

**West Suburban Special Recreation Association**

March 15, 2022

Located at the Park District of Forest Park

7501 Harrison

Forest Park, Illinois

**MINUTES**

- I. Chairman Jackie Iovinelli called the **meeting to order** at 4:04pm those present included:  
Approval of Zoom Attendance motioned by Mrozik/Lentz. A roll call vote was unanimously approved.

Mike Sletten, River Forest Park District remote  
exited 5:18pm

Sandy Lentz, Jan Arnold, Park District of Oak Park  
exited 5:00pm/5:02pm

Jackie Iovinelli, Park District of Forest Park

Joe Modrich, Park District of Franklin Park

Ted Gruber, Elmwood Park arrived 4:06pm

Carlene Greifelt, Veterans Park District

Anna Wegrecki, Village of Harwood Heights

Teresa Mrozik, Village of North Riverside

Sandy Fejt, Berwyn Park District remote

Mark Sladek, North Berwyn Park District

**Others in Attendance:**

WSSRA staff: April Ryan, Annie Hart, Marianne Birko

WSSRF, Beth Kaplan

**Not in Attendance:**

Village of Riverside

Norridge Park District

- II. Wegrecki/Fejt **moved to approve the agenda.** The motion was unanimously approved.
- III. A. Wegrecki/Lentz **moved to approve the January 11, 2022, Regular Board Meeting minutes. Ten voted yes, the motion was approved.**  
B. **Lentz/Wegrecki moved to accept the closed session minutes for December 14, 2022.** Nine votes yes and Mrozik abstained. The motion was approved.
- IV. A. **Mrozik/Greifelt moved to accept the corrected December 2021 Financial Report.** The motion was approved by roll call vote. **Lentz/Mrozik moved to accept the January & February 2022 Financial Report.** The motion was approved by roll call vote.  
B. **Wegrecki/Mrozik moved to authorize payroll, The board, by roll call vote, authorizes payroll, prepaid disbursements #40099 and ending with check #40131 and authorizes payment of January & February 2022 payroll and disbursements debit charges and cash transfers totaling \$222,570.32 and authorizes payment of March 2022 disbursements #40132 and ending with check #40148 disbursements debit charges and cash transfers totaling \$10,335.87 pending the availability of funds. Roll call vote showed ten yes votes and the motion was approved.**
- V. **Public Comment –None**
- VI. **Under the Foundation Report Beth Kaplan reported, The WSSRF is currently focusing on Four upcoming events:**  
**Event 1:** The Foundation and WSSRA are busy getting ready for this year's In-person Derby Gala taking place on Saturday, May 7, 2022, at D'Agostino's Pizza & Pub in River Grove. It will feature special presentations, Cup & Ad Sponsorships, Cash Raffle, and the Silent Auction. The Foundation is inviting you to support the event in whatever way that you can by donating items to the raffle, participating as a Sponsor and/or participating in the event. Your support as always is greatly appreciated. Note the Silent auction will be both Virtual and Live and opens on Wednesday, April 27<sup>th</sup> and closes on Derby Day at 6:30pm. Everyone and anyone can participate!  
**Event 2:** Planning is in the works for an in-person Bocce Tournament to be held sometime in August at the Village of Elmwood Park's. WE are very excited to be collaborating with them again this year. More information to come soon.  
**Event 3:** The "Summer Fun" Activity kits are currently being sold along with the " the Reverse Raffle tickets sold where the Top six winners get prizes Tickets & "Summer Fun" Activity kits. All are being sold on the website,

wssra.net. They will be available after the Derby Gala!

**Event 4:** WSSRF will welcome back the in-person “Fallin for Our Stars” Casino Night at the Cheney Mansion. This event is scheduled for the end of October 2022. We will get back to you soon on the final date! The Foundation Board of Directors thanks for your continued support.

