



WILMETTE PARK DISTRICT Lakefront Committee Meeting Minutes

*Monday, August 23, 2021
Village Hall Training Room*

Present

Commissioners/Committee: Chair Julia Goebel and Cecilia Clarke

Staff: Superintendent of Recreation Emily Guynn and Superintendent of Parks and Planning Kristi Solberg

Additional Staff: Executive Director Steve Wilson and Lake Front General Manager Ben Wozney

Visitors: Laurie Leibowitz, Sheila Bauer, Piper Rothschild, Mary Shea and Walter Keats

Absent

None

I. Meeting Called to Order

Meeting called to order at 4:05 p.m.

Commissioner Goebel began the meeting by acknowledging the Cook County mask mandate and thanked everyone in attendance for wearing face masks.

II. Approval of Minutes

A. July 19, 2021

Commissioner Clarke moved and Commissioner Goebel seconded a motion to approve the minutes for the July 19, 2021 Lakefront Committee meeting.

Commissioner Goebel asked if there were any comments regarding the June 19, 2021 minutes. Commissioner Clarke stated she noticed a few minor grammatical errors but that she had addressed them with Executive Administrative Assistant, Catherine Serbin, prior to the meeting.

By a unanimous voice vote; **motion carried.**

III. Public Comment/Recognition of Visitors

Director Wilson facilitated public comment. The Attendance Sheet will become part of the permanent record.

Walter Keats – He advised that he is speaking on behalf of Alan Golden, who was unable to attend the meeting. Mr. Golden had sent some e-mails to the Committee regarding suggestions for the Sailing Beach and he did not see his

correspondence included in the meeting packet. He also provided an analysis of the survey results and did not see those included either. He would like his correspondence acknowledged by the Committee.

Commissioner Goebel responded that she is familiar with both of those pieces of correspondence. The first item is regarding concerns Mr. Golden had with respect to parking around the Sailing Beach. The second item regarding the Gillson Comprehensive Plan will be reviewed at the next Committee-of-the-Whole meeting as the Comprehensive Plan is dealt with at the Board level. Mr. Keats suggested that e-mails be auto responded to that residents feel acknowledged.

Piper Rothschild – She stated she is still concerned with any Lakeview Center renovations and believes it will be negative to the park. She sees the renovation as an unjustified expansion and that the survey conducted did not support it. She noted a weak response rate to the survey. Additional concerns included parking, return on investment, potential parties at Lakeview Center and other Park District priorities she feels are more important.

Sheila Bauer – She asked how Michigan Shores was able to valet park at Gillson Beach and why that would have been approved especially considering the lack of parking. She stated that felt hypocritical on behalf of the Park District.

Superintendent Guynn advised that the Park District did allow Michigan Shores to rent twenty parking spots because the lot was not full at any period of the day in question. Michigan Shores had a need and the Park District had the availability. In an attempt to be good neighbors and also in light of the fact that Michigan Shores also serves residents of the community, the Park District did allow them to rent the spaces. Full time staff at the beach approved the request and managed the parking lot to ensure there was plenty of room for beach goers. Commissioner Goebel stated that the Committee trusts that staff is making good decisions done with respect to daily operations – this being one of them – but that she appreciates this comment before the Committee.

Mary Shea – She stated that she believes staff and several Commissioners already made the decision to ramp up activities at Lakeview Center and Wallace Bowl with the intention to create and enhance revenue stream. She accused the Board of privatizing use of a public park. She believes the survey was bias, asked where the demand was for this renovation and is strongly opposed to this expenditure.

IV. Communications and Correspondence

Commissioner Goebel acknowledged several pieces of correspondence that did not make it into the meeting packet. One of these was with respect to beach operations and safety concerns. A separate correspondence was regarding the use of the free beach versus the swimming beach. Lastly, some teenagers at the

beach felt there was an older gentleman watching them and taking photos of them. The teenagers also reported this incident to the police.

V. Unfinished Business

A. Shoreline Protection – Deferred

Commissioner Goebel asked if there were any updates to share with the Committee. Director Wilson advised there was not, which is why the agenda item had been marked as deferred. There have been no updates since the last report.

B. Lakeview Center Design Concept

Superintendent Guynn advised that since the last Committee meeting, staff has hosted two open houses. One of them was held during the daytime and the second was held after work to hit the most amount of available residents. The total number of attendants for the two open houses was two attendants.

