

West Suburban Special Recreation Association

December 12, 2023

Park District of Oak Park's CRC

229 Madison, Oak Park, IL

MINUTES

I. Chairperson Ron Malchiodi called the meeting to order at 4:13pm 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
Anna Wegrecki, Village of Harwood Heights
Colleen Broderick, Village of N Riverside

Mike Sletten, River Forest Park District
Ted Gruber, Village of Elmwood Park
Greg Stanczyk, Veterans Park District
Cathy Fallon, Berwyn Park District
Kelly Diaz, North Berwyn Park District
Annemarie Flaherty, Norridge Park District

Others in Attendance: WSSRA staff: Annie Hart, April Michalski, Marianne Birko, WSSRF, Karen Mullarkey Kerrins

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

III. Approval of the Consent Agenda Arnold/Iovinelli motioned to approve the Consent Agenda including the November 14, 2023, Minutes, November Financial Report, and Disbursements for November & December 2023. Roll call vote showed 11 yes votes, Broderick abstaining, and the motion was approved

IV. No Public Comment

V. Under the Foundation Birko introduced Karen Mullarkey-Kerrins as an Oak Park resident, WSSRA consumer, Foundation Co-Chairperson and 17-year member. The Foundation hosted their last meeting of the year on November 16, 2023 via Zoom. The focus of the meeting was to finalize details on the "Holiday Jazz Concerts", Holiday Solicitation, the Bowl-a-thon, Derby Gala, John Lannefeld Memorial Bocce Tournament, Fall in for Our Stars and Holiday Concert, in person. So far, the WSSRF has raised nearly \$70,000. The Holiday Solicitation kicked off with Giving Tuesday and so far, the two have raised \$4,834 and will continue through the end of December. See your invite included in the Board packet you received today. So far, we are seeing wonderful generosity from long time donors. Please keep the Foundation in mind when you make any end of the year donations. **Most importantly Thank you for your continued support. It has been another busy year, and the Foundation could not have done it without the support of all of you! Stay Safe and Enjoy your holidays with the ones you love...**

VI. Under Committee Reports

- A. **Birko reported the WSSRA Finance Committee** headed by Chairperson Arnold reported the committee did not meet in November after the WSSRA Board of Directors meeting.
- B. **Flaherty reported the Policy Committee** met December 7th to continue the review and updates of the WSSRA Personnel Policy Manual.
- C. **Nominating Committee** Iovinelli shared the slate for the 2024 is not changing from 2023. Malchiodi has agreed to stay on another year as the Board Chairperson and Arnold agreed to continue as the Vice Chairperson and is willing to continue as the Chairperson in 2025. She noted the approval vote will take place at the January 2024 Annual meeting.

VII. Unfinished Business

- A. **Park District of Forest Park Building Updates** Iovinelli shared Birko and Iovinelli have continued to attend the School District #91 of Forest Park's Board meeting. She stated that Birko presented during public comment at a special November 29th meeting and no further decisions have been made. The next school board meeting is Thursday, December 14 and the school board will let each entity know what their plan is moving forward. Birko & Iovinelli have been discussing plan B and the Park District of Forest Park Board signed off on the MOU.

B. No Other

VIII. Under New Business

- A. **Approval of Proposed 2024 WSSRA Board of Directors Meeting schedule** Arnold recommended October 1 for the October meeting that conflicts with NRPA. All other meeting dates and locations were approved. **Sletten/Iovinelli motioned to approve the 2024 WSSRA Board of Directors meeting dates and The motion was unanimously approved.**

2024 WSSRA Board Meeting Dates	Time	Location
January 9, 2024	4:00pm	WSSRA
No February Meeting		
March 12, 2024	4:00pm	WSSRA
No April Meeting		
May 14, 2024	4:00pm	Village of North Riverside
No June Meeting		
July 9, 2024	4:00pm	Park District of Forest Park
No August Meeting		
September 10, 2024	4:00pm	Village of Harwood Heights
October 1, 2024	4:00pm	WSSRA (NRPA is Oct. 8-10, 2024)
November 12, 2024	4:00pm	WSSRA
December 10, 2024	4:00pm	Village of Elmwood Park

B. Proposed Draft Committee Appointments for 2024 Birko proposed committee appointments for approval at the Annual WSSRA Board meeting in January 2024. Birko asked the board to review and let her know if you would like to make any changes.

