

WAUKEGAN PARK DISTRICT

PRESS RELEASE

Waukegan Park District and Waukegan Historical Society Carnegie Initiative

Waukegan, IL (September 16, 2019) The Waukegan Park District and the Waukegan Historical Society are excited to announce that the Waukegan City Council agreed tonight to transfer ownership of the historic Carnegie Library to the Waukegan Park District. Although the details of the arrangement are still being worked out with the City, it is expected that the Park District and Historical Society will take possession of the building in late 2019, early 2020.

The Carnegie Library is designated as a Waukegan Historic Landmark and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 2018, the Waukegan Historical Society commissioned Harboe Architects, a national award-winning historic preservation firm, to conduct a Historic Structure Report and Conceptual Design Study on the Carnegie Library as a potential site for its growing collections, archives, exhibits, and programs.

Consequently, planning for the redevelopment of the Carnegie Library proceeded. The next step is to assume physical control of the Carnegie Library. The private and public partnership between the Park District and the Historical Society will finance and redevelop the Carnegie Library as a multi-year project. More information will follow once the Park District acquires the building.

Josh Bill, President of the Waukegan Historical Society stated, “The Waukegan Historical Society has been a proud partner of the Waukegan Park District for nearly 50 years. We have recognized a need for additional space for more than 10 years now and have had strategic plans for expanding the Waukegan History Museum in Bowen Park. For the 50th

Anniversary of the Waukegan Historical Society, the Waukegan Park District Board of Commissioners approved a resolution to fund the expansion of the Waukegan History Museum by the year 2029. The Historical Society has been fundraising in the meantime.” Once construction is complete, the Carnegie Library will be the new site for expanded history programs, exhibits, collections, and archives and the Waukegan History (Haines) Museum will remain open. Bill further stated, “We couldn’t be more excited to restore and adaptively reuse one of Waukegan’s most historic buildings.”

Waukegan Park District President Marc Jones is enthusiastic about the project. “The Waukegan Historical Society spearheaded this initiative, which we are proud to support. We have always appreciated our close partnership with the Waukegan Historical Society. The District and the whole community have benefited from the education, outreach, events and volunteers provided by the Historical Society.”

Jay Lerner, Waukegan Park District Executive Director, summarized the project this way. “The community can be assured that this project will not only strengthen downtown but Waukegan as a whole. The Waukegan Park District and the Waukegan Historical Society are partners that are committed to meeting the needs of the community and delivering. We are enthusiastic about this opportunity and we’ll work diligently with the City of Waukegan, once the agreement criteria have been met.”

About the Waukegan Park District

Established on December 26, 1916, the district has 50 properties and more than 737 acres of land, including the 18-hole Bonnie Brook and 9-hole Greenshire Golf Courses. Properties are managed to the highest environmental and conservation standards. Facilities operated by the district include the Field House Sports, Fitness and Aquatics Center, the Jack Benny Center for the Arts, the Waukegan’s Greg Petry SportsPark, the Waukegan Skate Park, the Waukegan BMX Track, recreational centers, disc golf course, dog exercise area and agility course, outdoor sports fields, picnic areas, playgrounds, and sports courts including basketball, tennis and pickleball. A full range of programs and services are offered year-round for all ages, from infants to seniors as well as special needs populations. Healthy lifestyles, wellness initiatives, and a

connection with the outdoors and nature are integrated throughout programs, services, and special events. Cultural events are provided by the Waukegan Symphony Orchestra and Concert Chorus, and the Waukegan History Museum. There is something for everyone! The award-winning District employs 62 full-time and over 230 part-time, year-round, seasonal, and temporary employees. The District is a member of the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD), and Illinois Park and Recreation Association (IPRA). The district maintains national accreditation from the NRPA Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA), Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD) Distinguished Agency accreditation and Park District Risk Management Agency (PDRMA) accreditation and maintains a Level A Loss Control Program. The district was a NRPA Gold Medal Finalist in 2012 and 2013, awarded the NRPA National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management in 2013 and recently named a 2019 Gold Medal Finalist.

TJA/5/21/19

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