



**Park District of Oak Park
Committee of the Whole Meeting
Hedges Administrative Center
Oak Park, Illinois
Thursday, December 5, 2019**

Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 7:30pm.

I. Roll Call

Present: Commissioners Porreca, Wick, Worley-Hood, Wollmuth, and President Lentz.

Park District Staff Present: Jan Arnold, Executive Director; Maureen McCarthy, Superintendent of Recreation; Kyle Cratty, Director of Finance; Diane Stanke, Director of Marketing and Customer Service; Chris Lindgren, Superintendent of Parks and Planning; Paula Bickel, Director of Human Resources; Bill Hamilton, Superintendent of Special Facilities; Susan Curtain, Parks and Planning Assistant; Greg Stopka, Manager of Strategy and Innovation; and Karen Gruszka, Executive Assistant.

Others Present: Residents.

II. Public Comment - None

III. Public Hearing - Tax Levy

Discussion of Property Tax Increase

Executive Director Arnold stated the 2019 tax levy is 9.19%, an increase equaling a total level of \$10,488,291. This is approximately an \$882,510 increase from the 2019 tax levy; of the \$882,510 increase, the Park District already receives approximately \$400,000 from the two annual TIF rebates. The CPI of 1.9% equals \$177,510 in new taxes or \$4 per/\$100k of home value. As discussed, one of the major budget impacts to the Park District in the near future is the minimum wage increase. The new state law will result in a minimum wage increase to \$15 per hour by the year 2025, an increase of new expenses of \$160,000 annually for the same number of hours, resulting in an additional \$1,300,000 by the year 2025, compared to what the agency spent in 2017 for the same positions. This state law will directly impact the Park District budget more substantially than that of any other Oak Park government entity due to the approximate 500 seasonal and part-time staff hired annually. Therefore, the \$305,000 additional funds that the District will receive from the expiring TIFs will help the District absorb the minimum wage increase without sacrificing quality of park maintenance. The District will need to continue to look at cost saving opportunities to make up the additional \$1M in increased minimum wage expenses. The District funds its operations through property taxes and fees and charges which in 2018, was 51% fees and 49% taxes. In 2019, we estimate the fees/charges to be 52% fees/48% taxes. In other words, we continue to decrease our dependence on tax dollars and generate more revenue than the tax dollars collected.

Public Comment for Tax Levy Hearing:

Kitty Conklin – Informed the Board of the online petition she started on Facebook that has 1,261 signatures from Oak Park voters to prove that the tax payers have done their part and now it is the PDOP's turn to do its part. She said the Park District doesn't work in a vacuum. Our "little amount" may not be a lot to many people but for a lot of seniors they are having to move out of Oak Park as well as families due to the increasing taxes. She went on to say that the Park Board has all ignored the consolidation discussions and restaurants are closing; you're votes are being watched!

Marty Bernstein – Has lived here since 1993. He thanked the Board and said he knew they were all passionate by being on the Board but that their vision is narrowed because of their wanting to see only their own vision. He feels there is a little bit of well if they took it...then we should too. There is no collaboration.

Amanda Massie – She feels this is reprehensible as do many of the community. The Park District isn't underfunded...it is a want not a need. It is incorrect to say that this is only taking the TIF this once. It will forever be the baseline being taxed. The money belongs to the community. The Park District wants it, the community needs it.

Jack Powers – The Park District, like the schools, have been funded well but they still want to take the money. They don't need TIF money, they never needed it for improvements. He restated Diane Stanke's statement about freezing program fees; he says raise them. Not everyone is so poor to afford the raised cost of a program. He went on to compare youth baseball with over 1,300 users, yet pays the Park District to use the fields. They don't overcharge their fees, just like AYSO doesn't. We just keep duplicating programs that are already being run by the Legacy group, OP tennis, etc. We just keep overlapping programs, why?

Jon Adams – I strongly urge the Board to return the TIF dollars to the residents. It would be refreshing for the Board to return the money when it can, instead of always raising the taxes.

