

Park District Citizens Committee (meeting minutes)
October 23, 2023, 7pm
Ridgeland Commons Recreation Center

Attendees: Laura Stamp, Sandy Lentz (PDOP), Maureen McCarthy (PDOP), Bill Hamilton (PDOP), Steve Miller, Kevin Lee, Andres France, Karen McMillin, Mike Baiardo, Rob Kleps, Kathleen Lorden, Lauren Johnson, Jay Rowell.

-No Public Comments-

-Previous Meeting notes approved-

Ridgeland Commons Program Update – Bill Hamilton

- Introduction – Bill Hamilton is the Superintendent of Special Facilities & Customer Care, he attended the Park District Citizen Committee to provide an update on RCRC and Special Facilities. Providing the following information.
- Areas in department include, Customer Service, the Gymnastics and Recreation Center, Ridgeland Common Recreation Center, Rehm Pool and the 2 dog parks.
- Special Facilities department develops, plans, and implements the programs that take place in the facilities and are also responsible for their care and upkeep.
- Department totals 13 full time staff, approximately 100 year-round part-time staff, and approximately 180 seasonal summer staff.
- **Aquatics Program** – Led by our Manager, Kayla Lindgren and Program Supervisor Abby Sacks
 - After what seemed like a tough recruiting season for lifeguard staff, the district raised the hourly rate for guards from \$14 to \$16 per hour, leading to a late season surge in applicants. Staffing the pool for success in 2023.
 - During the 2023 Summer Season, 127 lifeguards were hired and trained. This is largest number we have had in my tenure. Lifeguards are certified through the Ellis and Associates Program, a leading program in the US and around the world. Key staff are certified to conduct lifeguard certifications and weekly in-service trainings during the season.
 - The community of Oak Park is fortunate to have a professional committed staff who produce the exceedingly competent lifeguard staff responsible for keeping our community safe year in and year out.
 - To hold Lifeguards and the Park District of Oak Park accountable, Ellis and Associates’ conducts audits of lifeguards and the facility operations. In 2023, Eliss’ Auditors conducted 3 audits, PDOP guards scored an “Exceeds” which also entitled us to a full refund on our Audit fees of over \$4,000.
 - Learn to Swim (swim lessons) is an important program. During the summer we had over 1500 registrations for 4 sessions of swim lessons for Parent and Tot to Adult.
 - The Park District of Oak Park’s swim lesson program’s curriculum is through Starfish Aquatic Institute. Over the last 2 summers, under Abby Sacks and Cameron Bayer, our program quality has greatly improved. Staff are routinely receiving positive Program Evaluations as well as 1st hand compliments.
 - During the school year, swim lessons are offered at OPRF 2 evenings a week and at Fenwick on Sundays. Serving approximately 725 registrants over 3 sessions.
 - Next year, however, the program will serve only about 280 registrants as OPRF will begin pool and gym space renovations.
 - Aquatics camps feature Camp Splash (328) and Jr. Lifeguard Camp. The intention is for the JR. Lifeguard program to become a recruiting tool for future lifeguard staff recruitment.
 - Pool Passes are the single largest revenue generator for the district. This year we had the 2nd largest number of pass sales since we went to an individual pass system of 10,183. The largest was last season at 10,525. Both years higher than pre-pandemic levels.
- **Ice Arena Program**
 - Programming at the ice arena is under the direction of Abby Sacks and Cathy our Skating Coordinator we offer our Learn to skate program, 2 exhibitions, and our annual ice show. Our Winter session prior to the show in March has the greatest demand serving over 600 participants. This year our ice show participation grew to 250 participants, getting us close to pre-pandemic levels.
 - Ice Bears is our Travel House League Program, this is a COED program that competes in the NWHL which is a fair play program. One all girls’ team at the U12 level competing in the Northern Illinois Hockey League
 - Summer Camps attracted over 1000 registrations in 4 - 2-week camps.
 - Adult hockey league is offered at 3 different levels: Beginners, Level 1, and level 2 with each team rostering up to 30 players per team
 - Paul Hruby is still involved in the OP Hockey community. The district worked with him to get an over 60-year-old Hockey League running.
 - For contracted out ice time, the district has various rental groups including OPRF and Fenwick Hockey clubs. They rent ice year-round but their primary season and largest rental commitment is during the regular season September through the beginning of March.
 - Public Skates are offered on Friday, Saturday evenings and Sunday afternoon. While our participation has been steadily growing since the pandemic, we have the capacity to serve greater numbers.
 - Ann Marie Buczek, the Communications and Marketing Manager is trying to get surrounding communities and districts to partner with the PDOP for ice programming.

