

**Minutes of the Waukegan Park District  
Special Meeting of the Board of Commissioners  
Special Recreation Program Advisory Committee  
August 23, 2021**

The Board of Commissioners of the Waukegan Park District met in a Special Meeting of the Special Recreation Program Advisory Committee on August 23, 2021, in a virtual format.

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 pm by Jennifer Dumas who directed a Call of the Roll and introductions.

**II. Roll Call**

Present: Janet Kilkelly, Commissioner; Jay Lerner, Executive Director; Errick Beverly, Superintendent of Recreation; Jennifer Dumas, Manager of General & Special Recreation; Kari Robinson, Supervisor of Special Recreation; Maria Owens, Specialist of Special Recreation; Elizabeth Fallon, Department Coordinator; Melissa Juarez-Ehlers; Mercedes Rivera; Christian Torres; Tina Yurik

Absent: Janalle Roth

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

**III. Review, Discuss, Decide**

**A. Fundraising Efforts**

- 2021 Polar Bear Plunge review and update for 2022
  - The 2021 virtual Polar Bear Plunge was very successful raising over \$8,000 offering participants a few options to donate and participate by submitting a plunge at home video. All participants were submitted into a raffle for great prizes donated by local businesses.
  - The 2022 Polar Bear Plunge planning has begun, and we are working with the city to hopefully have an in-person event this year.
- 2021 George Bridges 5K Run/Walk is September 18 and all are invited to participate, donate, or if you have contacts for sponsors you can pass that information along to Jen.

**B. Programs/Services**

- SRSNLC Brochure
  - From July 2020 – May 2021 the Waukegan Park District Special Recreation created its own monthly program brochure to meet the changing COVID mitigations and needs of the participants. A regular program brochure was created for the summer. The fall brochure includes all SRSNLC participating park districts.
- Programming – COVID impact
  - Special Recreation started with virtual programs in April 2020 and have offered over 70 programs virtually and offered a weekly Hobbies@Home

packet for 52 weeks that got emailed and printed copies mailed to those without email.

- Some virtual programs had registration numbers comparable to pre-COVID in-person program registrations.
- Offering programs on a month-by-month basis allowed staff to provide targeted programs that met the needs and interests of the participants.
- Virtual programs are still going well with some of the popular programs being Book Club, Fitness at Home, and Talent Showcase.
- For in-person programs we are still offering them outside as we are able and requiring masks for indoors.
- Group home participants have not returned to in-person programs.
- Committee Member Comment: Melissa Juarez-Ehlers shared that Group Homes that participate at her organization, Center for Enriched Living, have not returned to in-person programs.

C. Strategic Plan Goals related to Special Recreation – WPD Initiatives

- SRSNLC Brand Awareness
  - Maria Owens has a goal to increase awareness of the SRSNLC brand, logo recognition, and Special Recreation services within the Waukegan Park District by adding vehicle wraps, window wraps for the building, and increase promotion.
- Increase financial accessibility for the HEART Day Program
  - Jen Dumas is working on a grant request due November 1 for \$22,000 that would assist with program personnel expenses, supply expenses, and financial assistance to partially cover participant fees.
  - Developed a Letter of Interest for the Norma and Malcom Baker Targeted Replication Grant through Autism Speaks pertaining to Special Recreation programming which would be a larger grant award than the regular Autism Speaks grant which we have received in the past.
- Drums Alive Certification
  - Maria Owens will be obtaining a Drums Alive certification to give more flexibility in offering this program. The current Rhythm in Motion program is run by volunteers who work at the school district.

D. Comments and Suggestions

- Tina Yurik stated the brand awareness idea is a great one. The staff work hard and provide great programs and it is good to get more awareness and recognition. Great news about the Polar Bear Plunge.
- Melissa Juarez-Ehlers invited Robinson and Dumas to visit the Center for Enriched Living to see their day program and to exchange ideas.
- Lerner provided the group with an update of recent park district projects including Rose Park and the SplashZone, and upcoming projects to include Victory Park, the Carnegie Library Museum, and Bevier Park.
- Beverly thanked all the staff for their hard work pivoting to virtual programming and taking advantage of every opportunity to meet the needs of the community.

- E. Next Meeting Scheduled for October 25, 2021, with a tentative in-person meeting planned

**IV. Closed Session**

There was no closed session

**V. Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 6:35 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Dumas  
Manager of General Recreation & Special Recreation