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**MINUTES  
BUILDINGS & GROUNDS COMMITTEE MEETING  
June 21, 2022**

**1. Roll Call:**

A regular meeting of the Hoffman Estates Park District Buildings & Grounds Committee was held on June 21, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. at Triphahn Center in Hoffman Estates, IL.

Present: Chairman Chhatwani, Commissioner Kaplan, Comm Reps Poeschel, Sernett, and Utas

Absent: Comm Reps Evans and Macdonald

Also Present: Executive Director Talsma, Director of Recreation Kapusinski, Director of Golf & Facilities Bechtold, Director of Administrative Services Cahill, Director of Administration and Finance Hopkins (phone), Executive Assistant Flynn

Audience: President Kinnane, Commissioners Dressler, McGinn and Friedman; Comm Reps Henderson, McIlrath and Beranek (phone)

**2. Approval of Agenda:**

Comm Rep Sernett made a motion, seconded by Comm Rep Utas to approve the agenda as presented. The motion carried by voice vote.

**3. Longevity Recognition**

President Kinnane recognized the following Community Representatives for their years of service: Suzanne Poeschel – 4 years; Joe Utas – 8 years; Ian Macdonald (not present) – 4 years.

**4. Presentation of Gold Medal Finalist Video**

Executive Director Talsma introduced the Gold Medal Finalist Video that the District submitted as the final step in the National Gold Medal competition. Everyone present viewed the video.

5. **Approval of the Minutes:**

Commissioner Kaplan made a motion, seconded by Comm Rep Poeschel to approve the minutes of the May 17, 2022 meeting as presented. The motion carried by voice vote.

6. **Comments from the Audience:**

None

7. **Old Business:**

None

8. **New Business:**

A. **Inflation and Compensation / M22-061**

Director Hopkins highlighted the following from the memo:

- There are currently 11.4 million job openings in the U.S., an increase of 73% since 2018. Governments jobs were previously filling at a rate of 54%, and currently only 37% of the jobs are being filled.
- The Pew Research Center did a study regarding the reason for the mass resignation (affecting all industries). Most said the pay was too low. Next was no opportunity for advancement, and third was they felt disrespected at work. Other reasons are noted on the chart.
- The next chart shows the change in compensation vs CPI (inflation). CPI was 8.5% for May 2022, and 4.9% for May 2021. The cost of goods and services have increased 13.9% since 2020.
- Pay increases historically have been between 4% and 6% annually. Since April 2021, compensation has increased between 10% and 15%.
- The implication is that our employees have essentially lost 7.9% of their purchasing power (inflation less wage increase since May 2020), or the amount of goods and services they have decreased their ability to pay for.
- The Executive Director is not included in the chart on page 3 of the memo, since he is not part of the Grade System, but his loss is comparable to Grade 7.
- So far in 2022, we have lost five full-time staff members, and have had difficulty retaining staff for new or vacant positions. In May, we were able to retain one of our full-time staff by increasing their rate of pay. In turn, however, we had to increase the pay for an employee in a similar position who had greater longevity.
- Applicants we have offered positions to have been offered more money for similar positions elsewhere, forcing us to start our search again, and just this month, one full-time employee quit after only two weeks.
- A report by HR Source, which is an annual report completed for IPRA. Comparing our pay rate with all Illinois park districts, we are currently paying our

employees at the 50% level. Our EAV and population is consistent with the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile. In order to bring us up to the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile, the adjustment would be \$324,933.

- We are not looking to make this adjustment at one time, but would like to start making adjustments to show our employees that we care and keep them from seeking other positions.
- We are proposing a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) of 6% for those employees earning under \$75,000; 3% for those earning over \$75,000 and a 1.5% adjustment for anyone hired in 2022. This proposed adjustment would take effect with the first paycheck in July. We will then need to review our pay grades and scales for the 2023 budget.

Commissioner Dressler asked for a clarification on the \$845,181 adjustment that would be required. Director Hopkins explained that this would be for the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile, to attract the top employees (“leading professionals”) in the park district industry. Executive Director Talsma explained that we are not trying to get to this level, but we are competing with other districts and companies that are doing this same thing. He emphasized that we did not give raises in 2021, which was the right thing to do at the time, but this has compounded the current difference in pay rate.

