

WESTERN SPRINGS PARK BOARD MEETING
July 12, 2011 (BOARD APPROVED 8/9/11)

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Bob Daman
Damian Marshall
Dominic Arquilla
Walter Knake
Mike Stibich
Damian Marshall

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

Jennifer Dunleavy
Jennifer Cromheecke

OTHERS PRESENT

Robert Ekroth, Park District Attorney
Tracy Alden, Recreation Director
Deb Lyons, Village Trustee
Craig Himmelmann, Director of Parks
Maribeth Newell, Park Board Secretary

President Bob Daman called the July 12, 2011 Western Springs Park Board Meeting to order at 7:07 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Walter Knake moved with a second by Commissioner Arquilla to approve the May 10, 2011 minutes, with corrections as noted by President Daman, which motion was carried by all on voice vote.

Commissioner Arquilla moved with a second by Commissioner Stibich to approve the June 14, 2011 minutes as written, which motion was carried by all on voice vote.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF VISITORS AND PERSONS TO BE HEARD FROM THE

FLOOR : President Daman introduced Mr. Scheer, a Western Springs resident who came before the board to express his concerns regarding the Park District's use of employees to monitor the fields while they are fenced off for re-seeding. Mr. Scheer feels that it is a waste of money. President Daman explained that we routinely hire 2 part-time employees each and every summer. These employees are not experienced enough to run equipment and are used to perform daily maintenance tasks that our full-time employees do not have time to complete during the summer. The Park District only retains 4 full-time employees. The summer months mandate additional manpower to maintain the parks. That is why we hire part-time employees. With regard to the supervision of the fields in Spring Rock Park, we had received complaints that the temporary fencing had been pulled down and people played on the field. Since we had already invested \$2,500.00 in the repair and re-seeding of the fields, the decision was made to protect our investment by having the part-time employees monitor the fields. This was not their only function. They performed routine manual labor tasks throughout the park while monitoring the fields. Resident, Allison Zach, inquired how long the fields will be in a state of repair. She also expressed concern that the fields have never been down for this long in the past. President Daman explained that due to the heavy use of the field this year, and unusual weather with extreme rain storms, it has taken longer than anticipated. Director Himmelmann explained that

the storms damaged seeding and blew some of the germinated grass. We had landscapers come back and touch-up the fields. Mrs. Zach indicated that she was upset that her children were not able to play in the fields. She felt that the parks were essentially closed with no notification to the neighbors on Central Avenue. She lives directly across from the fields and that is where her children like to play. Director Himmelmann noted that the park was not closed, just the athletic fields were closed. Spring Rock Park is a 42 acre park, of which, 3 or 4 acres were not accessible. Mrs. Zach asked about the schedule for re-opening the fields. Director Himmelmann said that before the storms, we were ahead of schedule. Right now we are dealing with the storm damage clean-up and branch removal in the park for the safety of the park patrons. He also said that he will assess when communication is needed with the neighbors. Typically, communication is sent out with regard to major redevelopment in the park. Seeding the athletic field, and many other maintenance issues, are considered routine. Past policy has not included notifying neighbors of routine maintenance schedules. Mrs. Zach feels that the neighbors who are not part of organized sports need to be considered and notified. She would like to be better informed and stated that the neighbors around the park could be the best advocates of the park. President Daman thanked both Mr. Scheer and Mrs. Zach for taking the time to voice their concerns. The Park District will make every effort to improve neighborhood communication. Mrs. Zach asked if we had plans in place to avoid re-seeding next year. President Daman answered that we will address the issue in depth later in this meeting. We are looking at scheduling and tighter agreements with the user groups. However, due to the extensive use of the fields, we will most likely require some re-seeding and repair every season. The Board did attempt to alleviate the strain on the fields and had hoped to install an artificial turf field. However, the residents voted that referendum down in this past election. Our mission must be to maintain the turf fields to the best of our ability.

Mr. Sherer also addressed the Board regarding drainage issues in Spring Rock Park. The area of particular concern is the area between the A field and the bike bath and between the Matt Orth field and the softball field. President Daman explained that drainage is the nature of the beast in Spring Rock Park. Anytime that you deal with an area that used to be a garbage dump and portions were peat moss, you will have drainage issues. The nature of the soil base is that it will always sink.

