

**MINUTES OF THE 2,387th
REGULARLY SCHEDULED BOARD
MEETING OF THE COMMISSIONERS AND OFFICERS
OF THE WINNETKA PARK DISTRICT, WINNETKA, IL
THURSDAY, AUGUST 26, 2021**

President James called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Mickey Archambault, Christina Codo, Warren James, Eric Lussen, Cynthia Rapp, Colleen Root, David Seaman

Commissioners Absent: None

Staff Present: John Peterson, Executive Director; Costa Kutulas, Director of Parks and Maintenance; Libby Baker, Office Associate

Staff Present Via Zoom: Christine Berman, Superintendent of Finance; Kyle Berg, Superintendent of Recreation; Molly Krohe, Marketing/Brand Manager; Ania Cramer, Community Outreach/Business Development

Audience Present: Randy Whitchurch, Tom Kehoe, Marie DeLean, Kathryn Freemond, Alan Freemond, Andrew Bellhoefer, Sally Tomlinson, Allan Tomlinson, Lynn Jackson, Teresa Claybrook, Paul Getzenderner, Beth Mulhern, Janet Lubetkin, Elizabeth Lane, Meredith McCormick, Ian Larkin, Kim Marsh, Loree Sandler, Jill Deheeger, Linda Welch, Allen Welch, Betty Finken, Colleen Burke, Joanell Loss, Robert Loss, Cindy LeVeille, Leslie Cortopassi, Mary Ellen Morgan, David Padgitt, Rob Clesney, Jim Dahl, Heidi Mitidiero, David Easthope, Sam Tegel, John Caslio, Lisa Merrill, Anne Ross, Rich Suda, Ian McIntosh, Craig LeVeille, Vera Perner, Arthur Tokarczyk, Amy McCarter, Jim Collins, Laura Glenn, Judy Naper, Ventresca, Sandra Costa, Alex Konstantopoulos, Tim Clark, Diane Clark, Elizabeth Parkinson, Peter Rose, Beth Ottsen, Veronica Durdov, Michele Grygotis, Joe Dooley, Garry Grygotis, Stephanie Szady, Bob Berger, John Amman, Tom Bittman, Glen Voycey, Lynne Brenner, Ed Kraus, Amy Kraus, and Scott Myer

Audience Present Via Zoom: Elizabeth Parkinson, Kristin Katter, Chris Rintz, John Finken, CBS 2, ABC News, Mani Rad, Liz, Susan Curry, Maxine Wilson, David Padget, Alex Golemski, Ed Loeb, Jill Fisher, "Owner", Marianne Wright, Marsha Baker, John H., Amy Hilarides, Jodi H., Amy, Fritz Duda, and Emily Rose

CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

President James recognized the audience in attendance. He explained those participating

via Zoom would be in “listen only” mode. He noted there would be three opportunities provided for public comment to those individuals attending in person, with an additional opportunity provided prior to Agenda Item 9.

APPROVAL OF FINANCIALS

Commissioner Archambault made a motion to approve the July 2021 Financials. Commissioner Lussen seconded the motion. Superintendent Berman reported the district is running above budget with a surplus of \$2.3 million. She noted the budget would be behind on taxes for a few months due to the delay in the mailing of tax bills. Staff anticipates collecting 100% of the taxes. Operating expenses and capital/contracts are running below budget. A roll call vote was taken.

Ayes: Archambault, Codo, James, Lussen, Rapp, Root, Seaman

Nays: None

Motion carried

APPROVAL OF VOUCHERS

Commissioner Archambault made a motion to approve the vouchers for August 26, 2021 in the amount of \$618,373.63. Commissioner Codo seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken.

Ayes: Archambault, Codo, James, Lussen, Rapp, Root, Seaman

Nays: None

Motion carried

REMARKS FROM VISITORS

President James reviewed procedures for addressing the board and asked for comments on topics other than the dog beach. He noted there would be an opportunity for the audience to address the board regarding the dog beach before the board’s discussion of the topic. No comments were made by the audience.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Consent agenda to approve:

- Closed Session Meeting Minutes of June 24, 2021
- Regular Board Meeting Minutes of July 22, 2021
- Closed Session Meeting Minutes of July 22, 2021

Commissioner Archambault made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Commissioner Codo seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken.

