

West Suburban Special Recreation Association

December 9, 2025

WSSRA

2915 Maple St, Franklin Park, IL

MINUTES

I. Chairperson Jan Arnold called the meeting to order at 4:05pm those present included:

Jan Arnold, Park District of Oak Park
Jackie Iovinelli, Park District of Forest Park
Dan LoCascio, Park District of Franklin Park
Ron Malchiodi, Village of Riverside
Greg Stanczyk, Veterans Park District
Cathy Fallon, Berwyn Park District
Nate Brown, Norridge Park District

Katie Muellner, Village of River Grove
Ted Gruber, Village of Elmwood Park
Mike Sletten, River Forest Park District
Anna Wegrecki, Village of Harwood Heights
Nestor Zavala, North Berwyn Park District *remote
left mtg at 4:30pm*

Approval of 1 Remote attendee, Zavala, North Berwyn Park District, Iovinelli/Sletten motioned for a roll call vote and approved the remote attendee unanimously

Others in Attendance: WSSRA staff, April Michalski, Annie Hart, Marianne Birko

Excused Absence: Village of North Riverside

II. Approval of Agenda **Iovinelli/Gruber motioned to approve the agenda. The motion was unanimously approved.**

III. Approval of the Consent Agenda **Iovinelli/Gruber motioned to approve the Consent Agenda including the November 11, 2025, Minutes, November Financial Report, and Disbursements for November 2025. Roll call vote showed 12 yes votes. Motion was approved unanimously.**

IV. Public Comment: **No Public Comment**

V. Under the Foundation **Birko reported the Foundation is currently working on the following events: T 2025 Holiday Solicitation** The Foundation will close the year with their Holiday Solicitation went out the first week in December. This year's design was created by our very own Charlie Blakey, a Graphic Design intern for the last 14 months from Northeastern Illinois University who is also a former WSSRA participant. See the attachment in your packet and shared at the meeting. **2026 Bocce Tournament** Plan to get your Team of 4 Bocce players and sign up now. The event takes place the week before the Super Bowl on Saturday, January 31st. It will take place at the Village of Elmwood Park's beautiful CRC. Plan to join in the FUN! We are soliciting donations for raffle prizes. Please consider donating! **WSSRF once again thanks you for your continued support throughout the year!**

VI. Under Committee Reports **Sletten reported the Finance Committee did not meet in November as there were no budget questions to address. LoCascio reported that the Policy Committee met to review the suggested Policy changes to the WSSRA Scholarship program and Staff certification reimbursement. The committee approved and we will discuss it in detail later on the agenda. Malchiodi reported the 2026 Nominating committees proposed slate includes Ted Gruber from the Village of Elmwood Park as Chairperson and Dan LoCascio from Park District of Franklin Park as the Vice Chairperson. Anyone else interested should let Malchiodi know. This slate will be voted on January 13, Annual Meeting**

VII. Unfinished Business

A. **Park District of Forest Park Building Updates** **Iovinelli had no report**

B. **No Other**

VIII. Under New Business

A. **Approval of WSSRA Scholarship Guidelines and Staff Reimbursement for Certification Policy**

1. The WSSRA Policy Committee met to review the recommended WSSRA Scholarship Assistance Policy changes which include updated guidelines and a set amount of assistance per person annually for seasonal programming based on HUD income guidelines. WSSRA staff will continue tracking awards and adjust the Annual Amounts based on Funds collected and demand as noted. **Iovinelli/Gruber motioned the Board of Directors approve the WSSRA Policy Committee's recommended changes to the WSSRA Scholarship Assistance Guidelines as noted to be implemented January 1, 2026. Roll call vote**

showed 12 yes votes to approve the Scholarship Policy changes.

