

**West Suburban Special Recreation Association**

**November 11, 2025**

**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  
Jackie Iovinelli, Park District of Forest Park  
Dan LoCascio, Park District of Franklin Park  
Ron Malchiodi, Village of Riverside **remote**  
Greg Stanczyk, Veterans Park District **remote 4:05**  
Cathy Fallon, Berwyn Park District  
Nate Brown, Norridge Park District

Katie Muellner, Village of River Grove  
Ted Gruber, Village of Elmwood Park **remote**  
Mike Sletten, River Forest Park District  
Anna Wegrecki, Village of Harwood Heights **remote**  
Nestor Zavala, North Berwyn Park District  
Jeanmarie Hajer-O'Connor, Village of North Riverside

**Approval of 4 Remote attendees, Iovinelli/Hajer-O'Connor, a roll call vote approved remote attendees unanimously**

**Others in Attendance:** WSSRA staff, April Michalski, Annie Hart, Marianne Birko, WSSRF, Christine Nakatsuka

**Excused Absence:** **None**

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

III. Approval of the Consent Agenda **Iovinelli/Fallon motioned to approve the Consent Agenda including the October 14, 2025 Minutes, October Financial Report, and Disbursements for October 2025. Roll call vote showed 11 yes votes, Hajer-O'Connor abstained and the motion was approved**

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

V. Under the Foundation Christine Nakatsuka, a member of the Foundation, report the Foundation is currently working on the following events: The Foundation is currently working on the following events:

**2025 Fallin For Our Stars Casino Night A GRAND Success** The Foundation hosted it's Fallin For Our Stars Casino night event this past Friday, November 7, 2025 which took place at the Cheney Mansion in Oak Park. 129 guests enjoyed a fun filled evening of Casino gaming, food, LIVE entertainment, and Amazing raffle prizes! The preliminary numbers show the WSSRF raised nearly \$38,000 in profits for the night. Thank you to all who supported it! **2025 Holiday Solicitation** The Foundation will close the year with their Holiday Solicitation that goes out just after Thanksgiving. The design is being created by our very own Charlie Blakey, a Graphic Design intern or the last 14 months from Northeastern Illinois University who is also a former WSSRA participant. We look forward to sharing his work! **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 31<sup>st</sup>. 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 making a donation! **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 October as there were no budget questions to address.**

VII. Unfinished Business

A. **Park District of Forest Park Building Updates** **Iovinelli reported** the School District #91 Superintendent and board are fully engaged in discussions with the Park District of Forest Park.

B. **Approve the 2026 Preliminary Partner Shares**

Arnold reminded everyone the Finance Committee has reviewed this information and is recommending a 2.9% increase based on the CPI. Birko reminded everyone the 2026 shares presented are preliminary until the final 2024 EAV's are posted. Arnold reminded everyone if the 2024 EAV's have not been finalized we will move forward without and give the updated version with adjustments once they are posted. No questions were raised. **Iovinelli/Brown motioned the Board of Directors approve by roll call vote, the preliminary recommended 2026 shares which includes a 2.9% share increase. These shares will be updated and reapproved once the 2024 EAV's are final. Roll call vote showed 13 yes votes from , Fallon, Gruber, Iovinelli, LoCascio, Wegrecki, Brown, Zavala, Arnold, Sletten, Hajer-O'Connor, Malchiodi, Stanczyk,**

**Muellner and the motion was approved unanimously.**

**C. Approval of the 2026 Proposed Budget** Birko presented the 2026 budget as reviewed and recommended by the Finance Committee. No questions were asked. **Sletten/lovinelli motioned the Board of Directors approve by roll call vote, the recommended proposed 2026 budget as presented. This will be updated once the 2024 EAV's are final. Roll call vote showed 13 yes votes from, Fallon, Gruber, lovinelli, LoCascio, Wegrecki, Brown, Zavala, Arnold, Sletten, Hajer-O'Connor, Malchiodi, Stanczyk. The motion was approved unanimously.**

**D. No Other**

#### **VIII. Under New Business**

##### **A. Accept New Village of North Riverside Board Representatives**

Birko introduced Jeanmarie Hajer-O'Connor, the Village of North Riverside's, Recreation Director and who will be stepping in as the new Village of North Riverside's WSSRA Board Representative and Sue Scarpiniti, the Village of North Riverside's Village Administrator as the WSSRA Board Alternate effective immediately. Birko will provide both with an orientation to their roles as a Board Representative/Alternate in the next month. **lovinelli/Muellner motioned to approve Jeanmarie Hajer-O'Connor and Sue Scarpiniti as the new WSSRA Village of North Riverside's Board Representative/Alternate. A roll call vote showed 13 yes votes, and the motion was approved.**

