

**West Suburban Special Recreation Association**

**January 13, 2026**

**WSSRA**

**2915 Maple St, Franklin Park, IL**

**MINUTES**

**I. Chairperson Jan Arnold called the meeting to order at 4:00pm those present included:**

Jan Arnold, Park District of Oak Park

Danette Krajewski, Park District of Forest Park

Dan LoCascio, Park District of Franklin Park

Ron Malchiodi, Village of Riverside

Anna Wegrecki, Village of Harwood Heights arrived 4:02

Mike Sletten, River Forest Park District

Greg Stanczyk, Veterans Park District

Nestor Zavala, North Berwyn Park District **remote**

Nate Brown, Norridge Park District

Katie Muellner, Village of River Grove left 4:34pm

Jeanmarie Hajer-O'Connor, Village of North Riverside

Ted Gruber, Village of Elmwood Park

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

**Approval of Remote Attendees meeting Qualifying Event: LoCascio/Muellner motioned to approve, and the vote was unanimously approved**

**Not in Attendance** Berwyn Park District

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

**III. Approval of the Consent Agenda Gruber/Sletten motioned to approve the Consent Agenda including the December 9, 2025, Minutes, December Financial Report, and Disbursements for December 2025. Acceptance of 2026 Partner Appointments, Election of Officers, Committee Appt, Committee Tasks for 2026, the Safety Policy statement, IAPD membership renewal and Executive Director Goals; Roll call vote showed 12 yes votes, and the motion was approved**

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

**V. Under the Foundation LoCascio reported for the WSSRF: Happy 2026 All!** The Foundation hosted their last meeting of the year on November 13, 2025 via Zoom. They closed 2025 raising **\$80,233** with an additional **\$18,603** in memorials for a total of **\$98,836 in funds**. This includes the funds raised with Giving Tuesday and Holiday Solicitation is estimated at raising \$7,060 with more money coming in dollars to close the year. The Executive Committee met this week to update and finalize the 2026 Proposed Budget, update in the 2026 goals. The Foundation will host their Annual meeting on Thursday January 22nd to celebrate their 2025 successes and plan for 2026. Included in their plans are the following events: 2026 Bocce Ball Tournament taking place on Saturday, January 31, 2026, 2026 Derby Gala planned for Saturday, May 2, 2026, 2026 Family Bowl-a-thon taking place in September, 2026 Fallin For Our Stars taking place on Friday, November 6, 2026, 2026 Tuesday Giving & Holiday Solicitation, Included in your packet are opportunities for Sponsorships and raffles for the upcoming Bocce Tournament. We really need your support. Consider hosting a Team! We will send out notice shortly to collect donations for the Derby Gala on May 2<sup>nd</sup> our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the event and our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year! Thank you for your continued support throughout the year! Carmella introduced her daughter Kelly and Kelly's dad. Carmella shared Kelly has been selected to take part in an international art exhibition for artists with developmental disabilities. Kelly Wesolek, a current active WSSRA participant discovered her passion for art while she was in high school. Kelly shared "I love art. I paint animals, ocean, or movies," she said. Her work caught the attention of a cultural Olympics organization that hosts an exhibition known as ArtPara. According to her parents, the event is connected to the Paralympics. "It's organized by a South Korean foundation called People with Disabilities and Friends of Five Continents. Just to be able to participate with other countries in this amazing opportunity is mind boggling, said her mother, Carmella LoCascio. Her parents said they applied to the exhibition and submitted Wesolek's portfolio. From those submissions, one piece will be selected to be displayed at the exhibition in Italy this March. LoCascio said about 100 works from 30 countries will be featured. The board shared their congratulations to Kelly and wished her well at the exhibition.

