



Park District of Oak Park
Regular Park Board Meeting
John Hedges Administrative Center
218 Madison Street
Oak Park, Illinois 60302

Thursday, February 19, 2026

Minutes

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

I. ROLL CALL

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

Absent: None.

Park District Staff Present: Jan Arnold, Executive Director; Maureen McCarthy, Deputy Director of Recreation; Mitch Bowlin, Director of Business Operations; Mike Baiardo, Superintendent of Special Facilities; Chad Drufke, Program & Operations Manager; Joe Lilly, Program Manager-Early Childhood, Nature, Clubhouse, and Teens; Anne Marie Buczek, Director of Marketing and Community Engagement; Bill Hamilton, Superintendent Properties and Planning; Nelson Acevedo, Director of Parks and Facilities; Susan Crane, Historic Properties and Special Events Manager; and Karen Gruszka, Executive Assistant.

Others: Docents of Pleasant Home and their guests.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The motion was passed by a roll call vote of 5:0

III. VISITOR/PUBLIC – None.

IV. COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARDS

The Board presented the 2025 IAPD/IPRA Community Service Awards to the following recipients: Theresa Czarnik, Hilda Ettetdgi, Brian Flora, Paula Fenza, Esperanza Garcia-Alvarez, and Raeann Spencer. The Board introduced the recipients and presented those in attendance each with their Community Service Award. These individuals were awarded with the Community Service Award for their outstanding contribution, unselfish devotion and passion, and crucial support during the transition from the Pleasant Home Foundation to the PDOP and as docents for Pleasant Home sharing it's history with their knowledge and tours. The Board and staff thanked them for their volunteer work as docents to their community. Each recipient shared memories of Pleasant Home and thanked the Park District. A brief reception also took place for the awardees after the award ceremony.



V. CONSENT AGENDA

A motion was made by Commissioner Wollmuth and seconded by Commissioner Lentz to approve the Cash and Investment Summary and Warrants and Bills for the month of January 2026; approval of the Minutes from the Committee of the Whole Meeting January 8, 2026, and Regular Board Meeting January 15, 2026; approval of the appointment of Mekhala Merchant as a member of the Park District Citizen Committee to serve a three-year term; and approval of Disposal Ordinance 2026-02-13. **The motion was passed by a roll call vote of 5:0.**

VI. STAFF REPORTS

A. Executive Director's Report – In addition to the Executive Director's Report (which is included in the Board Packet), Executive Director Arnold noted emails sent with confirmation that staff are meeting with IDPH and the contractor to get the final license for Rehm. The Field project is moving forward, staff are staying on top of the construction to stay on schedule, and more carpenters are being hired for help with the rammed earth. The facility has nothing scheduled until a week before D97 starts but we need to be ready by end of August. Kids Around the World is taking out Longfellow's old playground by March 3 with a completion date expected by the end of the year. Finally, a reminder for the final Referendum Community Meeting is scheduled on February 25 at CRC.

B. Updates and Information – Written report included in the Board Packet.

C. Revenue/Expense Status Reports – No questions asked.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

A. Administration and Finance Committee

1. 2025 PDOP Annual Report – A copy of the 2025 Annual Report has been shared with the Board which highlights accomplishments in 2025. In addition, a copy of the Annual Report will also be made available at the end of the month to residents. The Board mentioned how great it was to not only see all the goals that were completed throughout the year but how they all tie into our values. The Board was informed of the Values Champions awards that were launched last year for one full-time, one part-time, and one seasonal staff person; each nominated by their peers and supervisors, showcased on pdop.org, and each received an award. The Board was also happy to see the number of households we reach and those who use our services increase every year.

