

**Minutes of the Waukegan Park District  
Special Meeting of the Board of Commissioners  
Recreation Program Advisory Committee  
September 12, 2022**

The Board of Commissioners of the Waukegan Park District met in a Special Meeting of the Recreation Program Advisory Committee on September 12, 2022, at the Field House Sports, Fitness, & Aquatics Center.

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 6:02pm by Errick Beverly who directed a call of the roll, made introductions, and welcomed all to the new format to include all committee members from Cultural Arts, Recreation, and Special Recreation into one combined meeting.

**II. Roll Call**

Present: George Bridges, Commissioner; Errick Beverly, Director of Recreation; Kaitlin Fischer, Superintendent of Sports, Fitness & Aquatics; Jennifer Dumas, Manager of General & Special Recreation; Javi Martinez, Manager of Fitness & Aquatics; Ty Rohrer, Manager of Cultural Arts; Elizabeth Fallon, Department Coordinator; Joshua Bill; Brian Cowart; Joleen Dooley; Sam Johnson; Melissa Juarez; David Motley; Martha Padilla-Ramos; Mercedes Rivera; Christian Torres

Absent: Jacqueline Herrera Giron, Commissioner; Jay Lerner, Executive Director; Yolanda Brown; Maria Calderon; Caryn Clothier; Jack Dudley; Mark Harms; Mary Olson; Dulce Ortiz; Odie Pahl; Rich Ribando; Janalle Roth; Roxanne Swanson; MaryFran Troha; Jane Waller; Tina Yurik

**III. Review, Discuss, Divide**

**A. Programming Updates**

1. Aquatics

- 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Swim Lessons will begin again with the first set of 2<sup>nd</sup> graders on October 6. Working with Carolina Fabian at the school district we have coordinated a schedule for each 2<sup>nd</sup> grader to have an all-day field trip at the Field House for a swim lesson which focuses on water safety, a fun fitness activity in the gymnasium, and they eat their lunch on-site. The students are bused to the facility and the Waukegan Parks Foundation provides the funding for this program.
- Committee member comments:
  - (1) Have you thought of taking them to the lakefront for a tour to show them where to swim and safety measures because there is a new law about having safety equipment at all lakefronts?
    - (a) Javi Martinez responded that the summer camp participants take a field trip to the lakefront for environmental education and a tour of the lakefront.
  - (2) Are special needs students accommodated?

- (a) Javi Martinez responded that there is coordination with Kari Robinson in Special Recreation to provide appropriate accommodations.
- (3) What plans are there to provide the same program to those 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders who would have missed this opportunity due to the pandemic?
  - (a) Errick Beverly responded that the school district is not able to schedule field trips for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades at this time, but we are planning to provide something to the students in those grades who missed out on the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade experience.
- (4) David Motley addressed the new law, The Lake Michigan Rescue Equipment Act, stating that the City of Waukegan will be installing water lifesaving equipment adjacent to the water on city property. He explained that there is property at the Waukegan lakefront that is owned by the Corp of Engineers and not managed by the City of Waukegan.
  - General swim lessons have been going well and we offer lessons for all levels.
  - SplashZone will be open through September 18 depending on the weather and was open starting Memorial Day weekend. This season saw 9500 visitors which included daily users, summer school groups, and day camp groups.
- 2. The Field House has once again won Lake County's Best of the Best award for Fitness Centers for the 4<sup>th</sup> time and currently the facility has nearly 8000 members. Membership decreased during the pandemic but has been increasing again to the same levels as from February 2020.
- 3. At Summer Camp, there were nine sessions of camp with 439 campers. There were field trips each week, Kohl's Children Museum came to camp to provide STEM activities, and there were community engagement activities with the Waukegan Fire and Police Departments and other outside organizations. The Brushwood Center provided backpacks with school supplies to campers the last week of camp. Special Recreation offered three, two-week camps with 56 campers and were able to provide off-site and on-site field trips this summer.
- 4. The iCan Shine Swim Camp was coordinated with the iCan Shine organization and funded through a partnership grant from Autism Speaks who have provided SRSNLC \$45,000 in grant money for the swim programs and wellness programs. Our staff were able to become certified adaptive aquatics instructors in the process. There were 23 campers of all abilities who had a daily swim lesson for one week. The progress the campers made during the week was great, and many have signed up for our swim lesson program this Fall.
  - Committee Member Comment
    - (1) Have you ever thought of doing Aqua Aerobics for Special Recreation?
      - (a) Kari Robinson responded that by design water aerobics is an inclusive program and most individuals just need minimal

