

West Suburban Special Recreation Association

October 14, 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
Megan Siska, Village of Riverside **remote**
Greg Stanczyk, Veterans Park District
Cathy Fallon, Berwyn Park District

Nate Brown, Norridge Park District
Andrea Bustamante, Village of River Grove
Ted Gruber, Village of Elmwood Park
Mike Sletten, River Forest Park District 4:03 arrival
Anna Wegrecki, Village of Harwood Heights
Nestor Zavala, North Berwyn Park District

Approval of 1 Remote attendees, Iovinelli/Wegrecki, a roll call vote approved remote attendees unanimously

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

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 September 9, 2025 Minutes, September Financial Report, and Disbursements for September 2025. Roll call vote showed 12 yes votes, 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: **2025 Family Bowl-a-thon a Success** took place on Saturday, October 4, 2025 and raised \$6,600. Our largest profit to date. A BIG thank you to all of the WSSRA participants who raised money on our behalf. **2025 Fallin For Our Stars Casino Night** The Foundation has busy planning for the Fallin For Our Stars Casino night event that is scheduled for Friday, November 7, 2025 taking place at the Cheney Mansion in Oak Park. We are soliciting donations for the raffle prizes and \$25 and up gift cards for the Star Pull. Anyone wanting to donate items reach out to Marianne Birko at WSSRA, marianneb@wssra.net. Your support is critical to the events success so plan to join us for this fun evening of Casino gaming, food, LIVE entertainment, and Amazing raffle prizes! See your enclosed Sponsorship letter and invite. Don't wait to purchase your tickets, they are available online NOW! Thank you in advance for your support. **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 seeing his work!*

WSSRF once again thanks you for your continued support throughout the year!

*VI. Under Committee Reports **Sletten reported the Finance Committee** met on September 23 to review the 2026 budget planning. The next meeting will take place on October 21, 2025.*

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. The School District has confirmed they are interested in letting go of a school within the district and it will likely **not be** Grant White School.*

*B. **2026 Preliminary Partner Shares***

Birko reminded everyone the Finance Committee has reviewed this information and is recommending a 2.9% increase based on the CPI. This will leave an approximate deficit of \$48,000 that will be covered by the FUND Balance. Birko reminded everyone the 2026 shares presented are preliminary until the final 2024 EAV's are posted. She asked the WSSRA Board of Directors to come prepared to accept the 2.9% increase to partner shares at the November 11, 2025 Board meeting. 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.

*C. **No Other***

VIII. Under New Business

A. Presentation of the 2026 Proposed Budget and Budget Narrative Review

Birko presented the 2026 budget as reviewed and recommended by the Finance Committee and requests feedback from all partners. She highlighted details noted in the budget Narrative including the proposed 3% merit for Full Time staff. She asked each WSSRA Partner to come prepared to approve at the November 11, 2025, meeting.

B. Accept New North Berwyn Park District Board Representative

Birko introduced Nestor Zavala, North Berwyn Park District's Board Commissioner who will be stepping in as the new NBPD WSSRA Board Representative effective immediately. Birko will provide Nester with an orientation to his role as a Board Representative in the next month. Iovinelli/Gruber motioned to approve Nestor Zavala as the new WSSRA NBPD Board Representative. **A roll call vote showed 12 yes votes, and the motion was approved**

C. No Other

IX. Under Correspondence No Comments

- X. **Under Board Reports** **Fallon reported the Berwyn Park District** has just finished Halloween events and are moving on to Christmas event planning. They are currently getting bids ready for construction projects and most importantly they have hired a new Superintendent, Mary Swade, formerly from the Oakbrook Park District. **Brown reported the Norridge Park District** had a very successful Family Pumpkin Festival this past Saturday. Soccer and flag football are wrapping up and the first ever "Bears and Brew" event was a huge success over 250 in attendance. A special thanks to those who attended. **Gruber reported the Village of Elmwood Park** is hosting a Halloween party on October 31st from 4-6 at the Recreation Center. They will be breaking ground soon for the pickleball courts with the goal to have the project done before Memorial Day. **Zavala reported the North Berwyn Park District** has several Halloween programs and events including a Paint & Pour Party, Fall Fest, Trunk or Treat, Halloween House & Storytelling and will close the season with the Halloween House decorating contest. They are also getting ready for Veteran's Day event on November 11th. **Bustamante reported the Village of River Grove's** Flag football is wrapping up; they are hosting a Trunk-or-Treat at Riverfront Park on October 25 from 10:00-11:30am and are hosting a tree lighting event on November 23rd. **Wegrecki reported the Village of Harwood Heights's** Youth Commission is hosting a Halloween Party on October 25th at the Recreation Center. Also enjoyed attending the NPD's Bears & Brews event- It was a great Fun! They also hosted the Annual Car Show, on September 28th, the same day and had great weather! They are all looking forward to Thanksgiving events coming up. **LoCascio reported the Park District** of Franklin Park hosted their Annual Eddie Biondo Fall Fest Parade and Pumpkin Fest on October 5th. They are also wrapping up flag football and gearing up for volleyball. **Sletten reported the River Forest Park District** partnered with the Thatcher Woods Forest Preserve to host Halloween Hoot n' Howl Event on October 3rd. They are currently getting bids for Keystone project, broke ground at Constitution Park and the Priory project is on hold waiting permits. **Iovinelli reported the Park District** of Forest Park recently finished several projects, had a pool leak detection person evaluate their pool in preparation for the 2026 season. Their recently completed Pickleball courts are getting popular positive reviews! They are also busy preparing for upcoming events including the Trunk-or-Treat on October 25th, and for their Veterans Day event on November 11th. Iovinelli recommends the Proviso Math & Science Academy's band for events. They are excellent and great to work with. Note if you are looking for something fun and different, stop by the Village of Forest Park's Casket Races this weekend. Park District of Forest Park also applied for OSLAD grant for main park upgrades especially for the soccer field. **Stanczyk reported the Veterans Park District's** "Haunt on Hirsch" Street this Friday, October 17 from 6-8pm, little goblins hours are from 5-6. They recently hired an Early Childhood Supervisor, working on developing PT Staff. **Arnold reported the Park District of Oak Park** Won National Gold Medal at 2025 NRPA. She noted the PDOP has been a finalist for the past 4 years and are excited to be awarded this prestigious award thanks to an incredible team of staff and a community of support. They are still looking for volunteers for Frank Lloyd Wright Race this Sunday, October 19. There are 2200 runners (and counting) registered. Fall programs are underway and some upcoming event highlights are their Trunk-or-Treat on October 25 and Spooky Skate to name a few. They are currently digging the footings at Field Center and are still waiting for permits. Arnold noted if anyone is having trouble with MWRD, let Jan know, as she has been in communications with Senate President Harmons office with Eileen Lynch. She is happy to include others challenges as well. Arnold asked the group of the ongoing concerns with the challenges of managing homelessness in the park. Each partner noted their ongoing concerns. **Siska reported the Village of Riverside** is finishing Halloween Events including the Trunk or Treat event which WSSRA participated in. The event took place on October 9 and had a great turnout. Coming up they are hosting the Haunted House this Saturday. In addition the Village of Riverside is hosting an Open House for Tuttle Park Renovation tonight looking for public input as they plan forward.