Commissioner Dressler asked where the money will come from for the increase in the 2023 budget. Executive Director Talsma explained that our part time staff are all over \$14 per hour, most at \$15 or higher. We have been doing small increases in program fees, and we do have surplus funds. It would be beneficial to return some of that surplus to the staff that helped create it.

Commissioner Kaplan asked what percentile the 3% and 6% increases will get us to. Executive Director Talsma explained that this would get us to somewhere between the 60<sup>th</sup> and 65<sup>th</sup> percentile. For those receiving a 6% increase, this would get them back to where they would have been if they had received a raise in 2021.

Commissioner Chhatwani asked if there is any comparison in terms of years of service. Executive Director Talsma noted that just today we had a new full-time maintenance hired at between \$40,000 and \$50,000. This new hire is already close to other staff who have worked for us for 2-5 years. We are trying to keep a little separation between new staff and those who have been here.

Comm Rep McIlrath asked if everyone will get a COLA. Executive Director Talsma said that if you were hired in 2022, you would get a 1.5% increase.

Comm Rep Macdonald noted that he is hiring people at \$20,000 more than he did a year ago for a similar position. Those hired a year ago are resentful, and he is glad that staff is trying to get out in front of this.

Commissioner Kaplan asked if this is mostly inflation based. Executive Director Talsma explained that inflation has hit us harder because we skipped a year of raises. If the

economy rectifies itself, we would not be able to take money away, but percent increases can be adjusted to balance things out.

Comm Rep Utas asked if this will be an every six month thing until inflation is under control. Executive Director Talsma responded no, in six months we will visit the merit based increase as part of the budget process. This COLA will hopefully get us to be able to attract the staff we need.

Comm Rep Poeschel made a motion, seconded by Comm Rep Sernett to recommend to the full board the approval of a one-time cost of living adjustment of 6% for staff earning under \$75,000, and 3% for staff earning over \$75,000 with a cap of 1.5% for any staff hired in 2022. The motion carried by voice vote.

Director Hopkins left the meeting.

#### B. ADA Transition Plan Update / M22-058

Executive Director Talsma noted that this is a housekeeping item and part of the accreditation process. This is our ADA plan. Our original plan was from 2005. Since then, all facilities have been made completely ADA compliant, as well as most of our parks. This latest list is what is left to be raised up to ADA compliancy. We should be proud that this is all we have remaining.

Commissioner McGinn asked if these are mandatory or if these items are nice to have. Executive Director Talsma explained that everything is grandfathered, meaning any new facility must be 100% ADA accessible. For playgrounds, you should try to have somewhat accessible. If someone needs an accommodation for a baseball field, for instance, we can schedule that person/team for the parks where we have sidewalks up to the fields. The law just states that you need to have a plan.

Executive Director Talsma added that we will receive a rebate of \$60,000 from NWSRA for fewer services during COVID. This rebate will go into our ADA budget.

Comm Rep Poeschel asked what a “seed bomb” is. Director Hugen explained that seeds are collected every fall. They are dried at the maintenance building, and then in the spring get mixed with clay and soil. Staff and volunteers throw these into the shorelines for future growth.

Comm Rep Sernett made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Kaplan to send to the full board the modified ADA Transition Plan Remediation schedule as presented. The motion carried by voice vote.

#### C. IPRA Environmental Report Card / M22-056

Executive Director Talsma explained that this is part of the accreditation process as well. We achieved 93% on this, which is phenomenal. Not having solar panels was a 2.5% hit against us.

Commissioner McGinn asked if we could consider any of the solar items. Executive Director said it is possible. It used to be that they would give you solar energy but you had to buy your electricity through that company. Things have changed; Oak Park has solar lights on some parks and they work well.

Comm Rep Utas asked about our limiting the use of refueling on ozone action days. Executive Director Talsma said we do try, but we cannot completely stop what we are doing.

Commissioner Kaplan made a motion, seconded by Comm Rep Poeschel to forward the IPRA Environmental Report Card to the full board for approval. The motion carried by voice vote.

