



**WILMETTE PARK DISTRICT**  
**Financial Planning & Policy Committee**  
**Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, July 28, 2021  
Village Hall Training Room

**Present**

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Commissioners/Committee: Chair Cecilia Clarke, Mike Murdock and Kara Kosloskus

Staff: Superintendent of Finance Sheila Foy, Executive Director Steve Wilson and Accounting Manager Lisa Phillips

Visitors: Walter Keats and Mary Lawler

**Absent**

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None

**I. Meeting Called to Order**

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Meeting was called to order at 6:31 p.m.

**II. Approval of Minutes**

**A. June 28, 2021**

Commissioner Kosloskus moved and Commissioner Murdock seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the June 28, 2021 Financial Planning & Policy Committee meeting.

By a voice vote, **motion carried.**

**III. Communication and Correspondence**

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None

**IV. Public Comment/Recognition of Visitors**

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Attendance Sheet will become part of the permanent record.

Walter Keats – Mr. Keats suggested that the Park District utilize LinkedIn to help find a Solar Energy Consultant. He stated he is in favor of solar energy and suggested that the Park District look at all other forms of alternative energy as well as implement any energy conversion in phases.

**V. Unfinished Business**

**A. Financing for Solar Panels on Community Recreation Center**

Director Wilson reported that staff is still in the information gathering phase. Last month, there were two options presented to Committee. Staff has included an additional option this month. This additional option is one in which the Park

District would pay for installation, which changes the calculations regarding return on investment. While there are only three options presented, there are multiple other ways to achieve this goal. The Committee first needs to decide whether they want to do a solar panel installation at the Community Recreation Center, to what extent and how large of an installation and upon knowing that information, seek proposals from multiple companies and decide which would be the best provider through discussion. Ultimately, the main difference between a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) and the Park District putting the money upfront is a question of cash flow. He asked the Committee if the funds the Park District has in hand better used in other capacities around the District.

Superintendent Foy stated that she has been in discussion with different energy providers. She advised the Committee that this is something worth considering as the price of natural gas is increasing. She advised the Park District has an overall energy contract through 2023, however, she is not sure if locking in now would be the best thing to do. She questioned the numbers presented as electric bill savings and expressed concern over when the Park District would reap the full benefits of the solar panels in comparison to their life span and the warranty provided. In the estimates provided, the Park District may benefit doubly if paid for upfront. She asked the Committee to consider the next group of people who would inherit this and added she doubts the benefits to the Park District if paid over the life of the solar panels.

Commissioner Kosloskus thanked Superintendent Foy for the update and noted there are intangible benefits to going solar and being greener. She stated she would support solar panels for that reason alone. However, there are things to be considered in terms of financing. Commissioner Clarke added she is concerned about paying for the solar panels upfront because there are a lot of big ticket items in the capital budget. This money could be used to protect the lakefront and noted there will be tradeoffs.

It was agreed that staff would perform a detailed analysis of the estimates provided to determine whether a PPA could be a benefit to the Park District. Commissioner Kosloskus asked if staff has explored other vendors. Director Wilson clarified that this estimate from Verde Solutions was helpful for staff to understand solar energy but that the Park District has not chosen the company as a vendor. Furthermore, if the Park District decided to pay the cost upfront, they would be required to facilitate a public bid process. He advised that Superintendent Solberg has made calls to other vendors and that some of them have asked for payment to provide the level of information that Verde Solutions has provided. He suggested a formal RFP to obtain proposals. Superintendent Foy added she believes that would be appropriate for this process as this would be a huge project.

There was a brief discussion as to why the Community Recreation Center would be the best option for solar panels due to its orientation and sun

exposure. Commissioner Kosloskus asked if there were any scenario where there would be modifications to the structure of the CRC which would cause a problem with the panels with respect to a payback schedule. Director Wilson advised that if there were any future modifications to the CRC, the solar panels would have to be managed within that project. He also highlighted the fact that the panels are movable.

