



City of Palos Heights
Recreation Committee
Tuesday, June 13, 2023
Minutes

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Key called the regular meeting of the Recreation Committee to order at 7:01 p.m. at the Palos Heights City Hall, 7607 W. College Drive. In attendance were Chairman Key, Alderman Bylut, Alderman Clifford, Alderman Begley, Director of Parks and Recreation Matt Fairbanks, Lake Katherine Director Gareth Blakesley, two members from Power Softball and recording secretary Morgan Pukula.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

LAKE KATHERINE REPORT

Lake Katherine Director Gareth Blakesley reported:

Education:

- 22 field trips learned about animal groups, wetlands, owls, seeds and plants
- 6 scout groups came for kayaking, hiking and outdoor art
- Nature tots had 2 programs with 3 sessions each. Each program was full with a waitlist. One program was about flowers and the other was about butterflies.
- Little explorers had 2 programs with 2-3 session each. One program was about plants and one was about wetlands.
- Junior explorers finished its season with kayaking and offered 3 sessions
- The after school program finished its season with fishing and had 2 sessions
- Summer explorers started its season with fishing and had 2 sessions
- We hosted the summer camp training for summer camp counselors

Work Days:

- Chicago Christian High School work day consisted of brush clearance in the ravine
- Com-Ed came and placed fresh woodchip in the nature play area and planted two trees
- Cummins came for brush clearance
- Southwest Cook County continuing education group and cleaned the woody clearance near the gardens

Our first archery class had a full session.

Our night hike was at capacity.

Our second fishing day of the season had 22 people in attendance.

The evening canoe kayak tour was at capacity with 20 people.

We attended the Farmer's Market at the community tent.

We held a city cleanup with 22 volunteers who helped pick up 25-30 bags of trash.

Chicago River cleanup day had volunteers who removed invasive species and trash.

There was a bird box drop off and they were also installed by the scout group.

A bat box was built by the scout group and was installed by volunteers.

The Public Works Department started distributing the woodchips on the trail around the lake.

We have been watering the trees because of the lack of rain we were receiving. May and June have been exceedingly dry despite the rain today and over the weekend.

Our intake deck for the waterfall, lookout dock and ADA ramp was completed by Public Works and looks wonderful.

The boathouse is still under discussion with talks of consultants and quotes. We will need permits and such so we want to have all the details in order before applying. Director of Public Works

Adam Jasinski will be involved in the process as well.

Alderman Begley and Alderman Clifford mentioned with the parking lot being redone, the committee of Roads and Construction has brought up the idea that the bike path may be moved to the Cal Sag River side instead of the Cal Sag Road side. After the concepts are drawn up and studies are completed, the committee will then review it and make decisions from there.

PARKS AND RECREATION REPORT

- **Power Softball additional field:** Patrick and Jeff from Power Softball had a meeting with Matt Fairbanks on May 24 about the options we have at Community Park and the concerns Matt and his staff have as a whole. Patrick from Power Softball brought up two different ideas they would like the city to consider: a bitty field on the southeast corner of Community Park and a permanent fence to replace a temporary fence around Power Field 1. The additional field is requested to be almost equivalent to the bitty field that is at Palmer Park and Meyers Park and the fence is to be only in the outfield of Power 1. Some challenges that arose were parking that will come with the addition of a third field. Currently, there is an issue with parking along 76th Avenue and with the parking spaces of the pool lots and administration lot for Power members at Community Park. It was also brought to the committee's attention by Jeff from Power Softball, that the overlap of parking for the softball season and the pool season would only be 3 Saturdays. Power Softball is requesting the city support the funds for the additional third field and the organization would fund the cost of the fence in the outfield of Power 1. The staff at the Recreation Department have gone back and forth with the pros and cons but will continue to discuss the options of the additional field as well as the permanent fence. This topic will be on the agenda for next month's meeting after the staff from the recreation department relay suggestions to the aldermen.

Alderman Bylut requested a break down for non-residents that are enrolled in Power Softball. Jeff from Power Softball stated that 49.5% of overall participation are non-residents according to the enrollment process where they can select if they are a Palos Heights resident or not. Jeff also made a point to say that non-residents help the program become a league; entering a smaller division with just Palos Heights residents, would still require neighboring cities to play at our fields.

Suggestions were made about the rate the residents should pay versus non-residents and the taxes that the residents of the city pay, to build this field. Chairman Key ended the Power field and fence conversation with acknowledging that the city has committed a substantial amount of money towards this committee already for the next 2 years and that the Recreation Department would be offering suggestions/recommendations to the committee to be addressed at the next meeting.