C. Paid Leave Act For All Workers Updates Birko shared updated information on the Paid Leave for All Workers Act, PLFAW which takes effect on January 1, 2024 and that park districts are exempt from this new law. She noted while legislators have introduced several proposals that would exempt other IAPD member agencies including forest preserve districts, special recreation associations (SRAs), and municipal recreation departments, as detailed below.

- [SB 2613 \(Lightford, K.\) / SFA #2 to SB 509 \(Harmon, D.\)](#) would exempt SRAs.
- [HB 4191 \(Sosnowski, J.\)](#) would exempt forest preserve districts.
- [HB 4208 \(Sosnowski, J.\)](#) would exempt municipalities, townships, counties, and forest preserve districts.

ultimately **the General Assembly did not consider or pass any changes to the Act during the Fall Veto Session.**

To assist member agencies to which the law applies, IAPD has added resources to the [Tools section of the IAPD website](#). The Illinois Department of Labor is also hosting a series of informational webinars on compliance with the Act. More information about the Act, including registration for the upcoming webinars, is available through the [Illinois Department of Labor's website by clicking here](#). A copy of the recently filed proposed administrative rules is available [by clicking here](#). Birko noted included in the WSSRA policy will be the Inclusion bill back. If park district partners are hiring and paying their own Inclusion staff, there is no responsibility to the PLFAW. This would be a good time for partners to consider hiring/putting inclusion staff on their own payroll to save themselves this additional cost. All WSSRA partners who are municipalities will follow the PLFAW as well. WSSRA is awaiting a sample policy being shared by PDRMA.

D. No Other

IX. Under Correspondence No Comments

X. Under Board Reports **Stanczyk reported the Veterans Park District** has released their Winter/Spring catalog. They are largely focused on promoting programs, including the newly developed after school cooking program offered two days a week, also offering 2 new family events: family fiesta and indoor remote-control car challenge. **Wegrecki reported for the Village of Harwood Heights**, and it is all things celebrating the holiday season including the Youth Commission's Holiday Sing with a visit from Santa, the Village holiday decorating contest, the Angel tree and a "Toys for Tots" drive. Happy Holidays to all! **Fallon reported the Berwyn Park District** is holding on to a local park challenge by the city to take it for a parking lot. They are full force on their Master Plan study being done by Hitchcock and their Winter-Spring brochure is out and registration has begun with great interest by the community! **Diaz reported the North Berwyn Park District** has a lot of Holiday and Winter events coming up for tots through seniors. NBPD is also looking to Oak Park for ideas to support the Asylum seekers they expect to come their way soon and the NBPD wants to be involved. They want to be proactive vs. reactive. **LoCascio reported the Park District of Franklin Park** is also doing their holiday events including Breakfast with Santa and completed a successful Polar Express. Due to the break in the weather they are working on a window & door replacement project at North Park and the Ice Arena. **Sletten reported the River Forest Park District** will be posting their approved Master Plan in the next couple of weeks and is currently updating the Affiliate agreements for approval in the next couple of months. **Malchiodi reported the Village of Riverside** just completed a successful Holiday Stroll, a special