**VI. Under Committee Reports No Reports**

**VII. Unfinished Business Acceptance of the 2026 Chairperson & Vice Chairperson**

**A. Nominating Committee** Chair Iovinelli recommends Ted Gruber as the 2026 Chairperson and Dan LoCascio as the 2026 Vice Chairperson. **Muellner/Malchiodi motioned to approve Ted Gruber as the 2026 Chairperson and Dan LoCascio as the 2026 Vice Chairperson. Roll call vote showed 12 yes votes, and the motion was approved**

**B. Park District of Forest Park Building Updates** Krajewski reported no building updates at this time.

C. **No Other**

VIII. **Under New Business**

A. **Approval of Grace Kenney Accounting Services** Arnold/Sletten motioned to approve Grace Kenney as the CPA & Accounting Services to complete the WSSRA Monthly Financial reports. Roll call vote showed 11 yes votes, and Krajewski abstained and the motion was approved

B. **No Other**

IX. **Under Correspondence No Comments**

X. **Under Board Reports** Brown reported the Norridge Park District has a new addition to its family. Superintendent of Recreation Brian and his wife had a son Nolan at the end of December. The outdoor ice rink is waiting for more cold weather, and the NPD will be hosting a March Madness Watch event on Saturday 2/20. They are busy finalizing the summer brochure offerings and the concession stand work continues. Hajer-O'Conner reported the Village of North Riverside Hosting Daddy-Daughter Dance on 1/30 and Mother-Son Dance on 3/6, Coed Basketball games start this Saturday with 340 participants registered, summer camp registration starts 2/7 and they too have started summer staff recruitment and the North Riverside Players Theater hosting their annual Murder Mystery Dinner and Fundraiser on Feb 21 & 22. Sletten reported the River Forest Park District projects are stalled in the mud, the Civic Authority will approve requests for community center development, and they are about to launch a community survey to get feedback on the potential building project. Malchiodi reported the Village of Riverside Winter brochure just went out, planning continues for the playground renovations, and they are putting in 4 dedicated pickleball courts at different locations in the Village. Krajewski reported the Park District of Forest Park is anxiously awaiting the results of the OSLAD grant submission. It is on the Governor's desk so they will know soon. Their holiday events went great and they are now getting ready for their upcoming Craft Fair on 2/7 where all vendor spots are full! They currently have an 8' x 4' hole in the pool in hopes to secure the leak. Once done, they can do the final repairs prep and painting for the next pool season. They are also currently hiring for summer and hope for another 80% seasonal retention. A BIG kudos to the lifeguard staff for winning a Wilver Award from Ellis! They are preparing for the upcoming IAPD/IPRA conference with 11 staff and board members attending. One staff member will be attending the NRPA Maintenance Management school and 2 staff are attending the Association of Aquatic Professionals conference in Colorado Springs. Stanczyk reported the Veterans Park District is working on a promotional video to promote camp and preschool. And they are planning to use it for summer hiring as well. The website is currently posting the summer timelines, jobs and rehires. Wegrecki reported the Village of Harwood Heights wishes everyone a Happy New Year! And they too are busy gearing up for all of the new year's activities. Muellner reported the Village of River Grove is hosting a political fundraiser event on 2/5 and hosting the Daddy Daughter Dance on 2/28 and the St. Patrick's Day event on March 10. LoCascio reported the Park District of Franklin Park's Solar Projects are up and running, they are ready for basketball league to start, and they too will be hosting their Daddy Daughter Dance 2/28. Arnold reported the Park District of Oak Park's winter sports kicked off and registration for summer camp opens 2/7. The Field Center project continues, and the Longfellow Park construction starts in March. The community talk has begun over the referendum for the potential pool project. Zavala reported the North Berwyn Park District is offering two 1-day sessions of "Play in a Day" on 1/17 and 2/21. Youth will have the opportunity to create and perform their own play in 7 hours. They will be hosting School Days Out on 1/19, a Milk and Cookies Valentine's Day Art Party 2/13, and Spring Break Camp 3/30-4/2. Gruber reported the Village of Elmwood Park's in house basketball league started with 100 kids participating, winter bocce is underway with 80 teams, and they are hosting 24 teams in winter golf league. Their pickleball courts are out to bid for construction with a planned completion prior to summer.

XI. **Executive Director's Report** Birko Reported

- A. **Board Responsibilities and Expectations** Annually the Board of Directors and Alternates are asked to commit their support to the Association. Birko asked Board Representatives and Alternates to please sign that you have reviewed and understand the list of Responsibilities and Expectations in this role.
- B. **WSSRA Staff will attend the IPRA Annual Conference** Ten Full-time staff are scheduled to attend the IPRA conference on January 29 -31, 2026. Note Birko will be attending Wednesday through Friday and will not attend Saturday due to the conflict with the Bocce Tournament this year.
- C. **WSSRA will Co-Host the In-person Legislative Breakfast/Brunch on Friday, February 27, 2026, with the Park District Franklin Park.** This event is scheduled to begin at 10:30am at the Centre of North Park in Franklin Park located at 10040 Addison Street in Franklin Park. We are looking forward to the opportunity to host our Legislators once again. More

information will be forthcoming on the platform to be used. A formal invite will be sent via e-mail to local Legislators & WSSRA Board Members. Please extend this invitation to your board members and RSVP your attendance to Birko.