assistance to get started in participating in these programs and the Special Recreation swim programs are primarily focused on skill development which includes water comfort, safety, and swimming skills.

5. BASE (Before and After School Experience) began on August 15 with 23 students and offers a safe place for students before and after school. The program provides homework help, social interaction through games and play, and arts and crafts.
6. Special Events Summer Events Recap:
  - The George Bridges 5K was Saturday, September 10, and was a wonderful event with great weather and participation.
  - The American Independence Parade was back in person after a two-year hiatus with 104 units and was one of our larger parades. The weather was good, and the community came out in large numbers to enjoy the music, entertainment, and overall community spirit.
  - Touch A Truck and Police Night Out was on August 5 in coordination with the City of Waukegan. The event was at the Waukegan Beach with 20 vehicles for families to explore. There were approximately 1000 attendees and after the event there was an outdoor movie at the Stiner Pavilion.
  - Dandelion Wine Festival was on August 20 and back in person after two years and with the threat of bad weather, the event moved indoors at the Jack Benny and the Jane Addams Centers in Bowen Park. There were 15 musical acts, 2 dance performances, and 20 vendors.
  - The Ray Bradbury Literary Walk was also on August 20 and had not been done in several years. It was also moved inside due to the threat of bad weather, but with the inside plan being in the Carnegie building, there were about 450 attendees who were very excited about seeing inside the building. The event was funded by an Illinois Humanities grant. There were five scenarios from Ray Bradbury books acted out by volunteers and professional actors.
7. Fall Events Upcoming:
  - Oakwood Cemetery Walk is Saturday, September 17 with the theme of “What Made the City Work.” There are several unique stories of folks buried in the cemetery that tell a story of who helped shape the city of both common and very uncommon jobs. Tickets are \$10 ahead of time and \$20 day of the event. Shuttle busses leave from Lilac Cottage.
  - Halloween Trick or Treat Trail is on October 29 from 1pm-3pm and we are expecting 2500 people to walk through the trail. There will be eight professionally costumed characters and a few other characters like the park district mascot, Parky. Children get treats at each station on the trail.
  - Turkey Trot is on November 12 at the SportsPark. It is a family fun run with races in several age groups and the winners of each group get a

turkey. Participants bring 2 cans of food as their entry fee and the food is donated to a local food pantry.

- It's A Wonderful Life-Live Radio Play will be on December 16, 17 & 18 with auditions to be held the beginning of November. Gloria Terry will be directing this production.
8. This summer the Youth Theatre program returned to the Jack Benny Center with a production of Frozen Kids. There were 13 student actors, and the performance had a jam-packed theater with over 100 people in the audience. The Fall production will be Moana Jr. Rehearsals have begun with 17 student actors and there will be two performances to accommodate the large audience on Oct 15 & 16. Next Spring, the Youth Theatre will be performing Lion King Jr.
  9. The Research Library and Museum Inventory will be moving to the Carnegie building so we are in the process with the Waukegan Historical Society volunteers and our own staff, Ty Rohrer, and Bryan Escobar, plus a summer intern, to prepare, inventory, and pack everything to be moved.
  10. The Waukegan Symphony Orchestra (WSO) and Concert Chorus (WCC) have begun rehearsals for this season. There are 25 members of the WCC under the direction of Randy Casey. The WSO will begin its third season with director Alexander Platt and the first concert is November 6 at the Sign of the Dove Church with a theme of "Celebrating Black Musicians" with special guest musician harpist Jordan Thomas. And there is a full season of concerts planned with the annual Messiah concert back at the First United Methodist Church, a Young People's Concert, and Summer Concert in early June.