- Offering Black Friday Sales again, on Year-Round Rink Passes at a sale price and introduce a Seasonal 3 month pass for the months of December January and February.
- The district has upgraded the theatrical lighting system at the beginning of the year and are in the process of upgrading our sound system to enhance the public skate experience. Also, Popular special events like our upcoming Trunk or Treat and Spooky Skate this Friday are great opportunities to promote public skate.
- **Gymnastics**
 - In July our long-time Manager, Jamie Lapke, retired. Fortunately, our Program Supervisor Keith Kerrigan was well prepared for the position and was promoted and a replacement, Michele Angel, was hired for Keith's job.
 - Since programming moved to the new facility at 21 Lake, the GRC, the program has been able to accommodate approximately 1100 participants between Pre-school and recreation programs to Competitive Team Gymnastics 7 days per week with about 500 more participants than in the old facility.
 - The GRC was built to accommodate the demand we had for gymnastics with 300 people routinely on waiting lists. Despite growing from 600 student capacity to 1100, we still ended up with 200 on waiting lists, attesting to the quality of the program.
 - In addition to Gymnastics, 2 late summer camps are held when other PD camps are ending. These camps sell out and serve 80 participants a week.
 - One of the biggest challenges staff have had is recruiting and hiring quality staff, especially in the last 3 years. Our staff are doing more hiring with the goal of training and growing coaches. This has been helpful at the preschool and lower skill levels.
 - Staff have recently introduced a Tumbling and Cheer Program to expand offerings to a wider audience. This also provides the opportunity to hire coaches with a different skill set.
 - Ninja courses are also offered. These programs have had high demand and we are looking to add additional equipment and expand the number of offerings.
- **Customer Service**
 - In 2021, Customer Service department was relocated to be under the Special Facilities Department's responsibility.
 - Customer Service staff maintain registrations, paperwork, and assist customers 7 days a week at Ridgeland Common, Gymnastics and Recreations Center, and recently added Community Recreation Center. Customer Service hours are span the hours of 5:30am to 10pm with the addition of the CRC.
 - This area is overseen by our Aquatics and Rink Manager, Kayla, and directly managed by Supervisor, Keely Garbasz We have one FT SC Rep, Cynthia Newell, and 20 part-time staff members.
 - In 2024 we will be focusing extensively on Customer Service training both for general staff and CS representatives to improve guest experiences.
 - This year we also entered into an agreement with Christ the King High School in the Austin Neighborhood.
 - They provide students with a work/study experience at all 4 grade levels. This provides students with meaningful mentorship and work experience that will aid them in future career development and growth. Each student works one day a week with the sponsoring organization.
 - The fees paid to CTK go to offset cost of tuition. In our case, the Men's Club at St Giles Parish have provided the funds for our partnership with CTK. The students are working at the Community Recreation Center at the front desk and a few other roles.
- **Maintenance**
 - Our maintenance team consists of 3 full-time staff members, Bill Moreth, the Supervisor and 2 Specialists.
 - They are responsible for the upkeep and care for our 3 facilities, RCRC, Rehm Pool and the Gymnastics Center, as well as 2 dog parks. It is our goal to keep these facilities looking and operating as close to the day they were new as possible.
 - Focus is on facility maintenance, preventative maintenance, and improvements. Staff also spend significant time on seasonal pool set up, and pool operations.
 - We work with outside contractors through maintenance contracts on systems like HVAC, and refrigeration.
 - We oversee larger capital projects requiring outside expertise and a legal bid process.
 - Current projects include:
 1. repair/replacing 40 feet of gutter at the Rehm main pool
 2. Working with a structural engineer to test the integrity of the concrete in specific areas of both pools, with the goal of prioritizing and conducting repairs over the next few years.
 3. Securing a contractor to perform the renovation of our skate shop area and service counter. We are working with the original architect on this space to ensure that the improvements match the look and materials of the original facility.

Community Comments/Feedback

- Spooky stroll took place last month and sold out. It was well done and all positive from the community.
- Very Positive reviews of CRC: great staff, gathering members input, working on facility flow and equipment requests.
- Sandy mentioned a discussion with high schoolers at CRC and they were all very positive, and respectful. It is a place for everyone and it seems that all generations like interacting with each other.
- CRC Youth committee started and is having growing pains. Staff are looking for responsible teens if you can pass the word on to the community as a committee.
- Suggest all youth activities need more advertising, especially on Friday family night. Some of the committee mentioned they weren't aware of the family nights. At this time just seeing low enrollment.

- Committee member suggestion: Divide open gym pickleball schedule at CRC based on skill level.
- CRC locker issues are scheduled to be fixed soon.
- Dominican University has begun tutoring for kids at the CRC. Many kids in the beginning were looking for assistance and wanting to do homework and now it is getting them to coincide with the tutors.
- Campout event went over well. It was at Lindberg park and was a big hit, had a great time.

Secret Shopper Reports

- Rehm pool staff were ask many questions and they provided thorough answers and were very knowledgeable and courteous.
- Dole is so much better since PD took it over.
- Scoville park is super clean.
- Longfellow is getting litter picked up earlier and garbage cans were added.