Mr. Jankowski, Resident, introduced himself to the Board. He represents 1 of 3 homes along Ridge Acres park. He stated that there is a drop of 36" from Ridge Acre Park's highest point to Gilbert Avenue. He presented pictures to the Board. He comes before the Board to ask for a berm or drainage to divert the water from their yards and basements. We have had 5 "once in a century storms" in recent years. Mr. Jankowski has spent thousands of dollars to slope a sidewalk, install oversized downspouts and gutters, and other miscellaneous attempts to fix the problem. He also noted that he understands budgetary constraints because of the field in which he works. Resident, Mike Gorman was also present to represent his home which is experiencing the same difficulty. He had a civil engineer out and he felt that the grading in the park is an issue. Mr. Gorman tried sandbags last year. He inquired if a swale could be created at a cost of \$10,000 to \$15,000.00. Both residents indicated that they have lived in their homes for a number of years and they have not had this problem until the last few years. President Daman empathized with the residents and also informed them that since living in his home for the past 33 years, he has had up to a foot of water in his basement in recent years. The Village Engineer

told him that it is due to all of the new construction in the area and the larger amounts of water being pumped into the streets. Director Himmelmann also stated that nothing has been done to the park since 1985. We have not changed grading or anything of that nature in 26 years. Mr. Gorman only wants the park district to manage the water on the park property, not to fix the water issues on his property.

Director Himmelmann will contact the Village Engineer to set up a time to meet with him, Mr. Gorman, Mr. Jankowski, and President Daman.

TRUSTEE REPORT

Trustee Lyons reported that the Safe-T-Lu sidewalk let by IDOT. The Village wants to complete the Forest Hills sidewalks before the start of school. The Downtown Planning Commission gave thoughtful consideration to all the input they received from the residents. They held 9 public meetings and 3 planning commission meetings. The plan is available on the Village's website. This is not anything that is going to happen in a specific time frame. It is just a general vision for the direction the Village would like to move. Townhomes are out of the plan. Mecinat wants to have an outdoor café with a liquor license until 10 p.m. on weekdays and 11:00 p.m. weekends. There has been no news on the underpass.

RECREATION DEPARTMENT REPORT

Director Alden reported that the Park Board received the Recreation Department meeting minutes for June, 2011. The next Recreation Commission meeting will not be held until 8/29/2011. They are midway through the summer programs. Camps, tennis and softball are all in full swing. There was a conflict between Little League and Softball, but the issue has been resolved and they are using fields in Countryside. Safety Village is complete. Due to staffing issues, they will be storing everything the week of July 25, 2011. Safety Village continues to search for a permanent home. The Fall book will go to the printer tomorrow. Director Alden received input from Commissioner Dunleavy and her notices on behalf of the Park District will be in the book. The concert in Springdale Park was cancelled, due to inclement weather. The concert in Ridgewood Park is scheduled for next week. The Grand Avenue Big Band Concert will be in September. Director Alden also wanted to commend Director Himmelmann for the job he does maintaining the fields and parks in the district.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer Stibich submitted the financial report as written. He noted that \$57,715.00 in expenses included \$6,200.00 for mulch, replacement of a broken drinking fountain, PDRMA insurance, and the final payment on the Bobcat. A copy of The Annual Report from Sikich has been sent to Cook County.

MOTION

Commissioner Knake motioned with a second by Commissioner Arquilla to approve the June 30, 2011 Financial Report as presented, with an ending balance of \$1,206,000.00, which motion was carried by all on voice vote.

OLD BUSINESS..

IPM PLAN

Commissioner Marshall reported that some final changes have been made to the plan. He issued

a revised copy to the Commissioners and Director Himmelmann. We will discuss and finalize the plan at the August, 2011 meeting.

SET DUE DATES FOR PAYMENTS TO PARK DISTRICT

President Daman explained that he does not feel comfortable with the data regarding the school district's field usage. We need more information before we can assess a portion of the field repairs. Director Himmelmann explained that we have a record of the time requested by the school district, but we have no way of knowing how many games/practices are actually played during those blocks of time. The data is inconclusive. A general discussion ensued regarding future ways of more closely monitoring user groups and actual time on the fields. Director Himmelmann explained that, in the past, we let the user groups work it out. The \$9,310.00 for 2011 field maintenance and repair should be divided as follows; East Field \$2,148.00 (AYSO, McClurg, Western Springs Recreation Department and Hodgkins); Football Field \$2,605.00 (LT Soccer and AYSO) West Soccer Field \$2,565.00 (LT Soccer and AYSO) and the North Soccer Field \$975.00 (LT Soccer Club). President Daman stated that he and Director Himmelmann will move forward with the assessments for the user groups.

NEW BUSINESS

PEER JURY

President Daman met with Pat Higgins. He also contacted Chief of Police Pamela Church and Sargeant Piest, who is now out of town for one week. President Daman would like to be actively involved in the peer jury process. If the peer jury decides that a minor who damages the parks does not have to pay restitution, he would like to pursue a community service arrangement. The minor can work in the parks for an amount of time equal to the cost of the damages. All Commissioners agreed and President Daman will contact Sargeant Piest when he gets back in town.