2. LoCascio shared the WSSRA Policy Committee met to review the recommended changes to the Staff Reimbursement for certification policy that updates the language and requirements for reimbursement as noted. **lovinelli/Gruber motioned the Board of Directors approve the WSSRA Policy Committee's recommended changes to the WSSRA Staff Reimbursement for Certification Policy as noted to be implemented January 1, 2026. Roll call vote showed 12 yes votes to approve the Staff Reimbursement for certification policy.**

B. Approval of the Proposed 2026 WSSRA Board of Directors Meeting schedule, Fallon/Malchiodi motioned to approve the 2026 proposed meeting schedule. A Roll call vote showed 12 yes votes to approve the 2026 WSSRA Board of Directors Meeting schedule.

C. Proposed Draft Committee appointments for 2026. Malchiodi requested to sit on the Policy Committee. Approval of the Committee appointments will take place at the January 2026 meeting.

IX. Under Correspondence No Comments

X. Under Board Reports **LoCascio reported the Park District of Franklin Park** is getting ready for the holidays! **Muellner reported that the Village of River Grove** is getting ready for the holidays as well! **lovinelli reported that the Park District of Forest Park** is hosting the IPRA Administrative and Finance meeting on 12/11. There will be a special presentation by Dr. June Price-Shingles on "Succession Planning." All are welcome! Forest Park is also excited to launch their new website on Monday! Be sure to check it out! **Stanczyk reported the Veterans Park District** is wrapping up their holiday events and working on the next fiscal year's budget. **Wegrecki reported the Village of Harwood Heights** Youth Commission is hosting their Annual Christmas party and "Holiday Sing- A-Long with the Clerk" on December 20th at the Village of Harwood Heights Recreation Center from 1:00 – 3:00pm. The Salvation Army Angel Tree is in the Village Hall until 12/15, and the village is collecting "Toys for Tots" until 12/18. All donations can be dropped off at the Village Hall or Police Station. Wegrecki wished everyone a Happy Holidays! **Gruber reported the Village of Elmwood Park** hosted another very successful Holiday Stroll event on 12/5. They are also hosting 3 Grinchmas events and they are completing the final preparations to go out to bid for the playground project. **Malchiodi reported that the Village of Riverside** just hosted their Annual Holiday Stroll and tree lighting event on December 5th, with great participation from the community. Thanks to WSSRA for their participation in the event. They will also be hosting 3 Grinchmas events and are in the final preparations to go out to bid for their playground project. **Sletten reported the River Forest Park District** has completed all of their holiday events and their park projects are currently buried in the snow. They are currently involved in negotiations with the RFCC. **Fallon reported the Berwyn Park District** has their last holiday event coming up on Sunday, December 14th where they will be working the City of Berwyn on food packaging for families in need. **Brown reported the Norridge Park District** will be hosting Cookie and Holiday lights with Mrs. Claus on 12/13 from 6:00 – 8:00pm. **Zavala reported the North Berwyn Park District** will host their Santa's Workshop event on 12/13 and will also be having a house decorating contest on 12/18. **Arnold reported the Park District of Oak Park** cleared the snow off of the outdoor ice rink and will just be adding water just in time for the deep freeze. They are also doing the winter conditioning for the Field Center project preparing it for Demo in February. Their upcoming Holiday events included Santa's Trolley running throughout the day on 12/14 including 4 events at Cheney and Pleasant home. If you are looking for something free and warm check out the Oak Park Conservatory decked out for the holidays! Happy Holidays All!

XI. Executive Director's Report Birko reported

- A. **2026 Board Member Appointments Due by December 31, 2025**, The Amended and Restated Articles of Agreement state that each partner should make their appointments to the WSSRA Board by December 31 of each year. We respectfully request that *all* the appointments be confirmed in writing using the sample letter included in **Attachment G**. Please send those signed letters to Birko on your agency's letterhead by January 7, 2026. We will accept those appointments at our annual meeting held January 13, 2026
- B. **Support the WSSRF Holiday Solicitation** The Holiday Solicitation has been mailed and WSSRF hopes to get a positive response for their efforts throughout the year. **Attachment H** is a sample card featuring WSSRA participants and highlighting the accomplishments of WSSRA and the WSSRF.
- C. **Partner Annual Presentations** Birko is scheduling Annual presentations to meet with your boards and share the Annual report and WSSRA updates. Call or email Birko with dates and times that work for you in 2026.
- D. **WSSRA Attends Events** Birko attended the Legislative Conference via Zoom with other WSSRA staff, the IAPD Joint Legislative Committee and was asked to stay on for an additional term, attended the Oak Park River Forest Annual Chamber meeting, the ITRS Breakfast meeting representing the Legislative and Advocacy Committee on behalf of the SRA Directors and the Annual Holiday Directors Lunch.