Longfellow Master Plan Review – Karen McMillin

- There was a total of 38 people attendance. Both on Zoom and in person, there were a lot of families on the zoom call.
- PDOP canvased the entire neighborhood, providing flyers on people's door steps, walking house to house to get the word out. Darrell from the design team had a great presentation.
- Some of the items that attendees were looking to have addressed are the following:
 - Eliminating the sand or sandpit area.
 - Bigger water/splash pad with features if possible.
 - Asking for pickle ball as an option instead of tennis courts.
 - Playgrounds – create to specific age segregated playgrounds

General Program Updates/Special Event Updates – Maureen (PDOP)

- A new women's basketball league will start in November at the CRC. Currently there are four teams registered with registration still open for a few more potentially.
- The grade 3-8 pre-season basketball league offering will take place in November and December. The program gives the players a chance to warm up and work on their skills before the winter league starts in January. We have a total of 210 participants enrolled for the pre-season basketball offering.
- Facility attendants will start to be scheduled for local D97 schools for park district sports programming in the school gyms.
- CRC membership update, 2,985 full memberships, 2,500 track memberships, 213 Junior memberships, 150-200 kids come after school, 773 school kids are registered.
- Triton tutoring program started around Sept 26, encouraging kids to take advantage of the help.
- 65,100 people have registered for PDOP classes year to date, 63,860 people registered for classes in 2022
- FLW Race was October 15 – Needed many volunteers, thank you all committee members that volunteered their time. Kids race went well, but we will be moving back to the street, instead of sidewalk, which will require 20 additional volunteers, GET THE WORD OUT!
- Need for after school staff, 3-6pm, must be 18+.
- On October 7, will begin OP resident registration for holiday programming.
- Many Halloween activities, Sensory Boo Bash, Hocus Pocus High Tea, Day of Dead dinner by Maya del Sol at Cheney Mansion, most are sold out.
- **Camps**
 - Camp counselor and Camp lead staff will be posted early December, for
 - Staff have submitted program guide downloads to marketing
- **Afterschool/Teens:**
 - Still hiring for afterschool staff, if you know of anyone send them our way.
 - Teen Night is new offering at CRC, the next Teen Night will take place on 11/4 with 16 participants registered.
 - Teen trips have become more popular, there is more offerings with ski trip and other entertainment trips.
- **Preschool:**
 - Indoor playground is open and has sold 84 memberships. First time to be back open since pandemic. ClubHouse in basement of Stevenson Oct-Nov – for kids under 5 years old.
 - Enrichments are continuing to grow, more offerings and more people registered.
- **Arts/Active Adults**
 - Active adult trips have continued to run monthly with October's trip going to Apple Holler and November's trip will attend Graue Mill.
 - Dance programs continue to grow in popularity.
 - At this time there are 166 unlimited fitness passes sold.
- **Nature/Adventure**
 - Archery programs continue to grow in popularity.
 - Adventure Teen Trips have started to run more frequently.

PDOP Update – Jan Arnold

Grants

- Received \$100k for after school program support.
- Applied for \$1.5 million for Rehm Diving pool conversion in fall 2024.
- Applied for \$525k OSLAD grant for Andersen Park.

Master Planning

- Five-year Comprehensive Strategic Plan is going out for bid. This will involve sending questionnaires to randomly selected individuals.
- Community Survey currently occurring. Districts goal is to receive 500 completed surveys for a statistically valid survey. After 500 completed surveys are received, district will accept additional completed surveys from any OP resident.
- Indoor pools are VERY EXPENSIVE TO build and operate. As a result, a referendum would be required if there is sufficient support.
- PDOP construction plans in 2024: GRC flooring replacement, Dole window replacements, Cheney tuckpointing and fence, Conservatory Historic door repair, Stevenson field shade structures, Irving field synthetic turf replacement (split costs 50/50 with D97), and Field Park's Center considering new designs.

Tax Efficiency Task Force

- The state of Illinois has put into law the requirement of each local government except school districts, develop a committee to review efficiencies every 10 years and submit findings to the county.
- PDOP Board appointed a group of community members to work as the Tax Efficiency Task Force to perform this review. The group has two OP residents that work for other PD in the Chicago area.
- Committee's first meeting was September 7 and they have two additional meetings planned for Feb 1 and April 4, 2024. These meetings are open to the public

Capital Projects

- Barrie Park – replace playground equipment. The tot lot will have some really cut make believe stuff that is OP themed. Jan's excited about the new equipment.
- RCRC Field replacement Oct 16-Dec
- S. Miller discussed the concerns about using PFAS containing synthetic turf. He emphasized get replacement turf that is certified PFAS free. PFAS is a class of chemicals called forever chemical. It was used in Teflon, other synthetic materials, and firefighting foams.

Everyone thanks Laura Stamp for her 12 years of service to the Park District by serving on the PDCC.

Meeting adjourned at 8:02pm