D. Poplar Park Playground Cost Adjustment / M22-054

Executive Director Talsma explained that this is for reimbursement from School District 54. Their original project budget was \$425,000, but they have subsequently received grants of \$450,000 for the project. Therefore, we are requesting that our budget for the project be increased to \$450,000, noting that the full amount will be reimbursed from the school district.

Comm Rep Utas made a motion, seconded by Comm Rep Poeschel, to recommend to the full board the approval of the change in budget for the Poplar Park project from not to exceed \$425,000 to not to exceed \$450,000. The motion carried by voice vote.

E. NWSRA Vogelei House Project Cost Adjustment / M22-055

Executive Director Talsma stated that the original board approved amount for this project was \$735,000. After the project is fully completed, the total cost will be \$812,000. The B&G committee is requesting the board approve the full amount of \$812,000, noting that the full amount will be reimbursed by NWSRA. The main change was the cost of the elevator.

Comm Rep Sernett made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Kaplan to recommend to the full board the approval of the change in budget for the NWSRA project from \$735,000 to \$812,000. The motion carried by voice vote.

F. Parks, Planning and Maintenance Board Report / M22-057

Executive Director Talsma noted that the TopTracer bathroom project should be completed by the end of July. He also stated that the renovated Seascape pool was

operating without any leaks. NWSRA is nearing completion, with final inspection taking place last week. They should be moving in soon.

Comm Rep Sernett asked if the company who renovated the pool offered warranty. Executive Direct Talsma said that he believes there is a full year seasonal operating warranty for the paint.

Comm Rep Utas made a motion, seconded by Comm Rep Poeschel to forward the Parks, Planning and Maintenance board report to be included in this month's Executive Director's Report. The motion carried by voice vote.

**9. Committee Member Comments:**

Comm Rep Poeschel: The (Gold Medal) video was impressive and packed with information. It was interesting to see how the environmental scorecard was working.

Comm Rep Sernett said she was impressed with the video.

President Kinnane said he was thankful for the opportunity to learn more by having the Commissioners rotate committees.

**10. Adjournment:**

Comm Rep Utas made a motion, seconded by Comm Rep Poeschel to adjourn the meeting at 7:53 p.m. The motion carried by voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Craig Talsma  
Secretary

Cindy Flynn  
Executive Assistant

The following questions regarding information in the B&G and Rec packets were submitted and answered via email prior to the meeting:

- A. COLA adjustment sounds like a good idea.  
[Thanks](#)

- B. Any thought to raising the minimum wage to at least \$15 for all permanent positions (if we have any staff less than that wage).  
The majority of our year round positions are at least at \$15/hour. A few are in the \$14-\$15 range which we plan on having at \$15 for 2023.
- C. I doubt the removal of Oakdale playground will go over well with Fabbrini Park area residents. It is a fun routine to walk your kids around to the 2 Fabbrini playgrounds (and sometimes to MacArthur). It is also the closest playground for the residents between the park and Hassell and most of us between Hassell and Rosedale. Will there be a neighborhood meeting before we finalize removal; if that is a certainty?  
This is not a certainty, only been in the planning aspect for about ten years. The location to the other park makes it hard to justify the expense. We had discussed a ways back about removing it but not until it was ready for replacement. However, we do have some thoughts like what we did at Highland and at North playground at South Ridge. We would definitely hold meetings at the site when we explore this.
- D. In the Eco-survey, p11 (p58 PDF) Planning & Open Space #3 – “Proscribed Burns” is not checked – we do those, don’t we?  
Yes it should have been checked, though it would not give any more points on that question as we got the maximum of five.
- E. I found it confusing that they score for pamphlets and brochures – kill a tree lately? How many of those things get printed in bulk, handed out and immediately discarded, then forgotten only to be discarded in bulk a few years later as they become out of date? I am happy we use our website, email and social media more dynamically.  
I think they wanted us to be as responsible as possible if we did print; however, I completely agree, points should be given for not printing. Not to mention we save over \$100,000 by not printing a brochure and doing it all digitally!