Bruce Kleinman – Has lived here since 1983. He stated he is 73 and still working and it's hard to hear Executive Director Arnold expressing that taxes are going up. He and his family can't go to the bank and say give me money, they have to make cuts at home. He said the Park District can't continue to go to "mommy and daddy" or the residents for money, it's unacceptable.

Michele Gurga – Stated that she voted yes to every referendum and agreed with 3% to go to taxpayers. Taking the TIF passes that check onto the community. The more the taxes rise, we continue to lose the class and diversity in our community.

Douglas Chien – Has worked with the former GAC in the Park District and has been a passionate volunteer. He is able to pay his taxes but he doesn't want to! The VOP is passing on taking the TIF dollars. "When dollars can be brought back to the community they should and not taken through the back door."

Patricia Medo – Has lived here 25 years and wanted to say that she believes the Park District's decision is simply wrong. Just because it's there, you don't take it. Reconsider for the residents. The levy is increasing faster than anyone can keep up with.

Peter Prokopowicz – Was a Hatch parent and is extremely sad to see their friends and neighbors have to move to Elmhurst, Berwyn, and Indiana because they can't afford the taxes here in Oak Park anymore. Now only well-to-do families are able to move in. Why can't his friends' dreams of retiring here anymore happen?

Patti Flannery – Thanked the Board for their time they put into the Board. She has lived here since 2005, and is a single mom. Her taxes have gone up from \$12,900 to \$19,000. She did not plan on a 60% increase. Colleges are \$30,000 and then some. All she keeps hearing is equity, what does that even mean? We are not an ATM. It's crazy that the taxpayers are being asked to sacrifice all the time.

Susan Caudell – Wanted to urge the Board not to take the TIF that the Park District has never relied on. She had tried sending a letter to the Board but it didn't go through the email system. Her taxes were raised 45%. They had used the Park District every day and had been willing to pay. But freezing the fees aren't the answer, the Park District is a pretty good bargain for people who need it. It would be wonderful to subsidize for everyone but we can't, it's not for the whole community. It's not the Park District's job and it should be decided by the community.

Corey Gimbel – Has lived here 40 years. He can afford his taxes but he feels bad for his friends who can't. It is the Park Board's fiduciary responsibility but you aren't doing that. Instead the Village of Oak Park is going down while taxes are going up. He has five open houses on his block on Marion, two are on the market, three are empty; they can't sell because of the taxes.

Heather Claxton – When her family moved here in 2014, they expected their taxes to be around \$15,000 but they felt it was worth it for the schools and gymnastics and were excited. But now their taxes are \$20,000, these increases are putting people in debt. They didn't buy a big home, they had to make cuts and decisions this year to pay the increase in taxes, including quitting gymnastics. We have stopped going out to dinner, it's all part of their budgeting to afford the increased taxes. Budgeting should be done in government, not just the families in the community.

Jim Peters – He was a member of the task force put together to see if consolidation could be an option. Every entity in Oak Park is living in a silo, they are each looking at their own needs, each saying it is just a few bucks. Stop with saying "our portion is just a drop in the bucket, please". The residents aren't having it anymore. 60% of residents said let's look at consolidation. Taxes continue to go up while the property values continue to go down. Each silo's taxes are an impediment on the residents.

President Lentz thanked the residents for their public comment and the hearing was adjourned.

V. Administration and Finance Committee

A. 2019 Tax Year Levy – Abatement Ordinance for 2012 Bond

The Board was informed that this ordinance was the same as the Abatement Ordinance described above for payment on the General Obligation Park Bonds (Alternative Revenue Source) Series 2012. The abated amount for 2019 tax year is \$320,350. **This will come before the Board on the consent agenda at the December Regular Board Meeting.**

B. 2019 Tax Year Levy – Abatement Ordinance for 2013 Bond

The Board was informed that this ordinance was the same as the Abatement Ordinance described above for payment on the General Obligation Park Bonds (Alternative Revenue Source) Series 2013. The abated amount for 2019 tax year is \$1,321,100. **This will come before the Board on the consent agenda at the December Regular Board Meeting.**