Ayes: Archambault, Codo, James, Lussen, Rapp, Root, Seaman

Nays: None

Motion carried

COMMUNICATIONS

None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Phase 1 Paddle Court Expansion

Executive Director Peterson reported discussions continue with WPTC. Park district staff met with village staff regarding initial design concepts, noting the village is in support of the additional courts. WPTC continues their fundraising efforts for the construction costs. The agreement between the WPTC and park district still needs to be finalized.

Commissioner Lussen inquired about the construction timeline. Executive Director Peterson explained neither the initial target of October 1 nor the secondary target of November 1 would be met. Director Kutulas provided additional clarification, noting the first plan review for the special use permit is September 13.

Commissioner Seaman inquired about the \$50,000 payment referenced in the board meeting minutes from July 2021, and who would make that determination. He shared his belief the golf business should be compensated. Executive Director Peterson explained it would be a board discussion for a future meeting.

REMARKS FROM VISITORS

President James addressed the audience and invited public comment.

Randy Whitchurch read a statement expressing his and other's shock, disappointment, and anger to learn the dog beach was to be eliminated. He cited statistics on the number of dog licenses issued from the village and the number of dog passes issued from the park district. He continued, noting dog beach users are passionate about dogs and want to keep the dog beach. Mr. Whitchurch suggested Elder could still be expanded while keeping Centennial as a dog beach. On behalf of the dog beach users, he concluded by asking the board to improve the beach plan and retain the dog beach.

Lynne Brenner shared how important the dog beach has been to many people during COVID and the mental health benefits it provided. She expressed it would be a loss to the community not to have the dog beach, and she asked the board to listen to the audience and realize the importance of the dog beach.

Ian Larkin, past park board president and liaison to the Lakefront Advisory Committee expressed his shock the dog beach is still being discussed. He noted the matter was settled during the lakefront master plan process and questioned where members of the audience were during the process. Mr. Larkin concluded by saying the plan needs to be implemented as is, and an off-leash dog park should be opened in another location.

Amy McCarter expressed her surprise at the size of the proposed beach and asked the board why the residents could not have a dog beach and a swimming beach. She presented the board and audience with a revised rendering of the Elder-Centennial beach and shared some thoughts for the board to take into consideration.

Sally Tomlinson expressed her belief it is a false premise to say this beach is a beach for dogs; it is a beach for the people, taxpayers, and community members who derive great pleasure from going to the beach with their dogs. She shared reasons not to eliminate the dog beach citing data from the Waterfront 2030 Plan. She concluded by saying there is ample room on the lakefront for both dogs and humans.

Elizabeth Lane commented residents argued for a dog park several years ago and heard at the time there was no need for a dog park because a place already existed. She feels if the beach is taken away, there will be nothing for dogs and fears Winnetka will have an anti-dog reputation.

Beth Mulhern stated, in response to a previous comment, another location has yet to be found. She noted a wonderful dog beach already exists and since non-dog owners do not want a dog park near their homes, the dog beach should be kept. Ms. Mulhern added it is the village and park district's responsibility to find a place on the lakefront for dogs.

Colleen Burke thanked the board and stated the dog beach offers respite and creates friendships. She participated in several lakefront-planning meetings and was told there was no plan to eliminate the dog beach. She added she could not understand why paddle boarders get priority over dogs. Ms. Burke concluded by saying dog pass holders are good stewards of the beach.

Peter Rose thanked the board for their efforts and expressed his interest in having the board complete the property transfer as planned and rehabilitate and create a beach all residents and visitors can enjoy. He encouraged the board to find another location for dog owners.

John Aman told the board his family moved to Winnetka partly because of the dog beach, and asked the board to strongly reconsider the dog beach.

Teresa Claybrook, former board member, read a statement citing statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and the Environmental Protection Agency about the dangers of dog feces in the lake and sand. She also stated allocating a portion of Centennial for dog use would be an environmental hazard to our community. Ms. Claybrook concluded by requesting that the board follow through with plans to convert Centennial to a swim beach, and look for a location for an off leash, off beach dog park.

Jim Dahl recognized the difficult decision before the board, but said its clear what is the right thing to do. He stated the people and the interactions at the dog beach are what is important. Mr. Dahl noted more people use the dog beach per square foot than the rest of the beach. He thanked the board and requested a stretch of lakefront be saved for dog owners.

