

**WINNETKA PARK DISTRICT  
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE  
MEETING MINUTES  
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2020 | 6:00 P.M.  
VIA ZOOM**

President Archambault called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

**Commissioners Present:** Mickey Archambault, Christina Codo, Warren James, Colleen Knupp, Eric Lussen, David Seaman.

**Commissioners Absent:** Teresa Claybrook

**Staff present in the Winnetka Park District Administrative Office with observance of social distancing practices:** John Peterson, Executive Director; Christine Berman, Superintendent of Finance; Lara Kuechel, Executive Assistant; Costa Kutulas, Superintendent of Parks; Kelsey Raftery, Marketing Brand Manager; John Shea, Superintendent of Recreation

**Staff present via Zoom videoconference:** Pat Fragassi, A. C. Nielsen Tennis Center Manager; James Janesku, Recreation Supervisor; Matt Johnson, Winnetka Golf Club Manager; Marty Kwiatkowski, Recreation Supervisor; Matt McCann, Golf Course Superintendent; Britni Purnell, Human Resources Manager; Toby Ross, Recreation Supervisor; Paul Schwartz, Ice Arena and Platform Tennis Manager; Debbie Zarembski, Program Coordinator

**Audience Present via Zoom videoconference:** Don Smith, Winnetka Resident; Colleen Root (note: joined at 6:13 p.m.), Winnetka Resident

**ADDITIONS/CHANGES TO AGENDA: None**

Executive Director Peterson offered recognition to Superintendent Kutulas and his work on the lakefront projects and announced that he will become Director of Parks and Maintenance.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

### **Lakefront Masterplan Update**

Superintendent Kutulas offered thanks for the recognition. He then reported on the Tower staircase, noting that it is making progress with additional staffing; the project will be finalized as soon as possible. The Lloyd breakwater project is nearing completion. The Centennial/Elder project proposal will be ready for view at a high level in the next week. A controlled burn will take place at Tower Lloyd and Maple Friday, November 13. A brief discussion took place regarding the progress of projects and the contractor for the Tower staircase.

### **2020 YTD Financial Overview**

Executive Director Peterson reported the "All Funds Operating Income" reflects top revenue is slightly behind budget, but operating income greater than budget by approximately \$350,000. President Archambault thanked the staff on behalf of the Board.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **2021 Budget Workshop – Group A of Budget Items**

Executive Director Peterson offered thanks to the Board for their leadership within the budget process. He further thanked the business unit leaders and the staff working behind the scenes. Superintendent Berman shared a slide presentation.

### **All Funds Overview**

**Christine Berman, Superintendent of Finance** – reported on the highlights of this past year, in particular maintaining a Moody's Aa2 bond rating, the bond sale and the response of operating expenses and capital while facing the COVID pandemic. Plans to seek fundraising in 2021 through the partnership with the Winnetka Parks Foundation are forthcoming. She further spoke of the coming challenges and explained the "all funds" format and overview as well as restricted and unrestricted reserves. A brief question and answer exchange took place with President Archambault. Commissioner Seaman offered thanks to Superintendent Berman and expressed that he is very concerned about passing this budget "as is", yet acknowledged he is respectful of the work done by the staff in a challenging year. He suggested that a committee be formed to further review the budget.

**Note:** Commissioner Lussen joined at 6:31 p.m.

## **Recreation Fund**

**John Shea, Superintendent of Recreation** – offered a brief description of the various funds and thanks to his staff, acknowledging their respective responsibilities: Toby Ross, Marty Kwiatkowski, James Janesku, and Debbie Zarembski, as well as special thanks to all of the Winnetka Park District staff. He noted the successes of the past year with the challenges of the pandemic, such as the third highest summer camp revenue, the highest beach pass income ever, and the introduction of new programming (i.e. outdoor yoga). Superintendent Shea explained the impact of COVID on budget trends, stating one of the greatest challenges the department is facing is the lack of indoor space for programming. A discussion took place with questions regarding revenue, user fees/pricing, community feedback and plans for the use of Lloyd boat storage. President Archambault queried if season beach passes will stay the same next season to which Shea stated that they would be, with the addition of some more flexible options.