## **B. Facility Updates**

1. The Field House Fitness Center has had seven new Cybex strength machines installed replacing old equipment and a total of 21 machines in total will be replaced this year.
2. The Field House Gymnasium floor is getting a total refinish, with the floor sanded down to the wood, new striping and logos, and a new finish. This is over a month-long project and the floor should be ready to use on October 1.
3. The Special Recreation program will be moving to a new building at 540 S. McAlister which used to be the old early learning school building. This facility is going through a renovation to upgrade systems, install new flooring, painting, and create a completely accessible facility. There will be a sensory room and other unique features.
4. The Carnegie building will be the new home for the Waukegan History Museum and currently we have completed the development and design phases and are heading into the construction bid approval phase with construction to begin

hopefully the end of October. The exhibits will focus on the history and development of Waukegan as a city and the natural resources.

- Committee Member Comment:
  - (1) Will the Carnegie building replace the Haines Museum?
    - (a) Ty Rohrer responded that the Haines Museum will be maintained as a museum but have a new focus to include the history of Bowen Park.
  - (2) What parking will be created for the Carnegie building?
    - (a) Ty Rohrer responded that there is an agreement with the City of Waukegan to utilize the city parking lot and we are working on an agreement with the College of Lake County (CLC) for parking lot use.
  - (3) What are the plans for handicap entrance?
    - (a) Ty Rohrer responded that there is an accessible entrance being planned which would also include 2 handicapped parking spaces adjacent to the building.
  - (4) When will the Carnegie building be completed?
    - (a) Ty Rohrer responded that projections included a 12–13month construction timeframe, so the earliest could be late Fall 2023, but we all know that anything can hold up a construction project so we will have a better idea when we are further along in the construction.

C. SRSNLC Cooperative changes have taken place, and two of the previous participating park districts have decided to join other SRAs in the area. Waukegan Park District and Zion Park District will continue to work cooperatively within SRSNLC to provide Special Recreation services to our communities.

#### D. What Can We Do Better?

1. Committee Member Comments:
  - What resources are there for pickleball?
    - (1) Kaitlin Fischer responded that the new gym floor will have pickleball lines on courts, Bevier Park and Serenity Park have courts for pickleball.
  - What resources are there for outdoor volleyball?
    - (1) Kaitlin Fischer responded that Rose Park has outdoor volleyball as well as there are still volleyball nets at the beach.
  - Victory Park is looking very nice, what is left to do to complete the project?
    - (1) Errick Beverly responded that the grand opening was two weeks ago and there are just some finishing touches like growing grass and planting trees to complete.
  - What is the soccer schedule for the schools?
    - (1) Kaitlin Fischer responded that any park district soccer is at the SportsPark. For soccer at the schools, you would need to contact the school district.

- George Bridges let the committee know that park district is still collecting community input on the Dugdale Park redevelopment project. A survey can be completed online.
- David Motley gave appreciation to the park district, and specifically, Kaitlin Fischer, for coordinating Yoga at the Beach this summer every Saturday morning and extending it into the fall. The participants have been passionate about this program, and it is well attended.

Errick Beverly let the committee know that we are once again a finalist for the National Recreation & Park Association (NRPA) Gold Medal in our category. We were a Gold Medal winner in 2013, and have been chosen as finalist three times since then. We will find out the results next week at the NRPA Conference. Errick closed the meeting recapping all the summer programs and events and thanking the committee and the community for supporting all that we do.

#### **IV. Closed Session**

There was no closed session.

#### **V. Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 6:55pm.

2023 meeting schedule is to be determined.

Respectfully submitted,

Errick Beverly  
Director of Recreation