Rich Suda explained he attended previous meetings and provided input, and was pleased to learn the dog beach for converting to a swimming beach. He concluded by expressing his support for a dog park.

Ian McIntosh expressed his shock to learn, said he does not remember ever seeing a sign for a survey. He opined more people use the dog beach than Maple. Many dog owners want a place to enjoy.

David Padgitt stated his only use of the beaches is with his dog, noting his kids are now adults. It is nice to have something just for the dogs.

Joe Dooley, a 30-year resident, former board member, and former member of the Lakefront Advisory Committee, noted the energy for the dog beach is the same as that expressed in 1995. He explained is has always been the goal to join Elder-Centennial and find an alternate location for dog owners. He noted the Village's interest in working with the park district on possible use of the landfill and requested the board to continue with what was planned.

Loree Sandler expressed her desire for a dog beach, not a dog park.

Stephanie Zady asked the board not to get rid of the dog beach, noting how much she and her dog love the beach and how many people she has met there. She described how much of a benefit the dog beach is to her and so many others.

Leslie Cortopassi stated she moved to Winnetka partly for the dog beach. She explained she is a frequent user of the dog beach, and has met many people, but rarely sees people at the other beaches.

Jim Collins, a 30-year resident stated the Winnetka dog beach was one of the first dog beaches. He opined a dog beach and a dog park are two separate things. He noted the park district already has several swimming beaches, but only one dog beach. He concluded by asking the board to keep the dog beach.

Annie Ross expressed her appreciation of the hard work. Ms. Ross noted the passion of the dog beach users saying the dog beach is a valuable asset that brings Winnetkans

together and should be preserved. This place is special and unique. Important to revisit a utilization study. Ms. Ross acknowledged the elimination of the dog beach might cause dog owners to utilize spaces they should not be using.

Betty Finken thanked the board for their efforts and explained her family specifically chose their property for the dog beach. She noted her participation, as well as others in the 2015 planning and said no one realized the dog beach was being eliminated. She asked what could be done to keep the dog beach and offered assistance to do surveys or research to show evidence in support of keeping the beach.

Meredith McCormick explained how important the dog beach was during COVID, providing an opportunity for the entire family to enjoy. She noted there are three other beaches for human and believes there can be a compromise on Elder by having a portion for the dogs.

Arthur Tokarczyk stated he followed Waterfront 2030 and it says nothing about eliminating the dog beach. He cited the benefits of the dog beach. Eliminating the dog beach will cause dog owners to use other areas not specified for dog use.

Vera Perner, a local realtor, noted it would not be a wise decision to eliminate the dog beach as many people got dogs during COVID, and others continue to get dogs. She noted many residential buildings now have dog amenities.

Sam Tegel expressed his surprise of the elimination of the dog beach stated his disbelief there would be more support for not having a dog beach.

Executive Director John Peterson read an email from Brad McLane, former board member, expressing his support of returning Centennial to the majority of park district users.

Executive Director John Peterson read an email Rebecca Ferguson expressing her support of the Winnetka 2030 lakefront plan, and her relief to learn the dog beach would become a people beach.

Allen Welch stated his family has used all the Winnetka beaches, but the dog beach is special. He asked the board to consider the dog owners in the same way golfers are considered.

NEW BUSINESS

Consideration for Dog Beach and Off-Leash/Off-Beach Dog Park

Executive Director Peterson and Director Kutulas shared a power point presentation providing factual information on the Winnetka Waterfront 2030 Lakefront Masterplan and efforts to identify and construct an alternate location for a dog park. Highlights included

Lakefront Advisory Committee formation, committee work, community engagement, plan approval and execution phases, pictures, key plan items, review of planning phases, review of 2019 dog park efforts and possible dog park locations.

Following the presentation, members of the board thanked the audience for attending and providing input. The board discussed the presentation and shared their thoughts.

Commissioner Root explained she moved to Winnetka partly for the dog park. In her reading of the masterplan, she never saw notice given of the dog beach being eliminated. Given the enthusiasm of the audience, Commissioner Root asked the board to consider modifying the plan to include a small area for the dogs. She added the dog beach people are a user group and always felt our park district was wonderful at trying to accommodate our users.