C. 2019 Tax Year Levy – Abatement Ordinance for 2019 Bond

Executive Director Arnold informed the Board that when the Park District announced the issuing of park bonds, it did so stating that there would not be a property tax increase to pay for the bonds. In order for the Park District to keep this pledge, it needs to adopt an annual property tax abatement ordinance that eliminates the property tax levy to be collected for payment on the General Obligation Park Bonds (Alternative Revenue Source) Series 2019. The abated amount for 2019 tax year is \$357,293.76. **This will come before the Board on the consent agenda at the December Regular Board Meeting. Budget and Appropriation Ordinance 2019-11-05.**

D. Budget and Appropriation Ordinance 2019-11-05.

The Budget and Appropriation Ordinance has been put on the table to make it available for the public for 30 days, after being discussed thoroughly at two budget meetings. There will be a Budget and Appropriation hearing held at the beginning of the Regular Board Meeting. Executive Director Arnold reminded the Board that the budget and appropriation ordinance is 15% higher than the working budget to provide staff flexibility between lines. However, staff from a funding standpoint works off the working budget. Upon adoption, it will be filed with the County Clerk. **This will come before the Board on the Regular agenda at the December Regular Board Meeting.**

E. Working Budget – Department Goals

Executive Director Arnold reminded the Board that two budget meetings were held this year; from those meetings, this working document was created and will be used for the goals that are tied into the budget. **This will come before the Board on the consent agenda at the December Regular Board Meeting.**

F. Strategic Plan Update

Executive Director Arnold reminded the Board in December 2018 they accepted the 2019-2021 PDOP Strategic Plan. All the seventeen goals in 2019 will be completed by the end of the year. There are fourteen goals for 2020, one of which will not happen due to the PDOP not being eligible for the Gold Medal until 2021. **No action is required on this item.**

G. Bi-Annual Executive Session Minutes Review and Release*

Executive Director Arnold reminded the Board of the requirement to review the Executive Session minutes semi-annually to see if confidentiality was still needed or if they could be released to the public. The new minutes to be reviewed which the Board, after reviewing, had consensus to be released are: July 11, 2019, and September 19, 2019, and that previously held Closed Session Minutes from April 5, 2018, March 21, 2019, April 4, 2019, May 16, 2019, can also be released. They have determined that there is still a need for keeping the minutes from August 21, 2014, and September 25, 2014, not be released. **This item will be brought before the Board on the consent agenda at the December Regular Board Meeting.**

H. Board Action Calendar

The Board Action Calendar is prepared to help staff track different items that will be coming before the Board during the 2020 calendar year. **This will come before the Board under the consent agenda at the December Regular Board Meeting.**

I. PDOP Attorney Review Update

Executive Director Arnold reminded the Board of the attorney review. Staff and she felt that the organization has been well represented by Mark Burkland and Holland and Knight and recommended a continued relationship. **No action is needed by the Board on this item.**

III. Recreation and Facility Program Committee

A. 2019 PACT Agreements

Executive Director Arnold reminded the Board of the ongoing PACT Program which was launched in 2012, and of the changes made during the interim years including moving many PACT agreements to multi-year agreements. The PACT agreements before the Board today were the annual agreements for Boy Scout Group 4020, Fenwick High School, and the Community Support Services. The Board had no questions for these PACT agreements. **This will come before the Board under the consent agenda at the December Regular Board Meeting.**

IV. Parks and Planning Committee

A. 2019 Park Report Card

The Board was given the results of the 2019 Report Card by Greg Stopka. The Board discussed the scheduling of the visits. **No action is needed by the Board on this item.**

VI. New Business – None.

VII. Closed Session – None.

VIII. Adjournment

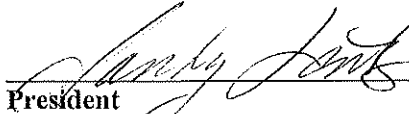
At 9:06pm a voice vote was taken to adjourn the Committee of the Whole. **Motion carried in a voice vote.**



Secretary
Board of Park Commissioners

January 16, 2020

Date



President
Board of Park Commissioners

January 16, 2020

Date

