

The Workshop Meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners was called to order by President Caron at 7:00 p.m. in the Administrative Offices of the Deerfield Park District located in the Jewett Park Community Center. Attendance was taken and the following were:

Present: Brown, Caron, Cohen, Patinkin, Serota (5)
Absent: None (0)

Staff: Executive Director Jeff Nehila, Director of Recreation Laura McCarty, Deputy Director of Recreation and SRC General Manager Tony Korzyniewski and Director of Parks Jay Zahn.

Director of Finance Jeff Harvey was absent.

Public Comment/Recognition of Visitors

No members of the public were present.

Merit Increases for 2023

Director Nehila initiated the discussion by advising that part of the District's ongoing budget process includes a review of merit increases for the next budget year. Per Finance Director Harvey's Board Summary, staff is recommending a maximum merit increase of 4% for all full-time staff in 2023 based on their annual performance review. This request is supported by a survey the Finance Department conducted of nearby Park District merit increases given in 2022. Of the ten Park Districts surveyed, the 4% merit increase requested by staff is within the range other agencies have adopted. Director Harvey also included a CPI and cost of living increase analysis in his report for the Board's consideration. Furthermore, none of these agencies utilize a tiered system with respect to annual merit increases. Director Nehila referred the Board to the 2023 Merit Increase Financial Analysis of full-time staff and explained that under a tiered system, an unintended consequence is wage compression in which a staff member in a lower tier will receive a higher merit increase than one in a tier above. Prior to Board discussion, Director Nehila acknowledged and thanked the Board for their generosity regarding the 5% cost of living adjustment given to full-time staff in July based on unprecedented CPI. President Caron initiated Board discussion by stating she is not opposed to staff's request. She provided a brief historical account as to why the Board implemented a tiered system and advised it was never the Board's intent to penalize senior level staff through a tiered system. Commissioner Patinkin added that many years ago, salaries were being increased at other District's prior to retirement for certain employees which caused a public outcry. Commissioner Brown agreed with Director Nehila and stated that generally speaking, it is easier to give employees a merit increase to retain them than bring on new employees. Director Nehila advised that the District has lost two senior employees to competing North Shore Districts and has been able to hire an employee themselves from another nearby agency so there is a migratory pattern and the District must be able to beat the competition in order to retain valuable employees. Commissioner Cohen stated he has no objection to the 4% merit increase but suggested the District offer paid internships to attract college graduates. Director Nehila advised that the District does currently offer paid internships and has been fortunate to provide these in recent years. There was a brief conversation regarding the future of the Parks and Recreation profession and what may entice students into this career.

Commissioner Serota suggested the District consider a higher merit increase than the average due to the retention concerns previously mentioned. President Caron stated that with the 5% cost of living increase, the combined increase would be 9% by year end which is why she remains comfortable with 4%. Ultimately, there was Board consensus on staff's recommendation for a maximum merit increase of 4% for all full-time staff in 2023 based on their annual performance review. The Commissioners thanked Director Harvey for his comprehensive Board Summary.

Jewett Park Master Plan Development

Director Nehila provided an extensive overview of the Master Plan as it currently exists and reminded the Board of the favorable Public Input received at the July Board meeting. He highlighted the major components of the plan and areas in which the plan had been changed since it's conception in 2018. Director Nehila asked if there was Board consensus to pursue a challenge course in the park as part of the Master Plan. Commissioner Cohen expressed concerns over the targeted age group for the fitness area and suggested the target age be adjusted towards teens and young adults. Commissioner Serota recommended versatile equipment that can be adjusted for various age groups, similar to what has been implemented in Schaumburg. President Caron added that the District has many playgrounds geared towards younger children and agreed with Commissioner Cohen that the target age should be increased. Commissioner Serota shifted the conversation towards natural play spaces and suggested some sort of a water play feature also be explored. Director Nehila acknowledged a piece of e-mail correspondence from a resident requesting a splash pad at Jewett. There was also a piece of resident correspondence suggesting a labyrinth be implemented as part of the Master Plan. Director Nehila then turned over the floor to Director Zahn to discuss the playground Request for Proposal (RFP) process. Director Zahn reported that he submitted an RFP based on \$125,000 worth of playground equipment. Ultimately, the Board was not satisfied with the results of the RFP as the playground would be much shorter in size than anticipated and the design subpar for a destination park. There was Board consensus that the budget be increased to \$150,000 and potentially geared towards older children who will utilize it more frequently. Director Nehila reminded the Board that through this planning process and as cost estimates come in, the budget will become more refined which will allow the Board the ability to reprioritize certain aspects of the plan. With respect to next steps, Director Nehila advised that the grant submission deadline is September 30th. After submission, the notification period is four to six months. If awarded the grant, there is a series of contracts that need to be finalized which can take between 30-45 days after which detailed architect and engineering work will begin. The expectation being that the project can be put out to bid by next fall with work commencing fall of 2023 and concluding by summer of 2024. He believes the Master Plan is a good candidate for the OSLAD (Open Space Land Acquisition Development) grant because of the variety of recreational offerings with both passive and active elements.

Other Matters

Deerspring Sprayground

The splashpad has finally opened and overall, families seem to be enjoying it immensely.

Sachs Recreation Center Updates

The lobby renovation project remains underway, and work is progressing steadily. The main entrance will remain closed one more day until the construction team is finished sanding and

patching. Staff is planning some promotional opportunities this fall to showcase the new front entrance and fitness floor with all new equipment. The SRC is also receiving heavy media attention due to the Chicago Sky.

Cost Recovery Program

Staff is working with an outside company that is going to help the District develop a cost recovery strategy that can be applied to all programs and services throughout the District. Furthermore, the Deerfield Park District will be participating in a cohort with the Mundelein Park District as Mundelein is also simultaneously participating in the program. This cohort will help lower the price of the program. Throughout the program, all of the District's services and programs will be categorized according to the type of program or service and whether it provides an individualized benefit or if it has a broader impact on the community. This program will consist of five phases, including the December Workshop. Overall, this will be a great educational opportunity for staff and provide a framework for program pricing moving forward.

Shepard Park Renovation Project

Director Nehila reported that the Shepard Park Renovation Project is going well. While there was a slight delay due to inclement weather, the construction team intends to begin paving the pickleball courts sometime next week. The base bid for the big ball field was only for infield mix and Director Nehila is considering an alternate for sodding. This may produce a cost differential of roughly \$10,000 more, however, this may be more beneficial as the baseball teams would be able to use the field as early as next spring.

Deerfield Golf Club Clubhouse

Bids opened today for the Golf Club clubhouse, and they came in at about 20% over initial cost estimates. Staff already purchased the shingles for the roof which will defer costs associated with that line item as shingles have since gone up significantly in price.

The Deerfield Road sign will be professionally cleaned Tuesday morning and there are 1,000 people booked for the next four days which will generate roughly \$50,000 in revenue.

Adjournment

There being no further business to conduct, Commissioner Cohen moved, and Commissioner Patinkin seconded a motion to adjourn the Workshop Meeting at 8:36 p.m.

By a unanimous voice vote; **Motion Carried.**

Respectfully Submitted,



Jeff Nehila
Executive Director