Commissioner Seaman noted he has used the dog beach. He expressed concern with the idea of not respecting what the previous board decided. There may be four new commissioners in two years who could overturn the decision of this board, and a precedent will be set.

Commissioner Archambault commented on the 2019 push for a dog park and the strong opposition from residents not wanting a dog park in their “backyard”. Commissioner Archambault continued, explaining the park district continued to look for alternate locations and solicited public input. He noted support for a dog park at the landfill was announced at the annual Town Hall meeting. Commissioner Archambault concluded by saying he understands the passion of the dog owners but new opportunities outweigh the need for a dog beach and feels the park district needs to do things for the general public.

Commissioner Codo agreed with previous comments made, noting this discussion truly is about people; the people at the dog park, the people here tonight, the people who developed the plan, all the people coming together to explore the landfill as a possible location. She said to ignore the legacy of past efforts is a betrayal of their efforts and expressed her support of a dog park at the landfill.

Commissioner Rapp acknowledged the passion and feelings of the audience, and recognized the loss to the group. She shared her opinion the park district needs to respect the efforts of the individuals who created the plan and see the plan implemented.

Commissioner Lussen stated in his five years on the park board most of his time has been spent on either the lakefront or the dog park. He noted the beaches are the park district’s greatest asset and they have been neglected. Commissioner Lussen expressed his opinion the beach is for public utility and does not favor a dedicated dog beach, but suggested

exploring the possibility of scheduled shared use.

Commissioner Root commented the park district has a beach already designated to a specific user group and therefore deference should be given to this 26-year group. She noted the lakefront plan was conceptual because the land in question was not available. Commissioner Root questioned if there was actual public notice given and if the board truly voted on the elimination of the dog beach. She again asked the board to reconsider modifications to the lakefront plan, noting a dog beach and a dog park are two different things.

Commissioner James expressed his love of dogs. He stated he became involved with the park district in 2013 serving on the Lakefront Advisory Committee, putting in hundreds of hours. Commissioner James noted the goal always was to obtain the property between Elder and Centennial. He referenced pages 120, 128 131 of the lakefront plan and the indications of eliminating the dog beach. Commissioner James stated the property exchange has nothing to do with the dog beach but everything to do with addressing the lakefront. He acknowledged Mr. Whitchurch and his efforts to maintain the dog beach, but expressed his goal as executing the lakefront plan as approved.

Commissioner Root asked Commissioner James if he would you consider an addition to the plan that includes a beach area, noting things change and plans need to be revised.

Commissioner Root made a motion that this board enter into consideration of finding an appropriate water area for a dog beach.

Commissioner Archambault asked for clarification on the location of the water area.

Commissioner James asked Commissioner Root if she looking for a dog beach on Lake Michigan or a place for dogs to swim. Commissioner Root replied she is seeking a dog beach on Lake Michigan, as it is the amenity that currently exists and has for the last 26 years.

Commissioner Seaman requested language be added to the motion noting the development of Elder-Centennial would not be impeded.

Commissioner Root made a motion that this board study and consider finding a location on the beaches of the Village of Winnetka that would be appropriate to be utilized as a dog beach, while not impeding any development of Elder Ln.-Centennial Beach. Commissioner Seaman seconded the motion. Following discussion, a roll call vote was taken.

Commissioner Lussen responded to Commissioner Root's motion saying he would not be in favor of a dedicated dog beach, and agreed it is the board's role to always continue working and studying for the benefit of the residents. Commissioner Rapp commented on the importance of finding a dog park location with access to water. Commissioner Seaman reiterated he would not be in favor of any motion that impedes the development of Elder-Centennial. Commissioner Codo commented on the interest of exploring an alternative location and said the board needs more information about partial use, hours of use, village owned assets that might be available, amenities that might be available, and types of water amenities that could be delivered at the landfill. She expressed favor for tabling the motion until additional information can be provided. Commissioner Archambault commented no one is going to provide private property for a dog beach is not going to happen. He added any park district property would be challenged as well and suggested staying with the current plan.