VII. Under **Committee Reports**

A. **No Report**

VIII. **Unfinished Business**

A. **Wegrecki/Mrozik motioned the Board of Directors Accepts Ted Gruber as the Board Representative and Jim Parenti, the New Alternate Board Member for the Village of Elmwood Park.**

B. **Other** Birko reported WSSRA is deciding on whether to lift the vaccination policy as the Governor has stated. Arnold reported the PDOP is currently keeping it in place. No other comments were shared.

IX. **Under New Business:**

A. **Park District of Forest Park Building & Land purchase**

Iovinelli updated the WSSRA Board of Directors on the Park District of Forest Park’s pending land purchase and their plans for a potential partnership with WSSRA for offices and a multi-use building for the Park District of Forest Park to be built as an additional part of their campus. The land purchase is expected to close within 45 days and then the existing buildings will be demolished and planning for the new building will begin. More information will be shared as plans are developed. Arnold applauded Forest Park for their forward thinking and shared the positive difference partnerships can make. She looks forward to the partnership planning with WSSRA. Birko stated the Office Relocation study WSSRA has done the last few years concluded with the best possible, affordable solution for a centrally located office was in a partnership with a centrally located partner. This opportunity with Forest Park checks all of the boxes and we look forward to the planning process going forward. Many board members shared their congratulations and look forward to the next steps.

B. **Other Modrich shared** that all of us now have a new set of formidable challenges ahead, making the provision of Parks & Recreation even more important (if that is possible), and at the same time, much more difficult to effectively deliver. It may be time to consider a group action plan (task force) to address what is potentially ahead Economically, Socially and Psychologically for our participants, families, and communities. Arnold agreed that past discussion groups outside of board meetings were helpful in problem-solving and Birko offered to spearhead roundtables on specific topics that all agency staff can participate in. Birko will set-up a meeting for April.

X. Under **Correspondence**- No comments

XI. Under **Board Reports** – Fejt reported the Berwyn Park District is ending their successful indoor soccer season and spring sports are beginning. The momentum is picking up and registrations are coming in. They are working once again to build a Kaboom playground at Freedom Park in collaboration with the Pershing School PTO’s 501-c3. Fejt thanked Chris Lundgren with the Park District of Oak Park for sharing his expertise as they toured Rehm Park and learned about the dos and don’ts of their amazing park. They are also under contract for a playground in Sunshine Park paid for by the sale of the property across the street from Sunshine Park and its proceeds. **Sletten reported the River Forest Park District** nothing new and all is going well. Discussions continue with the Priory. **Wegrecki reported the Village of Harwood Heights** Youth Commission programs are scheduled to have their Easter party shortly and the Recreation Center events are picking up as well. **Sladek reported the North Berwyn Park District’s** may be going to referendum to determine whether to raise taxes to keep the VFW building to renovate or

