

**Minutes of the Waukegan Park District  
Special Meeting of the Board of Commissioners  
Cultural Arts Advisory Committee  
November 7, 2019  
12:00pm**

The Board of Commissioners of the Waukegan Park District met in a special meeting on November 7, 2019, at the Jack Benny Center, 39 Jack Benny Drive, Waukegan, Illinois 60087

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 12:05pm by Ty Rohrer, Manager of Cultural Arts, who directed a call of the roll and made introductions.

**II. Roll Call & Introductions**

In attendance: Jacqueline Herrera Giron, Commissioner; Errick Beverly, Superintendent of Recreation; Mike Mayfield, Deputy Superintendent; Ty Rhorer, Manager of Cultural Arts; Bryan Escobar, Cultural Arts & History Specialist; Elizabeth Fallon, Department Coordinator; Jo Dooly; Mark Harms; Martha Padilla-Ramos; Roxanne Swanson

Absent: Josh Bill, Maria Calderon, Jack Dudley, Dave Fletcher, Myra Gaytan, Dave Johnson, David Motley, Rich Ribando, Betsy Stiles, MaryFran Troha, Jane Waller

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

**III. Review, Discuss, Decide**

**A. Waukegan Carnegie Library**

The Waukegan Historical Society has been looking to expand facilities at Bowen Park with fundraising efforts underway and were approached by a foundation, which wishes to remain anonymous, who would like to assist with the renovation and redevelopment of the Carnegie Library location for the purpose of the Waukegan Historical Society. The City of Waukegan and the Park District are in the final stage of completing a resolution to pass ownership of the Carnegie Library from the City of Waukegan to the Park District with hopes to have this completed by early 2020. Harboe Architects has shown interest in the project. Parking will be accommodated by the city with also possible collaboration with CLC parking.

- Committee Member Comments:

- Roxanne Swanson commented that this is very exciting and every project the park district becomes involved with turns to gold for the benefit of the whole community. A project like this is in good hands with the park district.

**B. Cultural Arts Facility Improvements**

- Jack Benny Center for the Arts

- The bathroom and painting projects are complete
- Possible future projects include sound proofing of some studios and renovating the Theater space for a multi-purpose use

- Committee Member Comments:

- How large is the Theater space and what would a renovation look like?
  - Ty responded that the risers and stage would be removed to return the space to the format for what was its original purpose which was a dance hall. This would

allow for more flexibility in using the space for a larger variety of events, programs, and rentals.

- Mark Harms suggested that when the room is redeveloped you could host a turn of the century cotillion as a fundraiser to showcase the facility to the community

C. Recap of Summer Cultural Arts Program Offerings

- Received the IL Arts Council Grant of \$13,900
- Private Music Lesson registrations have increased 30% since the reduction of fees
- All Dance programs are now in the Dance Studio and have seen an 8% increase in registration
- Visual Arts programs are now utilizing the redeveloped backstage space at the Jack Benny Center and have seen a 95% increase in registrations. The new space is more conducive to lessons and the community has responded positively.
- This past year there were \$6000 in scholarships provided to 50 students which is 5 times the amount over the previous year.
- Committee Member Comments:
  - Jacqueline Herrera Giron asked if there are waiting lists due to the growth?
    - Ty responded that they have been able to accommodate the growth by opening up additional program times

D. Upcoming Arts & History Programming

- Last school year there were 295 History School and Community Outreach programs reaching 9000 people which was an increase over the previous year.
- Bryan and Ty recently gave a presentation to the Lake County Historical Alliance on how to conduct school outreach programs.
- 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Field Trips have begun on Tuesdays with 2 classes visiting every week. The Lincoln Exhibit is housed in the Lilac Cottage Sunroom this year to make the experience more accessible for students and teachers who also visit the Museum during their field trip.
- The Latino Pop Up Exhibit was an example of the very successful use of our new format of collecting Oral Histories. One of the original people who provided an Oral History recently passed away so it was important that this person's history of being a first Latino family in Waukegan was preserved.
- The Museum exhibit titled Caption This has been a great interactive exhibit with attendees providing captions using sticky notes next to historical photos on display.
- New Walking Tours offered this summer were the Parking Lot Tour and the Waukegan Harbor Tour and both were well attended.
- New this summer was a History Outreach program for Summer Day Camps and COOL Learning Experience.
- Day of the Dead had 600 attendees and was a very successful event which is outgrowing the space
- Dandelion Wine Art & Music Festival will be moved to the second Saturday of June to avoid any possible conflicts with other events in Waukegan. This past year's event had good attendance despite the rainy weather.
- The Juneteenth event also experienced rainy weather decreasing attendance.
- Oakwood Cemetery Walk celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and Tour of Homes had 500 people attend and great feedback.