- **Recreation Update:** Matt Fairbanks gave the Recreation Update: Youth summer camp started on June 5th and there are currently 162 campers enrolled. The one week sports camp began June 12th and there are 14 participants in this camp. The staff runs a variety of sports with the kids during this week. On June 8th, our youth, performing arts started voice lessons with 5 participants in this program and runs for the entire month. Our dance program started the week of June 4th with 53 participants enrolled. The youth athletics program for all-star sports began today with 63 participants and will be teaching soccer and t-ball. The Sports Kids Inc. class started June 5th and concluded on the 10th and taught a number of classes with 20 participants in basketball, 15 participants in tennis, 9 in flag football, 17 in track and field, 7 in adult and tot mania, 4 in golf, 10 in archery and 20 in soccer. A new program we're offering is a men's summer league in addition to the winter league. It started on June 5th and will run for 8 weeks with 8 teams enrolled. The Farmer's Market started on May 17th and we have a total of 34 vendors going into week 5. We host various themed weeks for the kids and last week's theme was superheroes, along with a scavenger hunt. We will not have a market day on July 5th because of the holiday week but the market will run until October 11th.
- **Pool Update:** The pool kicked off to a great start! The past couple days the pool has been closed though due to cooler weather. Pool pass sales for the year so far are at

\$103,437.00. We are just about \$400 off compared to 2022 pool pass sales.

Alderman Bylut requested pool pass sale numbers from prior to Covid: 2018, 2019. It was requested to compare numbers from today and from before Covid to see how much the pandemic impacted general membership. Matt explained that in 2021, daily admissions were starting to increase but people may have not wanted to commit to a pool pass yet. Swim lessons started on June 10th and we have a total of 320 participants and expect this number to increase. In 2022, we had a total of 464 participants, but 320 is more of the expected average.

- **Orchard Park Update:** On June 6th, the recreation committee had a special meeting where City Council then approved the legal bid notice. The notice ran in the Daily Southtown on June 8th. As of today we have 3 contractors who have purchased the construction documents for the bid. The 100% completed project manual and construction documents were received. Materials and components for the splash pas are going to be ordered from Water Play which was voted on also in the special meeting. Another purchase is being looked into from another co-op to buy other amenities such as the shelter, benches and trash receptacles. The open bid is scheduled for July 18th at the city council meeting. The goal is to have another special meeting, and have city council approve the bid so we can hopefully break ground by the end of August.
- **Hiring of Superintendent of Recreation Update:** We have received 10 applications for the position and have interviewed 7 of the 10. We are extremely happy with 5 of the candidates and seem like we are on the right path for hiring. Next week we are looking into doing a second interview and from there see if a third interview is needed. Hopefully we can make an offer to someone in the middle of July and have them a part of the team by August. Many of the people who have applied do have about 5 years' experience in the field as well.

NEW BUSINESS

- a) Chairman Key motioned to approve the OSLAD Grant Agreement for Palos Pool improvements project, seconded by Alderman Begley. On a voice note, the motion passed unanimously. – **AGENDA**
- b) Chairman Key motioned to approve annual payment to TimeClock Plus, LLC in the amount of \$4,944.06 for administrative services to the Parks and Recreation Department, seconded by Alderman Begley. On a voice note, the motion passed unanimously. – **AGENDA**
- c) Chairman Key motioned to approve JSD Professional Services, Inc payment #4 and #5 in the amount of \$9,663.64 for work completed on the Orchard Park project, seconded by Alderman Begley. On a voice note, the motion passed unanimously. – **AGENDA**

OLD BUSINESS

- a) Resident Recreation Benefits – A staff meeting was held to discuss options that we could offer the residents these benefits. One of the ideas was to increase the Friday hours of the pool by 2, so the hours would then be 3 pm – 7 pm for residents. Another option was before signing up for a fitness membership, you can receive free passes to try out the equipment. If you do become a member, you will receive additional passes to bring friends. A third option was a free residents' afternoon once or twice a month from 1 pm to close to use the fitness center. Marketing was another discussion staff had, in terms of letting the residents know these benefits exist. We discussed possibly using Channel 4 or postcards to reach a broader audience.

Matt explained that the city should approach these benefits carefully, since these facilities are revenue generating. We do not want to completely separate non-residents from these facilities or devalue the memberships that we currently have because we do count on their revenue as well.

Alderman Bylut requested once a week with a 3-4 hour block for the use of the fitness center. This can be reevaluated if there is an issue with too much usage or we do lose revenue from memberships. The proposed fitness center benefit from Alderman Bylut is 1

pm – 5 pm on Saturdays.

Chairman Key mentioned there is a disconnect where staff is looking at this as a promotional/marketing tool and Alderman Bylut is looking at it as a perk for residency.

Alderman Bylut stated that these benefits are a way to say thank you to the residents for supporting and helping build the recreation center for the city.

Discussion was had that if any issue arises, we can revisit it before the deadline in December of the pilot program. Chairman Key requested that Matt create a form for the alderman to vote on at the next meeting, with the new proposed options.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Meeting adjourned at 8:19 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Morgan Pukula, Recording Secretary