Ayes: Codo, Lussen, Rapp, Root, Seaman

Nays: Archambault, James

Motion carried

Commissioner James made a motion that this board would reaffirm the decision made in 2016 to develop Elder/Centennial, acknowledging the property exchange, and to proceed with the plan as most recently proposed, including a swimming beach in the south cell and non-motorized boat use in the north cell. Commissioner Archambault seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken.

Ayes: Archambault, Codo, James, Lussen, Rapp, Seaman

Abstentions: Root

Nays: None

Motion carried

Consideration of AYSO, Region 425 Memo of Understanding

Executive Director Peterson explained the purpose of the agreement and the terms, noting the agreement is a great way to provide soccer to the community. Following discussion, Commissioner Archambault made a motion to approve the Memo of Understanding for the American Youth Soccer Association. Commissioner Seaman seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken.

Ayes: Archambault, Codo, James, Lussen, Rapp, Root, Seaman

Nays: None

Motion carried

Consideration of Copier Lease Agreement

Superintendent Berman reported she was contacted by Impact Networking with an opportunity to renew the current lease agreement early. She explained the terms, noting a significant cost savings. Commissioner Archambault made a motion to approve a five-year

lease agreement from Impact Networking at an annual cost of \$16,907, and to authorize Superintendent Berman to execute the Master Finance Agreement and Maintenance Agreement. Commissioner Lussen seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken.

Ayes: Archambault, Codo, James, Lussen, Rapp, Root, Seaman

Nays: None

Motion carried

MATTERS OF THE DIRECTOR

Executive Director Peterson recognized Commissioner James and the staff who assisted with the Stepan Family Boat Launch dedication August 15. The event was a success and the family was very pleased.

Scott Myers addressed the board and gave an overview of the EMERGE–Winnetka music event to be held at the Skokie Playfields September 11, 2021.

Executive Director Peterson reported eight teams with celebrity captains are registered to compete in the Celebrity Kickball Tournament hosted by the Winnetka Parks Foundation September 24, 2021.

BOARD LIAISON REPORTS

Commissioner Seaman reported the 2021 Caucus survey results are on the Caucus Council website. The platform summary will be provided at a later date.

Commissioner Rapp reported District 36 schools have begun. A budget presentation at a recent school board meeting suggested a \$50 million referendum is being considered.

Commissioner Codo reported 90% of students and 90% of staff at New Trier High School are vaccinated. The school district will continue with virtual conferences. In December, workers will break ground for the new athletics facility.

Commissioner Archambault reported drawings for the golf course renovation are 30% complete. He met with staff yesterday to discuss the plans and noted many trees will be tagged for removal.

Commissioner James reported he has spoken with many Village trustees who have expressed support for a dog park on the landfill.

REMARKS FROM VISITORS

None

STAFF UPDATES

Ania Cramer, Community Outreach/Business Development – reported sponsors have been secured for Fall Fest. Planning continues for the Celebrity Kickball Tournament. Applications are underway for three Open Space Land Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) grants.

Molly Krohe, Marketing/Brand Manager – reported Gracie Durham, the new Marketing Specialist began August 9 and is working on obtaining a drone license. Website development is still underway. The new site should be launched in December. New board member photos were posted on the website.

CLOSED SESSION

Commissioner Archambault made a motion to go into closed session at 9:00 p.m., pursuant to Sections 2(c)(1), (5), and (6) of the Open Meetings Act to discuss the appointment, employment, compensation, performance, or dismissal of specific employees, the purchase or lease of real property for the use of the public body, the setting of a price for sale or lease of property owned by the public body, and the minutes of meetings lawfully closed under this Act, whether for purposes of approval by the body of the minutes or semi-annual review of the minutes. Commissioner Lussen seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken.

Ayes: Archambault, Codo, James, Lussen, Rapp, Root, Seaman

Nays: None

Motion carried

RETURN TO OPEN SESSION

Commissioner Archambault made a motion to return to open session at 9:42 p.m. Commissioner Lussen seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken.

Ayes: Archambault, Codo, James, Lussen, Rapp, Root, Seaman

Nays: None

Motion carried

Executive Director Peterson thanked the board for their thoughtful communications.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Archambault made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:46 p.m. Commissioner Lussen seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken.


Ayes: Archambault, Codo, James, Lussen, Rapp

Nays: None

Motion carried



John Peterson, Board Secretary



Date Approved