sell. NBPD's Easter parade is coming up on April 16, and in June they will host Arts in the Park. They will also be closing on the maintenance garage and moving it across to 16<sup>th</sup> street shortly. **Mrozik reported for North Riverside's Recreation Department's** special events are back! They recently hosted the Daddy daughter and Mom & son events with over #170 persons attending each. They just wrapped up a highly successful winter basketball season and registration for summer camp is going well. They are currently very tight on space for camp this summer having lost a church site used in previous years that was recently sold. They are also amid budget planning and are waiting for approval to replace their long-time pre-school teacher who is retiring in May. **Arnold reported the Park District of Oak Park** is also looking to fill several full-time positions including a Fitness Coordinator, Pre-school Director, and Administrative Assistant position to name a few. The Community Recreation Center (CRC) Groundbreaking ceremony & celebration takes place this weekend and the work commences on March 21 and plan to open the CRC in Spring 2023. Programs and special events are going well and are well attended. They are having success in hiring seasonal staff through their recent job fairs. They are combining their Spring/Summer and Fall/Winter brochures and sending post card reminders between seasons. **Greifelt reported Veterans Park District** is busy stuffing eggs and getting ready for summer too. They recently hosted a 4-week Senior series on Stress Management with immense success after week one. The Seniors are so excited to be back together safely. The series addresses post pandemic concerns including stress management, current event fears and planning for the future. **Gruber reported the Village of Elmwood Park's** is wrapping up their Winter Bocce with 90 teams playing 5 days a week. The Spring/Summer session begins shortly with 120 teams playing outside and 32 teams playing indoors. The Basketball season just ended, and they are now busy getting the pool up and running. Every year there is always some issues that arise, but fingers crossed nothing major this year. A new playground is breaking ground shortly that will include a splash pad. **Modrich reported the Park District of Franklin Park's** Timber and Hawthorne parks will be done soon. Although families are ready to be in and until the construction fencing is down it is not safe to be there. They are also busy developing a State-of-the-Art Children's Garden in North Park. They are officially back to the same length brochure as in 2019. Which means programming and registration numbers are excellent and the commitments at the banquet hall are improving as well. Modrich shared the district has 55 different languages spoken and while it presents challenges in communication and reaching everyone, they are currently pleased with the success of staff recruitment from their community. As they are seeing a great work ethic! Modrich commented "Have you noticed the job notices posted in the IPRA website. Never has he seen such an expansive listing. We are all experiencing the hiring challenges!" **Iovinelli reported the Park District of Forest Park "Where Every day is a Walk in the Park"** hosted its first Royal Ball. An inclusive night for all children and their families and it was a huge success! Coming up they will be hosting a Family Trivia Night and Easter Egg hunts as well. Summer Day Camp registration is going well with great numbers. They are busy working on their parks projects and making adjustments in the timeline due to the delay in OSLAD funding. Be sure to notice the progress being made on their "Land of Candy" Splash Pad. They are determined to stay on schedule and open on time!!!

XII. **Executive Director's Report- Birko Reported**

- A. **WSSRA Hosted the Virtual Legislative Breakfast on Monday February 7, 2022.** Five Legislators attended including Senate President Harmon spoke as he was headed to Springfield. A special thanks to all of you who were able to fit it into your schedules. Look forward to hosting an in-person event next year!
- B. **WSSRA attends the Legislative Conference** Birko attended the Legislative Conference and did her annual tour visiting each one of the Legislators offices with the hope of meeting with them. She and Jackie Iovinelli successfully met with the Senate President Harmon, Speaker of the House Chris Welch,

Representative Edgar Gonzalez Jr., Representative Lisa Hernandez, Assistant Majority Leader, and Representative Bradley Stephens. It was a successful trip with many of them committing to attend the WSSRA Derby Gala.

