

Minutes of the Park District's Citizen Committee Meeting

2026-02-23 at CRC 7PM

Attending: Jan Arnold, Jermone Bailey, Denny Burke, Janet Coffey, Daniel Crane, Robert Kleps, Sandy Lenyz, Maureen McCarthy, Mekhala Merchant and Kavita Vermani. Robert Kleps acting as secretary.

Jerome Baily's report on after school activities at the CRC for the 3 to 6 PM program.

There are 10 adult staff members overseeing activities, so all rooms and areas are supervised. There are ~ 100 students attending each school day. Approximately 1,300 students are registered. Each student must sign in at the community room and get their hand stamped to be authorized involvement in activities. There is a sign in requirement, but no sign out is needed.

The supervisors ensure that a safe, civil and friendly environment is maintained for all activities. The philosophy is "Fun with purpose." Activities occur in the 1st and 2nd floor rooms. Hallways remain quiet. Students who brought snacks are eaten only in the community room

Any student attending an Oak Park school, public or private may register. All must live in Oak Park. Middle school and high school students are kept separated.

Male students enjoy mostly basketball with weightlifting available to 12 year olds after training. Female students are less physically involved and do crafts, board games and dancing.

Social interactions are discussed in the community room covering topics like: vaping, autism, behavioral standards, schoolwork, autism and mental health. Parent counselling is also available, overseen by Mr. Bailey.

The first year of the after-school programs was difficult, but procedures and responsibilities were implemented which greatly reduced disruptive student behavior.

Daniel Crane said that event at Fitzgeralds was successful.

Maureen McCarthy's report on programs was generally very positive. With many kids through senior adult programs being available and affordable. Mostly grades 3 through 6 utilize park programs. Last year's "Pirate" theme will be changed to "Doggy scramble" for this year. 56% of Oak Park families are utilizing our programs.

Specifics are available in the **"Park District of Oak Park 2025 Annual Recreation Participation Report."**

Lifelong learning has over 1000 registered adults with ~ 400 involved with crafts or games.

The Wright race had ~1030 runners. The CRC has over 10,600 memberships. Ridgeland public skating had > 10,000 in attendance. Skate rentals fee is included with membership. Hockey use is up and the annual ice show is coming soon.

More lifeguards will be needed for the summer. The Swim Academy uses the Fenwick High School's pool. Some off-peak hours may become available after the OPRFHS pool is finished.

Gymnastics class sessions were changed to 8 weeks which has improved availability and attendance.

The indoor Ridgeland pool referendum is a month away. It is a concept plan now with 3 pool areas: a splash pool for young kids, a warm pool available for professional or personal therapy and an 8 lane 25-meter lap pool. The lane float dividers can be removed allowing other activities in the pool. A glass wall is expected to separate the 3 pool activities. Remodeling of the east side of the building will occur to support the pool activities with locker rooms. The ice rink will not be affected. The north facing window in the concept plan will prevent hazardous glare off the pool which would obscure swimmers.

By 2031 the 60 year old Ridgeland pool must be replaced at a cost of 10 million dollars.

Jan Arnold's comments

A retractable roof would cost between 3 and 6 million dollars, and the footings (supports) could only be installed with a new pool, because there is not sufficient space surrounding the current pool.

If the new pool is installed an agreement with Forest Park is possible allowing each park district's pool passes to be accepted by the other at resident rates.

Pool expenses are always high. Jan hopes that the new pool will be a break even project.

The Park District Oak Park's website pdop.org has a tax calculator for determining the maximum taxes that would be assessed for a given house value.

Approximately \$38,000 was awarded in scholarships to Oak Park residents for park district's CRC membership and over \$200K in 2025..

The park district's goal is to be inclusive and sustainable.

The Field Park Center is expected to be framed in two weeks, and the slab will be poured while the Canadian company employees are on a two-week vacation. A tour of the Center project around April 14th will be offered to the public.

The Park district board approved the Field playground and parking work to move forward. Longfellow Park is still being renewed. There will be a ribbon cutting for the opening of Anderson Park on May 23.

The Citizens Committee bus tour of northern parks will be on April 20th at 5:30 PM

The Park District has received the following awards for excellence: GOLD MEDAL, CAPRA (NATIONAL ACCREDITATION) and DISTINGUISHED ACCREDITATION (STATE ACCREDITATION).