



City of Palos Heights
Recreation Committee
Tuesday, May 9th, 2023
Minutes

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Key called the regular meeting of the Recreation Committee to order at 7:00 p.m. at the Palos Heights City Hall, 7607 W. College Drive. In attendance were Chairman Key, Alderman Bylut, Alderman Clifford, Alderman Begley, Superintendent of Facilities Joe Smith, Superintendent of Recreation Lauren Koszola, Lake Katherine Director Gareth Blakesley and recording secretary Morgan Pukula.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairman Key moved to approve the minutes of the April 11th, 2023 meeting, seconded by Alderman Begley. On a voice note, the motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

LAKE KATHERINE REPORT

Lake Katherine Director Gareth Blakesley, provided the Lake Katherine update:

- Our annual Native Plant sale was on Saturday where only a few plants were left remaining.
- Our first fishing day of the year was on Saturday with over 40 people in attendance.
- We conducted a volunteer orientation for new volunteers. Our new recruitment process will entail year round recruiting.
- MWRD visited some of the south suburban sites which included Lake Katherine hosting lunch and a visit on our grounds.
- We gave our monthly Palos Senior Center presentation which was on birds and bird watching. We also conducted an impromptu duck rescue.
- Our Arbor Day program that is supported by the beautification committee, included 13 trees delivered around Palos Heights on Arbor Day.
- Arbor Day tree planting staff helped plant two Oak trees at Lake Katherine. The recreation staff also planted a Burr Oak at the Recreation Center.
- Marist landscape design finished a pollinator garden they will install.
- We completed a habitat landscape design for a local homeowner who is building a home on their new lot.
- 7 volunteer work groups:
 - Acacia Academy continued education and worked in the children's forest.
 - Nicor work day planted 15 trees and a variety of different shrubs just east of Harlem, close to the senior center.
 - The 'Do Good' movement work day was held in the meditation garden with volunteers pruning and weeding.
 - Parklawn volunteers came out and removed invasive species, including Garlic Mustard.
 - Exelon work day included pruning vegetation along the south shore where we were not able to burn.
 - McCauley High School volunteers came out for a work day and helped remove phragmites.

- Oak Lawn work day included the school group helping trim and plant trees.
- Bioblitz was held on Saturday, April 22nd. We counted 38 species, including the rare Henslow's sparrow which is listed as "near threatened".
- Green team meeting included green notes on Earth month article and upcoming city cleanup day.
- Natural navigation class was held at Trinity as part of their SALT program.
- We gave a library program class on 'reducing one's impact on the planet'.
- The boat house fundraiser was held on Friday, April 14th with over 90 attendees. We raised \$25,000.00 net. Overall our total in just under \$100,000.00 for the boat house and boardwalk. We are currently requesting quotes from firms.
- The intake deck for the waterfall was rebuilt by the Public Works department and turned out great.
- Education Programs: 8 scout groups focusing on ecofriendly initiatives, sustainability, hiking and water quality.
- 6 school field trips were held on different habitats, animal adaptation, animal groups and gardening.
- 1 junior explorer group visited about gardening.

Chairman Key requested that the ANCA invoice totaling \$5,685.00 be moved to the city council meeting. This was for a consultant from an outside service to review Lake Katherine's budgeting, programming, staffing, etc. Alderman Begley motioned to move the ANCA invoice to city council, seconded by Chairman Key. On a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

PARKS & RECREATION REPORT

Superintendent of Recreation, Lauren Koszola, provided the Recreation update:

- **Recreation Program Updates:** The Farmer's Market will begin May 17th and we currently have 36 vendors with 4 community tents so non for-profit groups can use these or vendors who do not choose to come each week can pop in. Lauren hosted a vendor Zoom meeting where almost all invited attended. We discussed policies, procedures, weather conflicts, etc.

We received the money for our Link Match Grant which was \$12,000.00.

Summer registration started on April 10th for residents and started for all non-residents, April 17th. This includes summer camp, swim lessons and all extra special events. We started using CampDoc, which is an online software for all camp paperwork. This system is integrated with RecTrac, so we can track and use both cohesively. Our camp staff will be able to access children's records quickly on our phones and iPads in an emergency as well. All of our Easter/April events were well attended, including the race and Easter egg hunt. Pancakes with Peter Rabbit was sold out, so overall the staff, Kara and Eric are working very hard to expand attendance and participation.

A sponsorship update: For the 3rd and 4th of July, we currently have \$5,300.00 compared to the \$2,000.00 we had last year. Our concerts in the park are at \$8,600.00. Farmer's Market is at \$4,000.00 in sponsorship money.