E. **WSSRA will Co-Host the Legislative Breakfast for 2026** with the Park District of Franklin Park at the Centre at North Park on **Friday, February 27**. Details of the event will be forthcoming.

F. Staff Report: April Michalski, Superintendent of Recreation reported

1. Programs

- a. **Holiday Hullabaloo's** WSSRA is offering 6 days of activities for school-aged children during winter break. Activities include a trip to Safari Land, Brookfield Zoo, ice skating at the Franklin Park Ice Arena, bowling, and more!
 - b. **Special Olympics**
 - **Floor Hockey** Our Bobcats Floor Hockey team competed in the Special Olympics State Floor Hockey Tournament on November 15th. They played exceptionally well and took home a silver medal!
 - **Special Olympics State Bowling** We have two athletes competing in the Special Olympics State Bowling Competition on December 6th. The competition will be held at Victory Lanes in Decatur.
 - **Snowshoeing** Athletes are training for the upcoming Special Olympics Snowshoeing Competition on January 10 at Hoffman Estates High School. Gold medal winners will advance to the State Winter Games in Galena on February 10-12.
2. **Inclusion** Our Inclusion team is conducting site visits for after-school programs. We are currently supporting 70 participants across 97 inclusive programs. Additionally, we are working to fill an after-school position in Oak Park and an Early Childhood position in Norridge.
3. **Upcoming Events**
- **Riverside Holiday Stroll** WSSRA is excited to participate in Riverside's Annual Holiday Stroll Event on December 5 from 5:30-9:00pm. Join us at the Quincy Recreation Center, where we will be hosting a fun holiday craft activity.
 - **Holiday Express Train Ride** WSSRA's annual Holiday Express Train Ride is taking place on December 13. Families will enjoy a magical train ride to the "North Pole" with a visit from Santa. The event is sponsored by Thumbuddy Special.
 - **Sensory Sensitive Cookies with Santa** The Park District of Oak Park and WSSRA are hosting a sensory-friendly holiday event at the Cheney Mansion on Wednesday, December 17. Families will have the opportunity to visit Santa, participate in holiday crafts, and enjoy a sweet treat.

I. Staff Report: Annie Hart, Superintendent of Business reported

1. **Seasonal Staffing** Return requests for Summer Day Camp and Inclusion staff were sent out this week. Our Staff Manager has already received several inquiries about summer positions, so he is currently vetting those requests and is setting up interviews for Day Camp and winter positions. We will then be posting all available summer positions for both programs by the end of the week.
2. **Safety** WSSRA had 4 staff attend the RMI conference. All staff walked away from the sessions with some good information to think about and bring back to the agency. The Safety Team is moving forward with updating our Safety Manual with the intent of having it completed by March of 2026.

G. Other None

XII. **Closed Session** *lovinelli/Muellner motioned to go into closed session pursuant to 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(11) Executive Director Annual Review A Roll call vote showed 11 yes votes*

lovinelli/Gruber motioned to come out of closed session. A Roll call vote showed 11 yes votes

XIII. **Possible Action following closed session** *Gruber/Brown motioned to approve the 5% increase for Birko as discussed in closed session. A roll call vote resulted in 11 Yes votes as follows: Arnold, Fallon, lovinelli, Sletten, Stanczyk, Wegrecki, Malchiodi, LoCascio, Brown, Muellner, and Gruber and 0 No votes. The motion was approved unanimously.*

XIV. **Adjournment** *LoCascio/Wegrecki motioned to adjourn the meeting at 4:40pm. The motion was unanimously approved.*

Respectfully submitted,



Marianne Birko, Executive Director, mb/December 25 Minutes