- Christmas Caroling will be on December 17 caroling to homes on Sheridan Road. We coordinate with our involved Sheridan Road homeowners for a great experience for all.
  - Ray Bradbury's 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday is August 22, 2020 and there will be a community festival event to commemorate this day. The Waukegan Park District and Historical Society will be bringing back the Literary Walk.
  - Committee Member Comments:
    - Martha Padilla Ramos asked what have you learned most in the process of collecting Oral Histories?
      - Bryan Escobar responded that he has learned that people want to share their story and are happy for the outlet
    - Martha Padilla Ramos suggested creating a program for middle school students to research the history of a building in their neighborhood.
- E. Waukegan Symphony Orchestra
- The Waukegan Symphony Orchestra kicked off the 2019-2020 Season with a concert on October 27 featuring the Russian Romantics with the new director, Alexander Platt. It was one of the more difficult concerts for the orchestra but also one of the best performances. There are about 60 members in the orchestra which is up from 50 members last year.
  - The DIY Messiah is on December 14 with some new features. Mozart's Messiah will be performed which incorporates more of the WSO. There will be new musical selections and carol sing along. The choirs from the First Presbyterian Church and the First United Methodist Church will be invited to join the WCC.
  - The free concerts this year were the Ray Bradbury Statue Unveiling which was very well received and upcoming free concerts will be the Young People's Concert on February 22 at the Library with a Story Telling in Music theme plus the Pops Concert at Dandelion Wine.
  - Committee Member Comments:
    - Jo Dooley asked if there was enough space at First UMC for the Messiah event with a full orchestra.
      - Ty Rohrer responded that they were mapping out the space and that overall the space is tight and out growing this venue
    - Martha Padilla Ramos suggested using the school district marquees to advertise concerts
    - Mark Harms volunteered his narration services for the Young People's concert
- F. Waukegan Concert Chorus
- The first concert of the season is on Sunday, November 10, featuring the music of former Gurnee resident, Mark Hayes.
  - The WCC has over 20 members which is an increase over last year.
  - Changes in season ticket options for this season have allowed people to purchase tickets for just the WSO, the WCC, or the premier package which includes tickets for all concerts.
  - This year there are new sponsorship opportunities to sponsor or "adopt" a musician or singer. 75% of the WSO is "adopted" at a sponsorship fee of \$39.
- G. Cultural Arts Community Partnerships
- The Cultural Arts department partners with a variety of groups to support the mission of the park district as well as the Arts and History in the larger community.

- Here a list of our current major partners: Waukegan Public Library, Waukegan School District, Waukegan Harbor Citizen Advisory Group, Waukegan Historical Society, Lake County History Alliance, Lake County Art League, COOL Learning Experience, Waukegan Band Foundation, Concert Call, Waukegan Arts Council, Center for Ray Bradbury Studies in Indianapolis, IN
- Future collaborations in the works are with BRAVO Waukegan and Kohl's Children's Museum

#### H. Questions and Comments

- Martha Padilla Ramos asked what events need more attendance to be improved, how can the committee help with this, and how can we make it more welcoming?
  - Ty Rohrer responded that all events can accommodate more people and larger attendance will make the events better with the challenge being getting the word out
- Martha Padilla Ramos suggested new ways to advertise by using local businesses and having the committee members help in sharing through social media.
- Roxanne Swanson suggested that one way to make it more welcoming is to promote that the concerts are casual affairs, that while the musicians wear concert dress attire, the event is not dressy. And added that there is a strong Latino Heritage in symphonic music with Mexico City having the oldest symphony orchestra in North America.
- Mark Harms suggested promoting the concerts as casual with a witty YouTube video
- Jacqueline Herrera Giron asked if the concerts were promoted in Spanish?
  - Ty Rohrer responded that all events are promoted in Spanish
- Martha Padilla Ramos suggested having student musicians perform along with the WSO or WCC which will bring their families to the concerts and give more exposure.
  - Roxanne Swanson, as a longtime member of the WSO, responded that over the years many different attempts have been made to try to connect with the school district music program
  - Jacqueline Herrera Giron asked why has the relationship not been there with the school and is it just a matter of massaging the relationships or re-thinking the approach?
  - Ty Rohrer responded that he has been in contact with key people and may develop an opportunity this year for a concert for all 3<sup>rd</sup> graders and also a program for 7<sup>th</sup> grade student musicians to have a mentoring and rehearsal session with WSO in the morning and a performance in the afternoon. Also, our new conductor, Alexander Platt, will be a guest conductor at the city-wide Middle School Music Festival this year.
- Jacqueline Herrera Giron complimented the staff on the great work at the Day of the Dead event and that she really enjoyed it.

#### IV. Closed Session – No Closed Session due to a lack of a quorum

#### V. Meeting Adjourned at 1:18pm

Next Meeting: May 7, 2020 at 12:00pm