## **Golf Fund**

**Matt Johnson, Winnetka Golf Club (WGC) Manager** – spoke of the wonderful opportunity the golf course had in providing some normalcy for the community during the pandemic. Limited marketing was required due to the high demand, but more marketing is expected in 2021. Johnson remarked that Matt McCann, Golf Course Superintendent, maintained a great product. He also is looking for a golf club food and beverage vendor, as the current agreement with Avli has expired. Maintenance will involve some new equipment and an aquatic specialist. Looking ahead, he is taking a conservative approach to NOI, noting the downward trend of season passes, keeping an eye on the competition, and stated that weather is always the biggest risk. Commissioner Lussen emphasized the need for netting or no range use and President Archambault concurred regarding the need to mitigate the risk.

**Matt McCann, Golf Course Superintendent** – explained the challenges involved with maintenance this season, most notably COVID-related reduced labor, social distancing, weather in May, and high water fees in the summer. Superintendent McCann addressed the need for new equipment as finding parts is challenging for aging machinery. Superintendent Kutulas suggested an off-line conversation regarding the irrigation pond and potable water.

## **Golf Fund – cont'd**

Superintendent McCann also added the season was beyond fabulous, particularly with the visibility of young families using the course. There is no confirmation of food service for the coming season, per Executive Director Peterson due to the current circumstances. Manager Johnson reported he received late notice that Louie from Avli may still be interested in continuing.

## **Tennis Fund**

**Pat Fragassi, A. C. Nielsen Tennis Center Manager** – spoke of the surge of interest, noting revenue doubled due to private play and group play. Manager Fragassi reported he appreciated the supportive, COVID-compliant patrons, and is proud of his staff for handling the circumstances so well. He is looking forward to 2021 and getting revenue back on track with continued growth, but noted capacity limitations, especially with children. Challenges also include continued debt service from renovation. Capital expenditures are expected to involve outdoor court repair, resurfacing courts indoors, and painting the walls. A brief questions and answer exchange took place regarding repairs and other potential sources of revenue. Manager Fragassi also reported on the continued good rapport with the Nielsen family.

## **Indoor Ice Arena Fund**

**Paul Schwartz, Ice Arena Manager** – commended his staff in light of the challenging change of operation. He noted it was a successful first year of a twelve (12) month operation and plans to continue in 2021. Manager Schwartz further reported about aggressive expense reduction plans, and noted the ice arena is facing a downward trend in hockey participation, and the infrastructure is aging and needs to be updated/renovated. He added capital expenditures would include exterior painting (pushed from 2020) and the purchase of a new Zamboni (\$150,000). A brief question and answer exchange took place regarding the proposed Zamboni cost. Executive Director Peterson commented on the possibilities for sponsorships throughout the District. Commissioner Lussen remarked that the Winnetka Ice Arena is the most safe and clean ice rink on the North Shore and offered thanks for providing that outlet to the community.

## **Platform Tennis Fund**

**Paul Schwartz, Platform Tennis Manager** – reported that the main reason for losses are the lack of paddle hut use for rentals/parties. He added there is a great partnership with the Winnetka Platform Tennis Club (WPTC), the main user group accounting for approximately 70% of revenue. New LED lights were installed and President Archambault inquired about decreases in electrical costs; Manager Schwartz will follow-up. He further offered thanks to WPD Landscape Architect, Rick Schram and Superintendent Kutulas for plans to make room for additional courts and continue to grow the program. Superintendent McCann and WGC Manager Johnson will concede the chipping green in favor of two additional paddle courts; costs to be undertaken by the WPTC, per Executive Director Peterson.

## **General Fund**

**Christine Berman, Superintendent of Finance** – reported the “customer service” fund includes four departments (100 – 400). Superintendent Berman noted steady revenues, some increases in operating expenses, and there was an increase in contract payables due to services for IT support. Salaries went down due to reduction in full-time status. Negotiations were still taking place for insurance costs. Revenues were mainly through taxes and user fees.