2. IGA Shared Facilities PDOP | OPPL at Dole Center Update - Executive Director reminded the Board that we own the Dole Center, but we lease the first floor to the Oak Park Public Library and lease part to the basement to the Oak Park Society of Model Engineers. Last year staff had a waitlist at the Whittier School for after school care. Currently there is the multi-purpose space that is located in the library area and is in their lease agreement that is largely unused. All the other rooms are being used mornings through evenings with the life-long learners and programs. Therefore, we are looking at a trial period of 20 months for after school care in that multi-purpose space. Twenty students are already on the waitlist that will be ready to use the afterschool care and we are hoping to begin this in March. This will add no cost for the space, only the supervision and supplies. This is being presented to the Library Board next week and we are looking forward to expanding this program.



B. Parks and Planning Committee

1. Approval of Field Park Improvements – Commissioner Worley-Hood: *I move that the Park Board approve the contract with Hacienda Landscaping Inc., 17840 Grove Road, Minooka, IL for an amount not to exceed \$605,353.25 for the Field Park Renovations project base bid and authorize the Executive Director Jan Arnold permission to sign the contract.* Executive Director Arnold reminded the Board of that the bid went out on January 7 with pre-bid walkthroughs, and the bids were opened on February 4. Hacienda Landscaping, Inc. was the low, responsible bidder. The bid includes the removal of contaminated soil but if it is not used, it would be deducted from the total. The Board confirmed there was a contingency but were also reassured that our knowledge of working with Hacienda in prior projects, a contingency most likely would not be needed. Motion was made by Commissioner Worley-Hood and seconded by Commissioner Wollmuth. **The motion was passed by a roll call vote of 5:0.**

2. Approval of Field Park Project Owner Purchased Equipment – Commissioner Worley-Hood: *I move that the Park Board approve the purchase of Landscape Structures - Playground Equipment for \$135,760.00, Landscape Structures - Splash Pad Equipment \$48,111.00, Forever Lawn – Playground Grass Ultra \$164,896.07, and Landscape Forms \$41,800.00 for a total of \$390,567.07 through Sourcewell and authorize Executive Director Jan Arnold to executive the contracts.* Executive Director Arnold reminded the Board that we will be purchasing these as we did with the owner purchases we approved in the December meeting for Longfellow; it saves on lead time and reduces costs with no contractor markup. Sourcewell publicly bids these items so that we don't have to go out to bid. Hacienda Landscape, Inc. has the installation of these items in their contract. There were no additional questions from the Board. Motion was made by Commissioner Worley-Hood and seconded by Commissioner Wollmuth. **The motion was passed by a roll call vote of 5:0.**

3. Field Center Demolition Update – Executive Director Jan Arnold reminded the Board of the Field Center demolition bid. There was a mandatory pre-bid meeting which seven companies attended. The bids are due back on February 25, and the low responsive, responsible bidder will be brought to the Board for approval at the Continued Regular Board Meeting. The Board asked about the parking spaces and were informed that the Village is requiring two additional ADA parking spaces, but that D97's parking lot could count for our building - we would only need to expand two spaces. D97 will bid that and we will reimburse them. **No Board action is required on this item at this time.**

4. Approval of Shared Mower Replacement PDOP |D97 – Commissioner Worley-Hood: *I move that the Park Board approve the purchase of a zero-turn mower, Toro Ground Master 7200 Traction Unit for a purchase price of \$31,369.92 and the snow conversion kit for a purchase price \$26,260.98 for a combined total of \$57,630.90 and authorize Executive Director Arnold to sign the contract.* Executive Director Arnold reminded the Board that stated in the 2014 Sports Fields Maintenance Agreement it was listed that D97 would pay for a mower for their use on their properties. When the last agreement in 2024 was negotiated, it was noted that we would share the costs as we use it as well during the winter months. The cost of the snow conversion kit will



be paid entirely by the PDOP as we use it solely for our snow removal in our parks. \$75,000 is currently allocated for this equipment in the budget. The Board discussed the life span of the mowers and the superior ability this equipment has not only as a mower but as a snow remover with it fitting on the sidewalk without grass getting chewed up along the walkways. Motion was made by Commissioner Worley-Hood and seconded by Commissioner Lentz. **The motion was passed by a roll call vote of 5:0.**