XI. Executive Director's Report Birko Reported

- A. **Attend the WSSRF “Fallin For Our Stars Event”** Birko invited all to support the **WSSRF FFOS Casino night on Friday, November 7th** from 7:00 until 11:00pm at the PDOP’s Cheney Mansion. She shared guests will enjoy an evening of Casino gaming, food, drink, raffle, and outstanding LIVE Auction items to bid on. **“Live musical entertainment by Rich Shep.”** Not able to come then consider a donation or sponsorship. Participation by each of the WSSRA Partners is critical to this event’s success. For more information go the www.wssra.net or click on the live link below. *Attachment I & J is the Star Sponsorship and FFOS event invite. We certainly hope you will join us! She noted a special thanks to the Park District of Forest Park, River Forest Park District, Berwyn Park District and Park District of Oak Park for joining us so far. We would love to see you all represented there!*
- B. **Partner Annual Presentations** *Birko continues to present to the WSSRA partner boards and most recently presented to the Park District of Franklin Park in August. Let me know the date that works for you.*
- C. **River Forest Park District “Color Run” Success** Birko thanked the River Forest Park District on their third year of the “Color Run” event. This wonderful community event engages families in a local, safe 1 mile run with the added bonus of environmentally safe color tossed as a motivator along the run route. All of us at WSSRA look forward to participating staffing the color stations and the start/finish line on race day. Once again, this year’s event surpassed last year’s event with 150 runners who had a blast with the whole family involved! A BIG thank you to Mike Sletten and Karen Stille and the RFPD staff for hosting this event and their continued support with the \$1,000 proceeds donated to WSSRA!

D. No Other

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

1. **Lake Geneva Trip** *Our adult participants enjoyed a day trip to Lake Geneva on August 21. The group enjoyed lunch at the famous Poppey’s restaurant and spent the afternoon exploring and shopping in the downtown area.*
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.
3. **Inclusion** Thank you to everyone who attended our Inclusion Workshop on Friday, September 26. We had great discussions on common scenarios that come up each year, and the feedback from attendees was very positive. Chris sent out a follow-up survey for your input that will be used to develop future trainings.
4. **Special Events**
 - **Sensory Sensitive Boo Bash** The Park District of Oak Park and WSSRA are partnering to host a sensory-friendly Halloween event at the Cheney Mansion on Saturday, October 25. Families will enjoy crafts, treats and a visit with the Great Pumpkin.
5. **Partner/Community Events** This fall, WSSRA has been involved in variety of partner and community events, including:
 - Village of North Riverside’s Flea Market on September 7
 - Village of North Riverside’s Monarch Festival on September 13
 - Riverside’s Touch-A-Truck on September 18
 - The Park District of Oak Park’s Fall Fest on September 21
 - Franklin Park’s Fall Parade on October 5

- Riverside's Trunk or Treat on October 9
- Berwyn Park District's Spooktacular Trick or Treat in the Park on October 12
- The Park District of Oak Park's Trunk or Treat on October 24
- Village of River Grove's Trunk or Treat on October 25

We always enjoy attending these events, as they are a great way to connect with our community members!

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

1. **Safety** The new Safety Team has met and established a goal to update the WSSRA Safety Manual by May of 2026. The team will review and revise the current safety policies and procedures. We plan to use PDRMA as our main resource to ensure our manual aligns with the most up-to-date standards.
2. **Health Insurance** WSSRA has completed its open enrollment for the 25/26 plan year. WSSRA is offering a PPO through Aetna. This is a change from BCBS, but we feel it's a very comparable plan that offers staff the same level of care at a reduced price. Staff will continue to pay 9% for single coverage and 15% dependent and/or family coverage.

G. Other

XII. **Closed Session** None

XIII. **Adjournment** *Gruber/ Brown motioned to adjourn the meeting at 4:53pm. Motion was unanimously approved*

Respectfully submitted,



Marianne Birko, Executive Director
mb/October 25 minutes