**Marketing Brand Manager, Kelsey Raftery** - added the department is projecting to be \$90,000 under budget in 2020 due to savings from electronic brochures, a furloughed position, and a summer intern was not hired. Plans are in place for a new, ADA compliant website. She is consistently sending emails for programming at all facilities. Superintendent Berman noted the additional postage savings were mentioned.

**John Peterson, Executive Director** – further reported hand delivering “welcome” boxes to new families. Commissioner Lussen questioned the increase in the IT budget to which Executive Director Peterson explained it was approximately half from 2019. ExcalTech was helping with broader competence and will help the WPD with its cyber-specific incidence response plan. A brief discussion took place regarding parking revenue from NTHS and the resurfacing of the Elder/Centennial parking lot. President Archambault queried the budget addition of a Business Development position to begin with budget approval and receive a salary of \$75,000 plus an incentive.

Commissioner Seaman commented that services is too broad of a category for the size of the largest expense item and should be reviewed next year.



**Costa Kutulas, Superintendent of Parks** – reported on the Garage maintenance account, which includes both the Parks Service Center and Golf Maintenance facilities. He highlighted painting at the Service Center and explained repairs and maintenance are always a concern. He further noted they outsource for diagnostics, but do as many in-house repairs as possible. Expenses of healthcare costs remain a main concern as well as the maintenance of equipment. Superintendent Kutulas explained the need for painting as a capital expense that can be reviewed however, a UST Cathodic protection system is necessary and emphasized the replacement cannot be deferred.

In discussing Parks Maintenance, Superintendent Kutulas noted the greater participation in parks and commended crew and staff for keeping up with extensive trash collection that increased with park participation. Lower staff costs were a result of a delayed season and the COVID pandemic.

**Human Resources Manager, Britni Purnell** - reported she is negotiating the 2021 insurance plans with Bill Miksch, PACT Administrative Services. Blue Cross Blue Shield has been the most affordable among the carriers. Rates are historically trending at an annual increase of 2-4% through the last three years.

### **Capital Projects Fund**

**Christine Berman, Superintendent of Finance** – reported, in 2021, the WPD's three projects are (1) \$1.3 million for Phase II bluff restoration; (2) \$400,000 for driving range netting; and (3) \$7.6 million cost for the Centennial/Elder project. President Archambault clarified that approximately \$9 million in expenditures are budgeted for the lakefront next year.

**Costa Kutulas, Superintendent of Parks** – President Archambault inquired if the Elder/Centennial breakwater project will continue into 2022. Superintendent Kutulas stated the timing of the permits is crucial and he is planning with favorable permit timing and weather in 2021. The costs will include: permitting, jetties, piers, breakwaters and bluff restoration, likely under land based operations, although not related to the Elder/Centennial Park sites. Superintendent Kutulas further clarified the scope of the project as sand, stone and placement. Commissioner James requested details on the capital budget, especially the expenses associated with Centennial and Elder Parks. Commissioner Seaman inquired about marine based costs, which Kutulas did not have available. President Archambault suggested presenting at the next meeting, due to the magnitude of the costs involved.

President Archambault asked if the Board would like to dispense with the closed session meeting due to the length of the Committee meeting. Executive Director Peterson requested that the Board go ahead with a brief closed session meeting.

### **CLOSED SESSION**

Commissioner Codo made a motion to go into Closed Session pursuant to Section 2(c)(5) of the Open Meetings Act, for the purchase or lease of real property for the use of the public body, and 2(c)(6) for the setting of a price for sale or lease of property owned by the public body to discuss the purchase or lease of property pursuant to the Open Meetings Act. Commissioner Seaman seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken.

Ayes: Archambault, Codo, James, Lussen, Seaman

Nays: None.

Motion carried.

**Note:** Commissioner Knupp left the meeting

### **RETURN TO OPEN SESSION**

At 9:42 p.m., Commissioner Codo made a motion to return to Open Session. Commissioner James seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken.

Ayes: Archambault, Codo, James, Lussen, Seaman

Nays: None

Motion carried.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Codo made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:43 p.m. Commissioner Lussen seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken.

Ayes: Archambault, Codo, James, Lussen, Seaman

Nays: None

Motion carried.

  
Mickey Archambault, Board President  
John Peterson, Board Secretary