5. Approval of Pleasant Home Professional Services Agreement ADA Restroom – Commissioner Worley-Hood: *I move that the Park Board approve the professional services contract with Daniel Rouse, from Oak Park, IL, in an amount not to exceed \$40,000 for the design and overseeing of the construction of the ADA restroom in Pleasant Home and authorize Executive Director Jan Arnold to sign a contract.* As Board the Board is aware, there is no ADA toilets in Pleasant Home which is needed with the events and programs that take place there. When the PDOP and the Pleasant Home Foundation separated, it was agreed upon that if there were any large projects at Pleasant Home we would engage a task force. Staff and I asked Laura Thompson prior PHF Board President to chair the task force. The task force consisted of Laura Thompson, Frank Heitzman, Doug Gilbert, Commissioner Worley-Hood and staff, and they met with three different architects and chose Daniel Rouse for the project. They then worked with Daniel on a proposal and agreed upon a proposal not to exceed \$40,000. The project will take place between January and February next year. The Board questioned if they had to go through the Historic Preservation Society and they were told yes that Daniel would need to run the project through two, the State and Oak Park, but we do not see a problem as it is using current space at the back of the home. Motion was made by Commissioner Worley-Hood and seconded by Commissioner Lentz. **The motion was passed by a roll call vote of 5:0.**

C. Recreation and Facility Program Committee

1. Annual Historic Homes Report – Susan Crane, Historic Properties and Special Events Manager, provided information in addition to her annual report in the packet saying that rentals continue to be the largest percent of revenue. Program revenue, especially the adult programming, has continued to grow since late 2024, including the partnering with Fitzgeralds that each event has been at capacity, and Oak Park Festival Theatre added a holiday program reading at Pleasant Home which sold out. Fundraising has been a successful partnership as well, increasing the historic property's reach and the nonprofits holding successful events. The Adult fall/winter section was in the brochure as a separate out pull section which they felt really had a good impact on adult programming as well as Ann Marie' focus groups and new Eblasts they've been sending out twice a month, allowing them to run programs not listed in the pullout guide. Susan also discussed the help the docents provide to Pleasant Home, expenses, and the geo thermal installation. Also helpful with the wedding rentals is the Docusign now set up and Noelle Combs follow-ups to viewings. They will continue to cultivate family programming and unique programming. The Board thanked Susan for her work at the properties and with her partnerships and appreciated the email blasts and their creativity to make the spaces successful.
2. Annual Recreation Report The Recreation and Special Facilities departments provided a joint annual update to the Board on Park District programming. Chad Drufke mentioned that the youth



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sports age group 3-5 has seen a decrease which is not a surprise as there are currently less children in that age group in Oak Park, but they continue to add additional classes such as youth pickleball instruction classes, one day volleyball tournament for teens, floor hockey has been brought back in, along with sports partnerships. Adult pickleball increased in 2025 in both leagues and instructions, women's basketball moved to the CRC as a monthly membership with Tuesday night being women's play, as well as adult softball, soccer, and coed kickball. The national average for retention for fitness is 60% we are at 62%; 10,890 memberships paid or free. The CRC held various wellness seminars, fairs, and blood drives. The CRC had 1,300 afterschool memberships signed up in 2025 and already have hit 1,000 by February of this year.

Joe Lilly oversees the general recreation fitness and classes which continue to increase with the CRC. He also provided updates to the Board in fine arts, performing arts, early childhood, and Austin Gardens with their homeschool nature and adventure classes on Fridays being very strong as well as local groups earning their badges. Life Long Learners had a spike at the end of the year to lock in last year's pricing. In 2026 they are excited for Field Center opening up for after school registration as it doubles the amount of space available. Joe and both Abby Meachum and Abby Sachs presented at the Wisconsin state conference.

Mike Biardo started by updating the board with the pool's big highlight, the receiving of the Ellis Platinum award. Swim academy records were set with their two-week sessions, but attendance was down due to Rehm construction and 2.5 inches of rain last summer. Mike then went on to update the Board on life guards, ice skating and hockey camps, and skate and swim camp. Public skate had an uptick with the addition of free skates and consistent times scheduled, synchronized swim teams had a large aging-out, and 1,500 viewed the ice shows last year. Customer service implemented iPad for Spanish speaking guests and Keely Garbacz held district-wide cash services training for the pool, skates, which improved services.