Commissioner Murdock stated that he strongly supports solar energy. He believes the Park District has a responsibility to look at alternative energy sources. He expressed concern over a lack of expertise with respect to solar energy and suggested staff obtain a consultant to clarify available options and help secure the most advantageous. He noted there is tremendous risk involved with a long term commitment and Verde Solutions lack of a downward protection.

There was a subsequent discussion regarding tax benefits at the federal and state level, a buyout provision and funding.

Director Wilson elaborated upon funding in that Superintendent Foy will be meeting with the Park District's Bond Advisor, Eric Anderson, to create a robust presentation for the full Board with respect to the District's bonding authority, bond capacity and current rates. As Commissioner Murdock noted, this is an important aspect to long range financial planning. Director Wilson advised there will be more information available in the upcoming capital Committee-of-the-Whole meetings.

Commissioner Kosloskus asked for clarification regarding the Park District's current energy contract which expires in 2023. Superintendent Foy advised that the current energy contract is for the purchase of the commodity only. The Park District utilizes Nicor and ComEd for the delivery. The delivery cost is between 55-60% of the monthly bill. Commissioner Kosloskus asked if the Park District is currently buying the traditional gas and electric sources to which Superintendent Foy answered affirmatively. Commissioner Kosloskus suggested the Park District purchase renewable sources and whether the Park District has the panels or not, there are still options to buy nontraditional sources on the market. She stated she would be curious to have the consultant research this as well as other options beyond solar panels.

It was agreed that a consultant be brought in by staff to provide information in regards to renewable energy. Director Wilson further committed to reaching out to other Park Districts that have implemented solar installations to gather additional information on their experience.

**B. Status of Implementation of DEI principles in Park District Programs**

Director Wilson reported that the Park District passed an inclusion statement which is featured on the Park District website. Subsequent to that, the Park

District adopted the Social Equity Policy. Director Wilson advised that he has been working internally with two staff members chosen to be co-chairs and lead the process. Over the last month, these co-chairs had been seeking volunteers for a six person Committee which includes the two co-chairs. There was more interest than there were spots available which is a positive sign. Their first meeting as a Committee is next week and their initial topics will be analyzing the demographics of Wilmette, an internal audit of the current equity position of the Park District itself and seeking to identify local Park organizations to link with to better understand social equity issues. The Social Equity Policy had several initiatives in it and the goal is to address all of them.

## **VI. New Business**

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### **A. Communications Policy**

Director Wilson advised that what exists today is not a formal policy voted on and approved by the Board – it is more so how staff operates. It is a constantly evolving process. The Marketing and Communications Manager, Marlon Rodas, gave a presentation a couple months ago to the full Board which included all of the different avenues the District utilizes to communicate with the public such as social media, large e-mail distribution lists, the website and through various monthly e-mails, the Park District newsletter and monthly Board briefs. In response to feedback from the community, staff has reviewed how the Village handles communication. Director Wilson reported that the Village has no in-house communications or marketing staff and outsource 100% of what they provide to the community. The Village spends roughly \$60,000 annually on an outside consultant to manage communications. In regards to higher profile projects, such as the stormwater project, the Village includes a requirement in their RFP's that any consultant hire a public relations communications firm that handles all of their communications on behalf of the construction companies and the Village. Director Wilson advised that he is set to meet with Manager Rodas to discuss resources he would need to perform at a higher level.

There was a brief discussion as to why the Park District has moved away from mailings and printed material. Director Wilson advised that the pandemic has created a new mindset regarding printed materials and that people are consuming the online brochure at a very high level right now. Staff is unsure at this time if they will go back to a printed brochure. The Park District is a user driven entity that attempts to best provide what the community wants. If there were feedback from the community expressing a strong desire to return to a print brochure, the Park District would comply – however, that is tangible money versus a digital version.

