

**Minutes of the Waukegan Park District
Special Meeting of the Board of Commissioners
Special Recreation Program Advisory Committee
December 6, 2021**

The Board of Commissioners of the Waukegan Park District met in a Special Meeting of the Special Recreation Program Advisory Committee on December 6, 2021, in a virtual format.

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm by Jennifer Dumas who directed a Call of the Roll and introductions.

II. Roll Call

Present: 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: Janet Kilkelly, Commissioner; Jay Lerner, Executive Director; Janalle Roth

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

III. Review, Discuss, Decide

A. Recent Program Highlights

- Bowling Update
 - The sessions held in the fall had full registration. For the second session, the bowling alley assisted in providing extra lanes to accommodate more registrations from the waitlist.
 - Winter/Spring 2022 will have 3 sessions of bowling.
- Virtual Fitness had 25 participants in the Yogi Stretch and Drumtastic programs
 - Rhythm in Motion program has been changed to Drumtastic since our staff, Maria Owens, has been certified from Drums Alive Drumtastic for educators.

B. Upcoming Special Events

- Polar Bear Plunge will be in-person at the Waukegan Municipal Beach on January 1, 2022. We are looking for sponsors and volunteers.
 - Currently we have 22 sponsors with 4 confirmed at the \$1000 level of sponsorship. Kari will email the sponsor information to committee members to pass along to their contacts.
 - The registration tent and changing tent set up will change slightly from past years set up to allow participants to spread out more.
- Recreation Rally will be in April with tentative plans for an in-person event but can switch to a virtual event based on the needs of the school district.
 - Looking for a group to perform at the opening ceremony.
- Committee member comments:
 - Tina Yurik asked if there is a list of Polar Bear Plunge sponsors on the website to know who has already committed. Kari stated that after December 13 the official list of sponsors will be posted but she will email the current list to committee members.

- Mercedes Rivera volunteered herself and Christian to assist at the event.
- C. Upcoming New Programs
 - I CAN Cook is a program revitalized from Chef Masters.
 - Each participant will have the opportunity to cook their own dish rather than working cooperatively to cook one dish together. This will give them more hands on practice plus the experience of cooking their dish from start to finish.
 - Love is a Battlefield will be in place of the traditional SRSNLC Valentine's Dance and the name is inspired by the main activity which will be Laser Tag.
 - Participants will get to play Laser Tag in small groups, create a craft and a snack.
- D. Summer Program or Activity Ideas
 - Summer Field Trips
 - Last summer all "field trips" were on-site activities with outside vendors coming to us to provide activities but we are looking for some outdoor field trips to incorporate for 2022 summer camp.
 - Curriculum for HEART
 - There is a good consistent number of participants for the program and looking to re-grow and expand the curriculum.
 - Inclusion Opportunities
 - Looking to expand on programs that would specifically incorporate inclusion into the foundation of the program where siblings could be included as well.
 - Committee member comments:
 - Melissa Juarez-Ehlers offered an open invitation to visit their REACH program. They can have up to 3 visitors. And can also meet with regards to program opportunities. She also asked for a list of previous field trips and what worked and mileage expectations to help her explore ideas to share.
- E. Special Olympics Update
 - Basketball Skills program had 7 athletes, 4 were new to the program, and 4 were eligible to compete at the regional tournament. 3 Athletes attended the tournament and collectively received two 3rd places and one 5th place.
 - Bocce tournament was cancelled last minute due to weather, but the park district was put in the lottery draw for the state tournament and we have an athlete that won a spot for the state tournament.
 - Basketball Team has 11 athletes with 6 new athletes, and we have some new coaches, so the program is doing well and rebuilding.
- F. SRSNLC Update
 - The Winter/Spring Brochure was mailed out on December 3
 - Planning SRSNLC cooperative programming for March 2022 will center around Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month.
- G. Funding and Project Updates
 - SRS Survey Review
 - The SRS survey had a 50% return on completed surveys which was a higher number of respondents than in past surveys.
 - We received great feedback from the survey which helped in making program decisions for Winter/Spring.
 - For Fall programs, 80% were in-person and 20% were virtual and survey responses confirmed that this is currently a good ratio.

- Grants and Funding
 - A \$10,000 grant was received from Grace Bersted Foundation to support the HEART program.
 - Waiting to hear from Autism Speaks for a grant that would fund SRSNLC cooperative programming.
- Search for new facility
 - Errick shared with the group that the park district has an ongoing commitment to upgrade and improve facilities that now includes the Douglas House which has its own facility challenges. Potential new facilities have been viewed and are in the vetting stage.
- Committee Member Comments:
 - Melissa Juarez-Ehlers asked what is the ratio of participants in congregant/group home living vs individual home living situations? And inquired if group home individuals were participating in-person at the same level as before because they have seen little return to programs from group homes.
 - Maria Owens stated that our ratio was at 50% and group home participation in virtual programs was high initially and seemed to be directly correlated to the group home staff efforts and abilities to assist participants with technology. Participation in virtual programs has dropped off, and in-person programs has not returned.

H. What can we do Better?

- Committee Member Comments:
 - Mercedes Rivera asked if we want to include another participant parent on the committee.
 - Jen Dumas responded that we could look at reaching out to other active parents to see if they would be interested and available.
 - Mercedes Rivera suggested a Baggo Program
 - Kari Robinson stated we tried Baggo along with the Lawn Games program last summer and the Lawn Bowling was the only Lawn Game that seemed to run but we could try it again.
 - All agreed that Bowling, indoors or outdoors, is popular.

IV. Closed Session

There was no closed session

V. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 6:34 pm

2022 meetings will remain scheduled for April 25 and October 24 at 6pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Dumas
Manager of General Recreation & Special Recreation