- D. **Bocce Tournament 2026** Don't miss your opportunity to be a part of the 2026 Bocce Tournament generously hosted by Village of Elmwood Park. It will take place on Saturday, January 31 starting at 10:30am. Be a part, field a Team of 4, no experience necessary or Be a Sponsor and/or donate a Raffle prize and of course please post on your websites. Your support is greatly appreciated. See attached fliers for more information
- E. **WSSRA Derby Gala 2026** Mark your calendars for Saturday, May 2, 2026, when the WSSRA/WSSRF will host the 25th year of this very successful event. We need all WSSRA Partners to be a supporter through sponsorships, donating raffle items to the Silent Auction and plan to attend the event! Mark your calendars and come celebrate WSSRA's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year by attending the event!
- F. **Partner Annual Presentations** Call or email Birko with dates and times that work for you in 2026. The 2025 Stats will be a part of this report starting in March.
- G. **Staff Report: April Michalski, Superintendent of Recreation reported**
1. **Winter Programs** Winter program registration is open. Our season begins on February 2 and ends on March 28, with a couple programs beginning next week. We are excited to offer several new programs this season including Taekwondo, Rhythmic Gymnastics, and Parent/Child Sensory Hour in our Imaginarium Sensory Room.
  2. **Day Camp** WSSRA's Summer Day Camp lottery will be open for two weeks starting Monday, February 9 through Friday, February 20. Our Program Manager is currently working on securing facility space for camp and confirming returning staff.
  3. **Special Olympics**
    - **Snowshoeing** WSSRA has five athletes competing in the Special Olympics Regional Snowshoeing Competition this Saturday, January 10. Gold medal winners will advance to the State Winter Games in February.
    - **Jr. Basketball** Our Jr. Basketball team will compete in their first Special Olympics Regional Tournament on Sunday, January 11, at Jacobs High School in Algonquin. Our four senior teams will compete in the Special Olympics Regional Basketball Tournament on February 1 at Oswego East High School. Gold medal winners will advance to the State Competition in March.
  4. **Inclusion** As we begin the new year, we encourage all our partners to schedule a staff training with our Inclusion Team. For questions or to schedule a training, please reach out to our Inclusion Manager, Chris Strum, at [chriss@wssra.net](mailto:chriss@wssra.net).
  5. **Upcoming Events**

WSSRA is kicking off our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration with our annual Recognition Banquet on Saturday, February 7, at the Centre at North Park in Franklin Park from 6:00pm-9:00pm. This event will celebrate the accomplishments of 2025 and includes dinner, dancing, and awards.
- H. **Staff Report: Annie Hart, Superintendent of Business reported**
1. **Marketing Round Table** Back by popular demand WSSRA's Marketing Manager, Nicole Walsh, is planning to host another marketing round table for all of our partner districts. Please alert your marketing staff to be on the lookout for an invitation from Nicole. Also, if you've had any turn over in your Marketing department that we should be sending this information to please let Hart know as soon as possible.
  2. **Year End Wrap Up** Hart has worked to tie up any loose ends and to start getting prepared for the upcoming audit. Hart continues to work with Grace Kenney to reconcile the monthly financials. Hart will be meeting with Kenney in early January to go over year end financials and prepare for the year ahead.
  3. **Safety** We've received our PDRMA 2025 Risk Management Review. While our score is not what we had hoped we plan to meet with our team in January to determine what steps we can take to increase our score for 2026.

XII. **Closed Session** Arnold/Brown motioned to go into closed session pursuant to 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(11) personnel at 4:34 all approved. Sletten/Arnold motioned to come out of closed session at 4:48pm. All approved.

XIII. **Adjournment** Sletten/Stanczyk motioned to adjourn the meeting at 4:48pm. Motion was unanimously approved  
Respectfully submitted,

*Marianne Birko*

Marianne Birko,  
Executive Director, mb/ January 26 minutes