FIELD USE/RENTAL SPACE AGREEMENT

President Daman distributed a preliminary policy with 10 major points every user group will be expected to adhere to. Most importantly, our staff must make the final decision on whether or not the fields are playable on game or practice days. Director Himmelmann noted that neighboring park districts have a hot line and weather decisions are made by 12:00 noon. President Daman agreed that Park District staff should make the final decision. However, there needs to be more flexibility and the decision should be made at game time. He asked Director Himmelmann to include field use as an item on the August, 2011 agenda under Old Business. Rental Space Agreements should be included on the August, 2011 agenda under New Business.

MAINTENANCE OF USER GROUP GIFTS

President Daman explained that the Park District has accepted gifts in kind from its user groups in the past. For example, we received a gift of irrigation equipment, but now have the expense of maintaining and repairing the equipment. He just wanted all of the Commissioners to be cognizant of the future costs of maintenance, repair, and daily use of these gifts. The lighting on the fields was also a gift, but we incur the additional cost of electricity and maintenance. It is something that should be considered before accepting any future user group donations. Director Himmelmann also explained that he is usually approached by the user group at the beginning of the process. He has always asked them to attend a Board meeting and formally present their

request to the Commissioners. It is always the Board's decision whether or not to accept the gift. However, there are times that things get past the Board. For example, batting cages were approved and then lights were installed without our knowledge.

FIELD REPAIRS IN SPRING ROCK PARK

This issue was addressed during comments from the floor.

NEW FULL-TIME EMPLOYEE

President Daman asked Director Himmelmann to postpone this item to the August, 2011 meeting agenda under New Business.

AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY PERMIT REQUEST

Director Himmelmann informed the Board that the American Cancer Society has requested a permit to host their 2012 Relay for Life in Spring Rock Park. The event would run from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. the next morning. Mrs. Zach noted that this is a good example of when she would like to have correspondence from the Park District regarding the event. President Daman asked Director Himmelmann to include this request in the August, 2011 Agenda under Old Business.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director Himmelmann reported that bids for the Laidlaw tennis court fencing were opened on 7/6/2011. They ranged from \$19,192.00 to \$24,230.00 for a double tennis court fence installation. The lowest bidder at \$19,192.00 has cleared background and reference checks. Per Dave Evans' request, replacement would not begin until 8/22/11. Commissioner Stibich asked if this was budgeted for replacement this year. Director Himmelmann explained that the previous Board took care of resurfacing and planned to move into fencing this year. We try to keep repairs/replacements on a rotation. We have reached fencing in that rotation.

MOTION:

Commissioner Marshall motioned with a second by President Daman to replace the double tennis court fencing at Laidlaw Park, at a cost not to exceed \$19,192.00, which motion was carried by all on voice vote.

Director Himmelmann further reported that we received a check in the amount of \$250.00 from District 101 for the edible garden space. We also received a check in the amount of \$28.40 for vending machine pop sales in Spring Rock Park and a check in the amount of \$4,999.92 from Cricket.

In conclusion, Director Himmelmann praised his staff for the outstanding job they have done on the storm damage clean up in the parks.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORTS

DAMAN: nothing further to report.

CROMHEECKE: nothing further to report.

MARSHALL: Commissioner Marshall reported that he and Commissioner Arquilla met with

Ray Walt, Bill Riley and Pam Foryzak regarding traffic and parking issues in Spring Rock Park. Possible solutions discussed included staggering start times of games and practices and encouraging car pools to reduce the number of cars around the park at one time. They also discussed the possibility of working with a traffic consultant. There really isn't an immediate solution due to the design of the parking lots. The thunderstorm issue was also discussed and they felt that each team needs to have a storm/evacuation plan in place and on file with the Park District who would then write a master plan. We need a permanent structure located closer to the street for the children to find shelter while they wait for their ride to arrive during an evacuation of the park. Commissioner Arquilla noted that this is a capital improvement issue and we should consider finding the money in the next budget. President Daman agreed and stated that we are trying to regroup on the \$511,000.00 that Lyons Township granted for the installation of the artificial turf field. We are hoping that instead of withdrawing the money, they will consider issuing the grant for other improvements to the park. Attorney Ekroth will keep us informed. He is working on getting more information from the Township.

KNAKE: nothing further to report.

DUNLEAVY: absent

ARQUILLA: nothing further to report.

STIBICH: nothing further to report.

HIMMELMANN: nothing further to report.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION TO ADJOURN: Commissioner Arquilla moved with a second by Commissioner Knake to adjourn the July 12, 2011 Western Springs Park Board meeting at 9:33 p.m., which motion was carried by all on voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Maribeth Newell
Park Board Secretary