programs. Robinson had already been offering yoga. She gave information to the interested parents. Interest received for Yoga did not result in registrations; she will be looking for more input on the time and day options. The youth bowling program started off strong but was cancelled for the fall. Robinson remains open to presenting program options of interest. She has found that the swim lessons options is really taking off and there is also regular inclusion support being given at general recreation programs throughout the year now. Robinson also clarified that she has been presenting at the Parent Universities for years now. This has allowed her to have more “face-time” with parents and caregivers as she has also been invited to the Parent Information Nights, held in the schools. This has allowed for the barrier of uncertainty and unfamiliarity to be bridged and as a result new participant registrations are being seen.

- **Meeting with School Social Workers:** Robinson announced that she has been connecting with the Waukegan Public School Social Workers working with the Diverse Learner's teachers. The goal is to form partnerships with social workers to start new programming. Committee Member, Janalle Roth, said to talk with the head of social workers of the school district to get invited to their regularly scheduled meetings.
- **Health & Wellness Nights:** Maria Owens presented that through a survey she conducted last fall in hopes of gathering insight into what type of health and wellness programs or activities participants and their families would be interested in seeing offered and would register. The results are being compiled at this time. Committee Member, Juarez-Ehlers suggested the initiative be taken in small steps and integrated into existing programs. She reported that CEL was also encountering some of the same need to educate and have participation from families to help develop health and wellness lifestyles. They have found the most success from integrating education and activities into existing programs. If done as a separate program, there is a need to have a catchy title and something being offered that they see as a real benefit for them to participate.
- **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 partnered with Cultural Arts to present "*Meet Me in the Parks*" at select parks that the Arts N' Parks program was being implemented. A second initiative that was coordinated with the Parks Department and Waukegan Public Schools (WPS) end of year Pavilion & Green Space rentals. Staff obtained 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. Staff attended a minimum of four parks to present activities. Staff will be working with the WPS to the concept of a "*Recreation Recess*" program which would entail staff coming to the schools to offer activities at recess time or gym time.
- **Belvidere Park Renovations:** Errick Beverly presented that the Belvidere Park renovation plans are being finalized with a 2019 opening of the new outdoor pool and park amenities.
- **Waukegan Park District headquarters:** Beverly reported that the district purchased the Waukegan Savings Bank located on Sunset which has been vacant for five plus years. There is a substantial cost savings by purchasing the facility that has a very large amount of office space and existing furniture as opposed to building a facility. With renovations to be made there is hope to be in the new space by late Spring 2018.

C. Fundraising Effort & Grant Use

- **2018 Polar Bear Plunge Planning:** Schneider reported that the registration is now open and planning has gone into full swing. Schneider presented the Sponsorship packets for members to take and present to any businesses. The Pledging materials are being finalized and will be ready for distribution by November 17 along with the past pledging mailer. If anyone is looking for specific promotional materials please let Robinson know and she will gather them together once finalized.

- **IAPD PowerPlay! Grant:** Schneider reviewed that Special Recreation received the Illinois Association of Park District's PowerPlay! Grant for \$1,000. The grant was written to implement a health, wellness and fitness component into all of the camps for the summer of 2017. Special Recreation had the "captive" audience and had the ability to reach 50+ campers as opposed to the 4-9 that have participated with the current grant implementation of P2K2. Schneider explained that one of the two summer interns was assigned to the program and completed the planning and implementing of the activities. Weekly activities were presented to the four Special Recreation camps. Monies received from the grant funded the purchase of a number of interactive supplies. The favorite purchase was a very large inflatable ball which was very light and colorful. Many positive comments were received from staff and campers. Schneider submitted the evaluation report and letter to IAPD. There is hope the opportunity will be available again in 2018 for Special Recreation to apply. It was a very successful implementation of the new concept.

D. Set Tentative 2018 Meeting Dates

- April 16, 2018
- October 29, 2018

E. Priorities for Next Meeting

- Polar Bear Plunge fundraising results
- Status and support required of Strategic Plan Initiatives related to Special Recreation
- Status of H.E.A.R.T day program
- Review of Programs and Services

IV. Closed Session

There was no closed session

V. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:30pm

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Schneider
Manager of General & Special Recreation