**B. No Other**

#### **IX. Under Correspondence No Comments**

**X. Under Board Reports** **Malchiodi reported for the Village of Riverside** is currently doing an engagement survey for the Turtle Park renovation. Community members can share their thoughts online or at a community town hall meeting. The feedback will help them create a roadmap for the future. The proposal will include a playground, and a court project for basketball and pickleball courts. Coming up is their Holiday tree lighting and Holiday Stroll a community wide event taking place on December 5, 2025. **Gruber reported the Village of Elmwood Park's** Halloween event had 500 kids in attendance at the Recreation Center. The pickleball court construction has been delayed to March 2026 with a completion date prior to the pool opening. Their tree lighting event will take place on Friday, December 5<sup>th</sup>. **Wegrecki reported on the Village of Harwood Heights** wishes everyone a Happy Veterans Day and Thanksgiving. **Stanczyk reported the Veterans Park District's** Winter/Spring program guide arrives on December 2. They are currently working on flier development and budget planning for 2026-2027. They are excited to see the new programs developed in the Creative Arts and Early Childhood. They have their Winter Wonderland event at Grant Park on December 5 from 5 – 8pm, Breakfast with Santa and Gingerbread House building on December 13 at Bulger Hall from 10 - 12. Happy Holidays All! **Muellner reported the Village of River Grove** has wrapped up their Fall sports and are hosting a Craft Fair and Holiday Tree lighting on November 23 at River Front Park 3 – 7pm. **lovinelli reported the Park District of Forest Park** hosted the Veteran's Day event today. Their Trunk-or-treat was held on October 25 and had great attendance. They are currently getting ready for the Holiday Trivia event coming up on November 14. They recently completed several projects including the pickleball courts, curbs on their new property across the street and have applied for the OSLAD grant for the main park. They are currently working on finding the pool leak and getting the NEW website launched within the next few weeks! **LoCascio reported the Park District of Franklin Park** had great weather for their trick-or-treat in the park event. They are now getting ready for their Holiday Train Express – 2 dates, December 13 & 20, and Breakfast with Santa on December 6 at Center at North Park from 9-10:30am. They have gone live with their Solar projects and are completing the roofing projects on the service center and ice arena. **Hajer-O'Connor reported the Village of North Riverside's** Winterfest is December 3 from 6-8pm. Based on last year's experience, they have a plan A & B for indoor and outdoor activities depending on the weather. They are still adjusting to the new registration program Dash by Day Smart noting it has been a difficult transition. They are hosting the Turkey Bingo on November 21. Registration for the event is up to 300 persons including 40 from WSSRA! They also hosted a Holiday Bazaar this past Sunday with over 50 booths! **Sletten reported the River Forest Park District** thanks WSSRA for putting on a GREAT FFOS event on Friday! They will be hosting 2 holiday events, Tree Lighting on November 20 and Deck the Depot Holiday Trolley on December 6<sup>th</sup>. The construction project at the Priory has begun, and they are out to bid for the Keystone Park project to put in synthetic turf. **Brown reported for the Norridge Park District** and he too thought the FFOS Event was awesome! He was very popular on Friday as he came home with bounce house rental as a prize! They will be hosting a Santa's Workshop event on December 6. They are currently getting the roof repaired on concession stand. Their Holiday tree lighting is on November 26! **Zavala reported the North Berwyn Park District** will be holding a school day off event on November 26. They are

hosting a Production of Miss Electricity at 16<sup>th</sup> Street Children's Theatre playing at the Joe Valez Activity Center on December 5-7. They will also be hosting Camp Igloo for the last 2 weeks in December where the kids will enjoy crafts and games. The Annual calls from Santa Program will take place on December 19, and Santa's Coming to Town for personal visits from Santa on December 4- December 6. **Fallon reported the Berwyn Park District's** Winter/Spring Brochure just came out. They are currently working on the budget and levy, and their 3 holiday events are Letters to Santa, Santa's Workshop on December 14, and in partnership with the city of Berwyn where they are packing boxes of food for families in need. Other news: Berwyn Park District in collaboration with the Morton Arboretum planted 50 trees, and they too have added pickleball lines to the tennis courts. **Arnold reported the Park District of Oak Park** has wrapped up fall programs and they are getting ready for their holiday events! It's official the Rehm pool will be ready to go for next summer. The Field Center project is proceeding as they are putting up the last fences. The Grand Opening of Anderson Recreation Center is scheduled for December 14<sup>th</sup>. The district wide Gold Medal Celebration for staff is on November 15. Arnold reminded all that there are many NEW laws that go into effect in 2026 as shared at the Legal Symposium. She encouraged everyone to consider the accreditation process for your agencies. Plan on a two year process. Arnold is a part of the accreditations committee, and they are wrapping up the accreditations for 15 agencies this year. PDOP is currently looking to fill a few full-time staff positions that are open for ice rink. Have a great Thanksgiving all!

