

MINUTES OF THE WORKSHOP MEETING BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS March 7, 2024

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners was called to order by President Cohen at 7:00 p.m. in the Patty Turner Center. Executive Director Harvey called the roll, and the following were:

PRESENT: Brown, Caron, Cohen, Patinkin and Serota (5)

ABSENT: None (0)

Staff: Executive Director Jeff Harvey, Deputy Executive Director and Director of Recreation Laura McCarty, Superintendent of Recreation Tony Korzyniewski, Director of Parks Jay Zahn, and Superintendent of Marketing Deanna Musurlian.

II. MATTERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no Matters of the Public.

III. DEERSPRING VISIONING

Mr. Harvey explained this is an initial discussion to see if there can be some direction on Deerspring pool. Commissioner Brown noted both pools are running at a loss and questioned whether having two pools instead of one may reduce the loss. With two pools, there are two sets of operating expenses. Commissioner Brown questioned whether operating only one pool would further complicate the scheduling with Coho, swim lessons and birthday parties. Mr. Harvey believes operating with only one pool would create further scheduling challenges. He explained each pool is operating at an approximate deficit of \$300,000. He believes if one pool were closed, the other would fill up but the expenses would stay about the same but the deficit may go down to approximately \$200,000.

Commissioner Caron explained there was a referendum that passed, to keep both pools. Both pools have different uses. She believes people expect playgrounds and pools from their park districts. We do not expect to make money on the playgrounds, which we have spent a lot of money to upgrade, and we should not expect to make money on pools. Commissioner Patinkin explained the referendum wisely omitted which pool would close, so everyone had a vested interest.

Considering the population of Deerfield, one pool should suffice; however, the two pools are on opposite sides of town, which would create a number of problems if one pool was closed. If one pool were built more in the center of the Village or if there were only one pool with all the features, maybe one pool would have been enough (if the scheduling issues were not prevalent).

Commissioner Brown asked what was driving this discussion. Mr. Harvey explained that the pools and bath houses are aging. If things remain as is, the Commissioners should start planning a renovation. Commissioner Caron noted the discussion years ago about making Deerspring a major waterpark, so there is a big draw from other communities, was not supported by the community.

Commissioner Patinkin believes it will be interesting to see if the weekend swim at Deerspring and the heated splashpad favorably influences the attendance. In looking at the schedules, Commissioner Caron noted Deerspring closes at 4:00 every day. Coho has 4.5 hours in the afternoon and the public has 3.5 hours of swim time. Commissioner Serota noted Coho practiced at DHS until the last week. Commissioner Caron explained if the Park District wants people to patronize Deerspring, they have to give them the opportunity. The hours at Deerspring are much less than the hours at Mitchell.

President Cohen would like to see what happens this year with the weekend hours at Deerspring. He would also prefer longer hours at Deerspring noting closing at 4:00 does not work for residents that work. President Cohen would not be in favor of spending \$8 million to renovate Deerspring but believes there are options in between

that could work. Commissioner Caron suggested marketing Deerspring to adults in the afternoon. The commissioners discussed the possibility of offering a senior discount or a discount coupon targeting the older adult demographic.

The commissioners discussed whether the Park District should consider alternative uses in the future. Commissioner Serota suggested utilizing Mitchell for free swim and play, and Deerspring for parties, lessons and camps. Deerspring will then require less staffing because it is not open swim in the same manner. Commissioner Caron explained Mitchell has a better design because of the shallow water. Mr. Korzyniewski does not believe shifting lessons and Coho to Deerspring would make a difference financially. It is not ideal to teach swim lessons at Deerspring. Commissioner Serota suggested people are not purchasing passes because the pools are not open enough. Mr. Korzyniewski is open to making adjustments but believes things have flexed in the past five years. The Park District has received complaints that they do not want their 7–9-year-old practicing at 7 pm. Adjustments were made, and now Deerspring closes at 4 pm.

President Cohen believes the pools are going to lose money no matter what we do. He would not want to see Deerspring converted into a special use pool. People go to Mitchell because it is new, however, they cannot go because it is closed for lessons and pool parties. There is a budget in the capital plan, with more money dedicated to Deerspring than Mitchell. Mr. Zahn explained the pool is leaking and the bath house is in worse condition. ADA accessibility is not good, so the bath house is the first priority. The filtration system will be about \$100,000. The concrete is getting divots under the liner, so the liner will need to be replaced in the next couple years. Mr. Zahn believes it will be at least \$1 million to keep the pool going and another \$1 million for the bath house.