thanks to WSSRA for being a part of it while there was a smaller turnout due to the rainy weather. They hired Barry & Dunn to complete their Master Plan and they are currently in the midst of the Community surveys and their program brochure will be out the beginning of January. **Gruber reported the Village of Elmwood Park** has 12 teams in their Winter Golf league that has begun. Indoor pickleball is a hit with open play from 2 – 7 daily. Basketball leagues start this Saturday where their numbers continue to be low. They also had a low turnout to their tree lighting event due to the rainy weather. **Flaherty reported the Norridge Park District's** awesome holiday events are happening. The construction project is ongoing, and they are going to bid for resurfacing on their indoor basketball courts. **Iovinelli reported the Park District of Forest Park** "Where Every Day Is A Walk In The Park!" Grant White School continues to take a lot of time and attention. The Reiger park project is moving along according to schedule. They will be going to bid for the Remembrance Park in January. This First Responders themed park will include a spray pad, a rain garden and bocce court. Holiday events are happening in Forest Park too! **Arnold reported the Park District of Oak Park's** Barrie Park is back open after doing a renovation on both playgrounds, added fitness components and has a lot of imaginative play at the tot park. PDOP is getting ready for a variety of Holiday events including a Holiday Ice show this upcoming Saturday and Nutcracker Dance performance, Holiday trolley, Cookies with Santa and they are all well attended. PDOP is going out to bid in January for replacement activities for the former diving well at Rehm pool. Additions include two 2 slides and a cross walk activity. This 31/2 ' tank will be used for lessons and other activities during non-public time. Oak Park is awarding a bid for a 5-year comprehensive Master Planning Project where they want to take a creative approach on demolition of Field Center project-by doing a design competition and opening it to the community. Fun Fact, the PDOP's Recreation Centers were all built by design competition, FLW entered and did not win. PDOP's summer hiring is underway, day camp registration opens first week in February. Anyone interested in a tour at the close of the meeting of the CRC is welcome. As you can see the CRC is being well utilized with 4000 paying members, 4000 free walking track members and 1000 free drop-in after-school members with an average of 150 daily afterschool participants Monday – Friday! **Broderick reported the Village of North Riverside's** paver project for all parking lots is complete. Their Holly Jolly camp is full, and they served Breakfast with Santa to over 200 guests. A successful Winterfest was held last week with Channel 7 News reporting Live at the event!

XI. Executive Director's Report Birko Reported

- A. **2024 Board Member Appointments Due by December 31, 2023** Birko reminded the board as stated in 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. These appointments will accept those appointments at our annual meeting held January 9, 2024.
- B. **Support the WSSRF Holiday Solicitation** has been mailed and hopes to get a positive response for their efforts throughout the year. The sample card features WSSRA participants and highlights 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 2024.
- D. **WSSRA Attends Events** Birko attended the IPRA Directors & Finance Committee meeting and luncheon. The Directors Lunch, Legislative and Advocacy SRA Directors meeting, PDRMA RMI training, Joint Legislative Committee meeting and presented at the 50-year Anniversary of the Riverside Township Mental Health Board Celebration.
- E. **WSSRA Hosts the Legislative Breakfast for 2024** WSSRA is scheduled to host the in-person Legislative Breakfast on Friday, February 23, 2024. Birko will keep you posted on the details as they are confirmed. Both Arnold & Iovinelli offered to host.
- F. **Illinois Parks Day at the Capital** WSSRA plans to attend Illinois Parks Day at the Capitol on May 7, 2024 followed by the Legislative Conference on May 8, 2024. Let us know if you are interested in sharing a table.
- G. **Staff Report: April Michalski, Superintendent of Recreation reported**
 1. **Programs** Our winter/spring program registration is set to begin on Monday, December 18 at 9:00am. Several programs will continue to be lottery registration. Additionally, winter and spring registration will occur on separate dates in efforts to make registration as fair as possible.
 2. **Special Olympics**
 - i. **Floor Hockey** WSSRA had five athletes compete in the Special Olympics State Floor Hockey competition on November 18, two athletes received a bronze medal, one athlete received a silver medal, and one athlete received a gold medal.

- ii. **Snowshoeing-** WSSRA has 7 athletes competing in the Special Olympics regional snowshoeing tournament on January 21 at Oswego East High school. Gold medal winners will advance to the state winter games in Galena on February 6-8.