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

- A. **The WSSRF "Fallin For Our Stars Event Success!"** Birko thanked everyone for their support of this year's **WSSRF FFOS Casino night on Friday, November 7<sup>th</sup>**. She shared, guests enjoyed an evening of Casino gaming, food, drink, raffle, and outstanding LIVE Auction items to bid on. **"Live musical entertainment by Rich Shep."** She noted a special thanks to the partners who were able to join us for the evening and those who supported us in some other way.
- B. **Partner Annual Presentations** *Birko continues to present to the WSSRA partner boards. Let me know the date that works for you.*
- C. **Eddie Sitzman Night** Birko reported Eddie Sitzman was a WSSRA participants for 18 years of his life. He was an active member in WSSRA programs and an amazing advocate in our communities. Eddie passed away suddenly this summer leaving us with a tremendous void. WSSRA staff and participants will be honoring Eddie's memory with the WSSRA Bobcats playing the NEDSRA Huskie's. All are welcome to join us at the game taking place on Tuesday, November 18<sup>th</sup> at Elmwood Elementary School with Game time set for 7:00pm. Please arrive by 6:45 for an opening ceremony!
- D. **WSSRA attends Legal symposium & PDRMA RMI** Birko & Hart attended the IAPD Legal Symposium remotely and all levels of staff will be attending the PDRMA RMI in a few weeks in Tinley Park.
- E. **WSSRA Executive Director Annual Review** Arnold reminded everyone she will be sending out the Executive Director Birko's Annual Review. Included in the evaluation will be Birko's 2025 goals updated. Arnold requests the evaluation be completed by each partner and return to Arnold by December 2, 2025. Arnold will summarize for the December 9, 2025 Board meeting.
- F. **Reminder on Alternate Share Payment Schedule** Birko reminded everyone to please accept this as your reminder of the process you must follow to request an alternate payment schedule. Per the Amended and Restated Articles of Agreement, "any partner, who has not received an alternate payment schedule for more than two consecutive years may request and alternate schedule for the payment of the Special Recreation Share. Such requests must be in writing, must describe the reason for the alternate schedule, and be received by WSSRA by December 1, 2025, The WSSRA Board of Directors will vote on the requests at the December 9, 2025, meeting. The alternate schedules can be granted only if all the schedules can be granted. All the schedules must be approved by a vote of two-thirds of those members of the Board voting on the issue at a regularly convened meeting of the Board of Directors. Interest will be charged on the alternate schedules as described in IV. C. Schedule for Payment of Shares of the Amended and Restated Articles of Agreement.
- G. **No Other**
- H. **Staff Report: April Michalski, Superintendent of Recreation reported**
  - 1. **Programs** Our fall programs are off to a great start, and participants are enjoying all things fall! On October 2, our adults enjoyed a trip to Kuipers Farm, and our school-aged participants are visiting Brookfield Zoo on October 13. Staff are also busy planning our Halloween Dance on October 25. Participants will enjoy an evening of games, prizes, food, and dancing. Thank you to Norridge Park District for hosting this event!

## **2. Special Olympics**

- **Golf** A BIG congratulations to our two athletes, Georgia Hunter, from Park District of Oak Park and Tyler Brownlee from Veterans Park District, who competed in the Special Olympics State Golf Competition on September 5-6 in Decatur, both received gold medals for their excellent performances!
- **Volleyball** Our two WSSRA volleyball teams competed in the Special Olympics Regional Tournament on September 14, our Bobcats Gold team took 3rd place, and our Bobcats Blue team took 3rd place. The season concluded with the TR Tournament on September 21.
- **Bowling** WSSRA will have two athletes, Miles Cullen and Benjamin Chan both from the River Forest Park District will be competing in the Special Olympics Sectional Bowling Tournament on October 26 at Stardust Bowl in Addison. Gold medal winners will advance to the state bowling competition in December.

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

1. **Safety** PDRMA visited our Community Cruisers program a few weeks back. Vince is our PDRMA Rep, he had wonderful things to say about the group and gave positive feedback to our staff about the way our program is organized and implemented. The Safety Team is looking forward to attending RMI later this month. We have 3 representatives attending.
2. **Seasonal Staffing** We continue to see a rise in our inclusion numbers and are currently serving 67 participants in 88 inclusive programs. We are experiencing some challenges staffing after-care programs and would greatly appreciate referrals from partners. Interested applicants can apply on our website at wssra.net. Our Staff Manager is currently working on staffing for our upcoming Holiday Hullabaloo and hiring staff for Inclusion and our upcoming winter season.

### **G. Other None**

### **XII. Closed Session None**

### **XIII. Adjournment *lovinelli/Fallon motioned to adjourn the meeting at 4:37pm. Motion was unanimously approved***

*Respectfully submitted,*



*Marianne Birko, Executive Director*  
*mb/November 25 minutes*