Alderman Clifford requested a list of the sponsors so he can reach out to some people who may want to contribute to our Recreation Center and events.

Superintendent of Facilities, Joe Smith, provided the pool, Orchard Park, and future project updates:

- **Pool Update:** Filling of the pool has begun today! 1 of our 8 water heaters was replaced about a month ago by Robert, our facility tech. The main hot water tank for the bath house, showers, and concession stand was also replaced 2 weeks ago by Robert. Robert and Jeff from Public Works will start the railing tomorrow at the pool. We are fully staffed and possibly overstaffed on purpose because we do lose some between time of hire and opening day. We are confident in the staff that were promoted to

managers. We are over staffed for summer camp as well on purpose to accommodate for potential issues. We are replacing the one deck as well; it is the same material as the renovation at Lake Katherine with a light gray material. We are replacing the roof on the shelter next to the deck and that will match the green material on the other structures. RAB came and toured the facility last week. Joe gave them a tour of the future OSLAD projects and hopeful timelines.

Our pool pass sales are over \$40,000.00. We have 270 participants signed up for swim lessons already; registration started April 10th.

- **Orchard Park Update:** 75% of the drawing construction came out. This should hopefully be going to bid in June. Regarding the MWRD permits, we proved that we were grandfathered in before the Water Shed Management Ordinance was established. We do not require any water detention and we can move on with the park as we would originally.
- **Power Softball additional field:** The Power Softball organization has requested another field at Community Park. Discussion was had about the challenges of placing the ball park in that location. Parking and the size of the lot will not accommodate what the field is expected to bring. She also stated the equity of the PBO and Power fields; the number of fields and the location. PBO primarily funds themselves. Power is requesting the help of the city.
Alderman Begley suggested bringing the members of Power Softball to our meeting and discussing the options we have. Different parks in town were discussed for the addition of the requested field. Alderman Begley also stated Power Softball requested a permanent fence on Power field 1 to replace the temporary one.
Alderman Key requested a sit down with Joe and Power Softball to obtain more details for price, age group, location options.
- **Dog Park Research:** Joe stated there have been issues with unleashed dogs at the tennis courts so at the last RAB meeting, the members brought up the idea of a dog park. Alderman Bylut said it has been brought up previously in years past, but there is never a perfect location. The land is always an issue here in Palos Heights. Other concerns were memberships, maintenance and dogs complying with vaccines. It was agreed that research can be started since there is no time limit and since the recreation committee is starting many other projects, this idea can be held onto for future. Chairman Key moved to table this discussion.

NEW BUSINESS

Chairman Key motioned to approve JSD Professional Services, Inc. payment #2 in the amount of \$10,627.69 for work completed on the Orchard Park project, seconded by Alderman Begley. On a voice note, the motion passed unanimously. – **AGENDA**

Alderman Bylut raised the idea of 'Patron Day' at the Recreation Center. This idea came from the pilot program for the employees. Patron Day would allow for one day a week for the residents to come and use the pool and fitness center, free of charge with proof of residency. This may stem into more revenue with residents buying passes for our amenities in the future. With this pilot program, we can see the usage of our facilities and of course reevaluate at the end of the year. The mayor mentioned this may be an issue at the fitness center on early mornings; so the thought is to start the Patron Day at noon.

Example: Every Wednesday from 12 pm-close, residents with proof of ID will be able to utilize the facilities.

Residents currently have the opportunity on Fridays from 5 pm-7 pm to use the rec center amenities. Alderman Begley expressed concern on the purchase of pool passes if there is a free day each week. The city relies on the purchase of the summer pool passes. Lauren stated, we as a department can do a better job promoting the free day that is already given to residents to try out the facilities.

Alderman Begley, Alderman Clifford, Joe and Lauren all expressed concern on the idea of the Patron Day. Chairman Key stated we can look into the idea and make a recommendation of a day and time and table the idea pending options for a 'Patron Day'.

OLD BUSINESS

Chairman Key stated in the last RAB minutes, it was discussed that the members would like to see the staff at the Recreation Center continue the process with CAPRA. The aldermen collectively agreed that CAPRA was not to be discussed and that the department would utilize their time focusing on events for the city and not exhaust resources to chase CAPRA.

Chairman Key ended the meeting with announcing to the committee the unfortunate farewell to Lauren Koszola who has accepted another position in Channahon. The committee wishes Lauren the best of luck on her new journey and thanks her for her 10 ½ years of service to the Palos Heights residents! Lauren's last day is May 26th, 2023.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chairman Key moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Alderman Bylut. All in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 8:08 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Morgan Pukula, Recording Secretary