3 Hiring Updates We hired Kim Kassam as a Full-Time Recreation Specialist. Kim will be overseeing Lekotek, our Imaginarium Sensory Room and School Collaboratives. Kim has worked part-time with WSSRA since 2013 in both staff and supervisor roles. Outside of WSSRA, she has worked as a Paraprofessional at multiple elementary schools and managed after-school programs with Frida Community Foundation. We are excited for Kim to bring her experience and new ideas to the team in this new role! Our Staff Manager is hiring seasonal part-time staff for our winter/spring season. She attended the Youth Crossroads Career Professionals at Speed N' Work event. It was a fun and unique event where students came around to speak with each professional for 3-5 minutes to discuss their organization and career opportunities. There were about 20-25 organizations in attendance and many students came through to chat with us.

4. Inclusion This fall we served 45 participants in 69 inclusive programs. Chris conducted successful training with the Park District of Oak Park's Clubhouse staff and supervisors. If you are interested in having WSSRA come to your next staff training, please contact Chris at chriss@wssra.net. WSSRA made some shifts in responsibilities, starting in January our Recreation Coordinator, Megan Foster, will be assisting Chris with inclusion Support. Megan is excited for her new role and is looking forward to meeting our partner staff.

5. Upcoming Events

- i. **Sensory Sensitive Cookies with Santa** The Park District of Oak Park and WSSRA are collaborating to offer a sensory friendly holiday event at the Cheney Mansion on December 13. The event is full with 45 participants and family members registered. Families will enjoy a visit with Santa, crafts, and treats.
- ii. **Polar Express** WSSRA's Annual Polar Express Story Time is taking place on December 9. Families enjoyed a fun-filled train ride to the "North Pole" with a visit from Santa. The event was sponsored by Thumbuddy Special, and 130 participants and their families were in attendance. We had enough cancellations to take everyone off the wait list and filled the train car to capacity.

H. Staff Report: Prepared by Annie Hart, Superintendent of Business

- 1. **Safety** Seven staff Attended the Risk Management Institute on Friday, November 17th. The Safety Team has updated the "Parent Sign-in/Sign-out" form to include Time in/Time out per the suggestion of PDRMA. The Safety Team spent some time comparing Incident Reports from Day Camp 2022 vs. Day Camp 2023. We broke them down into eight areas: Slips, Trips and Falls, Participant Elopement, Participant Aggression Towards Staff, Participant Aggression Towards other Participants, Inappropriate Verbal Comments, Seizures, Participant Bites. Incidents went from 82 in 2022 down to 63 in 2023. We feel this is a result of the extra Handle with Care Training at Day Camp Orientation and the ongoing support given throughout the summer and will be continued in 2024.
- 2. **Staff Update** Full-time Transportation Specialist/Lekotek Leader, Luz Serrano, has officially retired after 17 years of employment with WSSRA. We had a great turnout for her retirement party with 60 to 70 in attendance. Thank you to the Park District of Forest Park for letting us use your space to help celebrate Luz and her service to the agency.

G. No Other

XII. **Closed Session** pursuant to 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(11) to discuss personnel & compensation

5:00pm Sletten/LoCascio moved to go into closed session to discuss personnel & compensation. Motion was approved. At 5:35pm Sletten/LoCascio motioned to go out of closed session and motion was approved.

XIII. **Action following Closed Session** Sletten/Arnold motioned the Board of Directors by roll call vote, approve the 4% merit increase as discussed in the closed session + \$2,000 one-time bonus and a change in the Unused Sick leave policy to increase it to 240 days per the IMRF limit and will be updated in the Policy Manual that is currently being reviewed and updated by the Policy Committee. Voting yes: Fallon, Gruber, Iovinelli, LoCascio, Wegrecki, Flaherty, Diaz, Arnold, Sletten, Broderick, Malchiodi, Stanczyk. Record shows unanimous approval.

XIV. **Adjournment** Sletten/Arnold motioned to adjourn the meeting at 5:37pm. Motion was unanimously approved

Respectfully submitted,



Marianne Birko, Executive Director
mb/ December 23 minutes