She then directed the Committee to her memo included in the packet providing a summary of the Lakeview Center survey responses. In total, the survey was sent to 22,897 e-mails. Those e-mails are comprised of all of the e-mails that the Park District has in their system. She noted there were instances of multiple e-mail addresses within the system for one household and also non-residents. Of those e-mails, 6,448 e-mails were opened and 856 were responded. This is about a 13% response rate. Commissioner Clarke asked what the timeframe was for the responses. Superintendent Guynn advised she did not have that exact information but roughly the first four days after sending the initial e-mail. She stated she can pull together the exact amount of responses per day from the Marketing Department for the Committee. Commissioner Goebel commented that a 25% open rate is high for organizations that have a relationship with the consumer. In the private business sphere, one might expect a 10-15% open rate. She believes this high open rate is a result of people wanting to read the survey. From a market research perspective, a 13% completion rate is also quite good. Superintendent Guynn proceeded to read the summary results of the survey. When was the last time you were in the Lakeview Center? The majority of respondents stated within the last five years. Why do you most often visit the Lakeview Center? The majority of responses indicated for restroom facilities, which staff recognizes as a valuable aspect of the Lakeview Center for the balance of the park. Rentals were the second highest response at 16%. She explained that of the 79 "Other" responses, those were for recreation programs and voting. Would you ever consider hosting an event at the Lakeview Center? 171 respondents said "No" and 481 respondents said "Yes". Of the 31 "Other" respondents, 15 respondents indicated "Maybe". 566 respondents answered the open ended question asking why they selected the previous answer. Common themes in the open-ended question include: positive remarks regarding the location, have either hosted or attended a rental, other venue options which were both positive and negative, parking concerns, unaware it was available for private rentals, unattractive facility and not hosting or attending rentals due to Covid

concerns. If you responded YES to Question 3, what kind of event would you host? The majority of respondents indicated a family gathering at 147 and the second highest answer was an adult party at 130 respondents. Of the 86 “Other” responses, the majority of respondents indicated “All of the above”. In its current state, do you find the Lakeview Center a useful feature in Gillson Park? The highest response was “occasionally useful, I use it here and there”. The next highest was “not very useful, I only use it once a year”. Common themes in the second open-ended question include: useful for camp, recreation programs and events, it would be more useful if it were nicer, useful for sailing and swim beach customer service/purchases, useful for restrooms, not useful because it is too small and not familiar with the building or offerings. Overall, there were 449 total responses to this question. The last open ended question did not have a lot of common themes as responses tended to be more personal and anecdotal. There were two strong groups in the responses – one group writing that nothing about the building detracts from the Park and the other group indicating interior renovations would be nice.

Commissioner Goebel noted it was interesting to see the range of open comments and thanked Superintendent Guynn for elaborating upon the results. She highlighted that weddings were not as popular as family gatherings and thought it was helpful to see the events one might consider. Commissioner Clarke observed that the building is useful to residents but that the lower level of Lakeview Center is currently underutilized. Even if the building were not rented, an improvement of the interior space would be beneficial for campers and the community at large. Commissioner Goebel agreed and believed these concepts were thoughtful and considerate. Commissioner Clarke added that it is wrong to think of this as an expansion because it is truly a renovation to a building that has not been updated in over 30 years. The interior footprint is not being expanded. Commissioner Goebel emphasized that any events this building would accommodate would be smaller in nature.

Staff recommended that the Committee consider the Lakeview Center Design Concept and bring it forward to the Committee-of-the-Whole meeting for capital consideration.

VI. New Business

A. Committee Responsibilities

Commissioner Goebel referred to past Committee meeting notes in which the Committee discussed how it can advise and support the ongoing safety and operations of the lakefront as a whole. The Committee can plan ahead for future capital or maintenance projects. Part of that may include a bridge to the work that would be considered at the Committee-of-the-Whole with respect to the Gillson Comprehensive Plan. Commissioner Goebel believes these were the key priorities within the Committee. Director Wilson advised there had been a conversation at the Board level about each Committee defining their responsibilities for the website to provide better clarity to the public. It was agreed

that any matters concerning the lakefront be considered the Lakefront Committee responsibilities. Commissioner Goebel stated she had outlined this in a memo and it was agreed staff would work off of that memo for the website update.

VII. Mangers' Report

Lakefront Manager Ben Wozney reported on the following:

- In response to the waitlist at the Sailing Beach, staff has updated the website so patrons can view their waitlist spot in lieu of calling in. The waitlist is updated daily and is time stamped.
- Weekend boat rentals have ceased for the season based on staff shortages.
- Staff met with both Special Olympics and Our Place for their upcoming events. The Special Olympics event will be in March and the Our Place event will be in October.
- As of today, there were 133 trailer permits sold and 727 dog beach passes sold.
- Projected Sailing Beach visits are 8000 and projected Swimming Beach visits are around 40,000. Daily pass counts for residents are 2,462 and 15,177 for nonresident's year to date.

Commissioner Goebel commented the website update should be really well received.

VIII. Next Meeting

The next Lakefront Committee meeting is to be determined due to the Labor Day holiday next month.

IX. Adjournment

There being no further business to conduct, Commissioner Clarke moved and Commissioner Goebel seconded a motion to adjourn the Lakefront Committee meeting at 4:40 p.m.

By a unanimous voice vote; **motion carried.**

Minutes Approved on October 4, 2021.

Respectfully Submitted,

Catherine Serbin

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Executive Administrative Assistant