- C. **WSSRA Derby Gala 2022** Mark your calendars for Saturday, May 7, 2022, when the WSSRA/WSSRF will host the 21st year of this extraordinarily successful event. The location is D'Agostino's Pizza & Pub in River Grove. The solicitations are out, and invites will be out shortly. Please consider being a part of the event in some way through sponsorship, Ad sponsors and we are looking for donations of pool passes, ice rink passes and other donations. So, mark your calendars and get registered!
- D. **Senate Bill 3972, Career Connect Program** As a member of Joint Legislative Committee Birko is working closely with NWSRA on the passage of SB3972 Career Connect Program. This bill would require "the State Board of Education and the Department of Human Services to jointly establish and administer the Community Career Connections Program. This program would provide high schools the ability to establish a credited program for applicants participating in a 2-year school program where upon completion they would receive a "Direct Service Professional certification; DSP certification". Click on the link below in the upper left corner it says, "Full Text," clicking to see the bill in its entirety. <https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/BillStatus.asp?GA=102&DocTypeID=SB&DocNum=3972&GAID=16&SessionID=110&LegID=139074> This DSP Bill has been driven by Mr. Baker, a very influential NWSRA parent. It has been sponsored by Senator Laura Murphy and Co-signed by Senator Cullerton and recently passed out of the Senate with a positive vote of 55/0 and has moved into the House. This bill will positively impact SRA's as we see this bill as a fantastic opportunity to secure already trained staff which is desperately needed and while also increasing the awareness of high school students to follow this as a potential career path. It especially impacts SRA's who currently have an Adult Day Programs. Tracey Crawford at NWSRA is directly involved with Mr. Baker and is working to develop a pilot program with Rolling Meadows High School. The timeline of this bill is that it will be implemented for the 2023-2024 school year.
- E. **WSSRA 2021 Audit Update** Lauterbach & Amen has completed their field work and has shared their preliminary audit report. It is currently under review and will be presented at the May 10, 2022, Board meeting
- F. **Staff Report: Prepared by April Michalski, Superintendent of Recreation**
1. **Programs** Winter programs run until March 26, we currently have over two hundred participants and family members participating in winter program and special events. Spring registration is underway, and programs are set to begin on April 4.
  2. **Day Camp** WSSRA's Dino-mite day camp registration is open; registration is taken on a first come first served basis. Camp will be broken into two sessions running June 13-July 29. Staff are working on securing facilities, so far, we have six out of the nine sites confirmed.
  3. **Special Olympics** WSSRA has ten athletes competing in the Special Olympics regional aquatics competition on March 10 and 7 athletes competing in the Special Olympics regional powerlifting competition on March 26 and 27. Gold medal winners will advance to the state summer games in June.
  4. **Staff Updates** WSSRA's Program Manager, Carlos Marroquin, resigned, his last day is March 21. Carlos accepted a position with NEDSRA as their Marketing and Communications Manager. WSSRA is working to fill this Manager position and seeking to fill a full-time Recreation Specialist. If you know anyone who might be interested, please direct them to apply at [wssra.net](http://wssra.net).
  5. **Inclusion** We currently have thirty-two participants participating in thirty-four inclusion and aftercare programs.

Chris has been working on program observations and scheduling trainings with Park District staff. Please reach out to Chris Sturm at [chriss@wssra.net](mailto:chriss@wssra.net) if you would like him to implement a training for staff. Sensory Room. The program is targeted for special education classrooms within our partner communities. Visits are one hour; 30 minutes will be spent in the Imaginarium, and 30 minutes will be spent completing a sensory art or science project. For more information contact Bethany Pastrana at [bethanyp@wssra.net](mailto:bethanyp@wssra.net).

#### **6. Special Events**

- **Family Skate** WSSRA is hosted a Family Skate Night on Friday, March 4, thank you to the Park District of Franklin Park for hosting us.
- **Wheelchair Basketball Clinic** On March 16 WSSRA collaborated with LWSRA for a Wheelchair Basketball Clinic at Grant Park Recreation Center in Northlake from 5:00-8:00pm. The clinic was open to anyone with a physical impairment ages 3-22. Participants will learn the rules of wheelchair basketball and will have the opportunity to play.
- **Bunny Bonanza** WSSRA is hosting a Spring family event on April 2 at North Riverside Recreation Center. Participant and will enjoy games, crafts, face painting and a visit with the bunny.
- **Sensory Sensitive Treats with the Bunny** WSSRA is collaborating with the Park District of Oak Park on April 3 for another spring family event. Participants will enjoy crafts, treats and a visit with the Bunny.

#### **G. Staff Report: Prepared by Annie Hart, Superintendent of Safety and Operations.**

1. **Transportation** We are continuing to work with our PR Coordinator, to update the design on the vehicles. We are hoping to get all three new vehicles wrapped with the new design as soon as the weather warms up. WSSRA was able to bring back, after being furloughed, a part time driver for a couple shifts this season. In addition, WSSRA has opened the vehicle capacity from 50% to 75% and now to 100%. We are still requiring everyone on the bus to wear a mask.
2. **Office** WSSRA has hired a student from the OPRFHS Transition program, to help clean WSSRA offices. Mila, who is also a participant of WSSRA programs, began her job on Wednesday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>. Mila, along with her Job Coach will clean our offices on a weekly basis with the hopes of her transitioning to 2 days per week.

#### **H. No Other**

XIII. **Adjournment** Gruber/Wegrecki moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:29pm. The motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,



Marianne Birko, Executive Director  
mb/ March22 minutes