The commissioners discussed other possibilities including a spray ground or a nature center with educational space. Mr. Harvey explained the pool and bath house are aged facilities that are reaching end of life. At some point, we have to make some decisions which may be a lot of money. Mr. Zahn believes it will be a huge issue to rebuild the pool. He would not recommend keeping the pool and phasing in the changes. President Cohen suggested letting residents decide with a referendum.

Commissioner Caron discussed the history of the pools. Initially Deerspring had a kiddie pool while Mitchell did not. Then the splash pad was added to Deerspring to attract both toddlers and others. She believes Deerspring was built for Coho in the 1970s. She believes the Park District needs to figure out the commitment to Coho and about adding other uses. Commissioner Brown noted if Coho uses the DHS pool more than we think, it would free up the pool for more public swim. Mr. Korzyniewski reported DHS will be closing the pool for about two months in the Summer of 2025 because they have had a number of issues.

Mr. Korzyniewski suggested possibly having Deerspring open late a couple days a week. Commissioner Caron suggested having both pools open alternate evenings so one pool was open at night and on the weekends for open swim. Before giving up on the pool, she would like to make it more attractive and come up with other programs and events to gain awareness.

President Cohen noted expanding the hours would require more staff. He suggested doing a community survey about whether residents want to pay to renovate the pool. Commissioner Caron noted the size of Deerspring is similar to Floral Park. Floral Park has a pool, basketball courts, tennis courts and ball fields while Deerspring has a pool and a playground. The difference is this is a rectangle piece of property with houses along the long sides. She questioned if there are buckthorn and other invasive species and suggested getting rid of that first. President Cohen believes it will create a huge uproar.

The commissioners believe the bath house will need to be completely torn down and renovated. Mr. Zahn believes the pools are in bad shape but can be patched. The bath house could be rebuilt, as it is not used frequently. If Deerspring was rebuilt, people will use it. Commissioner Caron explained if the Park District conducts a survey, it is imperative to ask how much tax money would be acceptable. The commissioners would not want to redo the pool in a piecemeal fashion. Ms. McCarty noted the bath house renovation will need to be

done sooner rather than later as the bath house does not have many years left. They believe a community survey would assist in determining whether residents are in favor of a new pool and if they are willing to pay. Commissioner Patinkin explained the Park District needs to consider a referendum but would not want it to be at the same time as the referendums for the schools.

Commissioner Caron would like to see some efforts to determine what community events people would like that would draw people to the pool. The commissioners discussed possible activities including a dive-in theater and music at the pool. Commissioner Caron suggested marketing Deerspring to middle school students. Mr. Harvey will put out an RFP for a community survey. Commissioner Serota suggested incorporating some usage questions in the survey. President Cohen suggested coming up with some programming talking points for a future Board meeting. He would like a condition assessment of the pools for the referendum.

IV. OTHER MATTERS

Ms. McCarty asked if anyone is interested in attending the Shining Stars awards banquet on April 19th at Pinstripes. She noted they are planning to do a walkthrough of the renovations at Jewett on March 21st at 5:30. Ms. Musurlian provided programming updates. President Cohen asked about publicity in community calendars. Ms. Musurlian is working on it. Mr. Korzyniewski noted there will be a retirement luncheon for Nancy Reese for her 27 years with the District.

Mr. Patinkin reported this morning, someone vandalized Shepherd. He would like to offer an award if there are pictures from the camera. Commissioner Serota noted there has been some vandalism at the tennis courts as well. Commissioner Caron noted there are some bad things written about the Park District on Indeed.

Commissioner Patinkin asked about Rectrack. Mr. Harvey explained the issue with respect to registration is the integration between Rectrack and the website. The goal this year is to redesign the website along with making the integration more seamless. The person brought in will be a superuser that can run reports and build templates. Ms. Musurlian explained Rectrack is very data-rich and can be customized so we can pull data. The other component is ensuring we are categorizing properly. It will be important to have an understanding of how to pull information rather than how it is displayed. We need it to be user-friendly to drive users to search and shop. Mr. Harvey noted this will be one of the larger and most visible projects this year.

V. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business or discussion, Commissioner Caron moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Brown seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm.

The next Regular Board meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners is scheduled for Thursday, March 21, 2024 at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Jeff Harvey, Secretary

Transcribed by: Jeri Cotton