Keith Kerrigan informed the Board that priority registration for gymnastics was taken away allowing participants to continue session-to-session strictly making it either resident or non-resident, creating more opportunities for registrants to continue with their sessions in a transparent way. Advanced gymnasts moved to a monthly payment schedule. All of these changes have had very good success with very little push back. The Board was also updated on two additional preschools, successful parents nights out, a ninja challenge class added on Sundays, summer camps, and 98 birthday parties booked out of 108. The Board commended him and Ann Marie for their training and information shared with the families prior to the changes taking place.

Maureen McCarthy also updated the Board on the PACT Agreements. The Board discussed the OPRF and Fenwick agreements and agreed that were informed that the Park District was living up to our end of the agreements, but we need to make sure that OPRF and Fenwick provide what they signed on for in the agreement. The Board thanked everyone for their reports.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS – None

IV. COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS

Commissioner Wollmuth: Commissioner Wollmuth attended the FOPCON meeting and said that the agreement looks to be heading a good direction and that with persistence it is meeting our goals as much as theirs. With these final markups, it will hopefully be completed soon.

Commissioner Lentz: Commissioner Lentz wanted to note that as she listened to staff this evening giving their reports, she was so impressed by what the PDOP has accomplished especially with our limited resources and is proud to be a part of this agency.

Commissioner Onayemi: Commissioner Onayemi agreed with Commissioner Lentz's comment and went on to say that even though he has participated with the Park District and local government before, you just don't see the overall picture, and he too is amazed at what gets done in the space that we have for our community. He also cannot remember what we were doing prior to having the CRC as it is such a huge part of the community now. He expressed kudos to the staff and mentioned that doing his homework for the Park District and seeing what we do versus what other Park Districts do is very impressive.

Commissioner Worley-Hood: Commissioner Worley-Hood attended a COG meeting that the tone has shown that a few attendees are advocating for items that they don't have all the information on. Commissioner Worley-Hood stated that he appreciates the Recreation Report and the trends that it uses as it prepares us to know what is coming. He mentioned he would love to see some demographics in regard to the scholarship being used as it would help to answer some questions he's encountered with concerns we overserve higher incomes and he believes the demographics would definitely show that not to be the case. Executive Director Arnold reminded the Board that we ask residents to identify their race, but it is not a requirement and if they choose not to, there is no way to show the actual demographics.

President Porreca: President Porreca attended the FOPCON meetings with Chris and Jan and feels that the discussions are heading in the right direction, she also attended the Festival Theatre Gala with Commissioner Worley-Hood and exclaimed it was a wonderful event, and the Park District was praised for their 50 year partnership with Festival Theatre and for the lights and sound system. She wanted to point out that residents have every right to not like the referendum, they have every right to not want to lose an outdoor pool, to feel nostalgic regarding their memories of the Ridgeland Common outdoor pool from when they were young, to vote no, but they do not have the right to bully, libel, and defame the Executive Director nor staff for doing their job. The Park Board made their decision on December 18. No decision was made prior to that during any discussions that took place as noted in the minutes; it was a Board decision voted on December 18. We the Board, sought to become public figures, we went out and asked for votes to become public figures. Jan Arnold, the Executive Director, simply is doing her job. Jan has been nothing but a professional, highly regarded Executive Director not only locally but nationally awarded. We as the Board need to support and protect the hard working staff of this Park District who have always worked for the residents. It is our job to support staff.

X. CLOSED SESSION – None



XI. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:04pm, a motion was made by Commissioner Lentz and seconded by Commissioner Onayemi to adjourn the Regular Board Meeting. **The motion was passed by a voice vote of 5:0.**



Secretary
Board of Park Commissioners

March 19, 2026

Date



President
Board of Park Commissioners

March 19, 2026

Date