Commissioner Clarke asked how the Park District is reaching residents who are new to the Village. Director Wilson advised that staff will review and consider this point. He added that this year has had tremendous turnover and a lot of new families – the preschool capacity is currently full and the Park

District is currently hiring new staff to accommodate. This indicates that community members have sought out the Park District and are utilizing Park District services.

Director Wilson also noted that in the past, the Park District had worked with the Village Water Department to obtain lists of new water bill customers and send them packets and information. Commissioner Clarke asked if the Chamber of Commerce would have a list of new residents. Director Wilson, in his capacity as a recent former member of Chamber of Commerce, did not recall that being one of the annual expenditures. Commissioner Kosloskus stated she would like a survey implemented at some point to determine if residents prefer an electronic or printed brochure. She appreciates that enrollment is very high but believes this may be attributed to the pandemic. Director Wilson agreed and added that it is too early to determine if the online brochure was truly a success. Commissioner Clarke and Commissioner Kosloskus suggested a post card with registration dates as an alternative mailing in lieu of the full brochure.

Commissioner Murdock asked that prioritization of goals be listed as a topic of discussion for next month's Committee meeting.

**B. Financial Statements for the Month Ending June 31, 2021**

Superintendent Foy reported that the staff feels confident the property tax line item will come in at what was budgeted for the year due to the fact property taxes are based on a levy and Wilmette has good collections. In regards to the daily fees, the June actuals match the budget. Actual has been about 22% ahead in May and June which is related to January through May. The biggest contributors to the daily fee revenue are golf and the lakefront because staff decided to start implementing daily fees as the state opened up, which were not part of the budgeting process. In regards to fee revenue, it was 26.1% ahead of budget in May and now it is 23.8% so as the year is progressing, the financials are aligning closer to budget. Memberships are up in almost every offering that the Park District has. While creating the budget in October and November, staff did not know how the state was going to open up which accounts for this large variance. The rental revenue variance is mainly the sailing beach, however, golf cart rentals are also contributing. The miscellaneous revenue is down –half of that, about \$7,000, is from net interest income. Regarding net interest income, Superintendent Foy advised she is not seeing much difference in returns from investments maturing within 270 days to two years. They are all offering five basis points between a little under a year to over a year. The MaxSafe account was at 8 basis points last month and 7 basis points this month. She stated she does not know whether that will tighten up but that is still better than the 2 basis points from the account that contains property taxes. She advised she is actively trying to obtain extra net interest margin and will update the Committee as to her findings.

Revenue is up 25% based on the budget.

With respect to expenses, staff is expecting expenses to level off with budget. In regards to the projection, that is precisely what happens through the end of 2021. The Park District is coming in at 1% of the budget for operating expenses on the projection. She added that the salaries and wages category is beginning to catch up. Operating expenses in total were under budget by 22.5% in May and now that has dropped to 17.9%.

Some capital was spent towards paying for the roof. While it was under budget last month, it is getting closer to the budgeted cost of \$900,000. Superintendent Foy stated she believes the roof will finish \$24,000 under budget. Commissioner Murdock clarified that so far the project has cost \$785,000 and when it's done it will have cost about \$875,000. Superintendent Foy agreed. The actual year to date income number is 7.4 million. The budget is 2.4 million with a 5 million dollar net variance. The Park District has not spent all of the capital yet so that number will come down. The biggest moving piece on capital during the month of July was the roof. The phone system has been paid off and came in a little under budget.

**C. Wilmette Park District 2021 Capital Expenditure Summary**

Commissioner Kosloskus observed there is several instances of remaining budget on the capital worksheets. She referred to the first item in Q1, the Center Fitness Club studio equipment replacement and subsequent \$5,000 expense. She asked if this expense was paid in Q1. Superintendent Foy advised that when the state opened up, staff had to get operations going again and work on capital was put on hold. Therefore, the studio equipment for the CRC has been purchased this month which will show up in August. Staff is still waiting on the fire marshal before they can install the fire alarms. Commissioner Murdock stated it is not critical if the spending occurs in Q1 or Q2. He asked Superintendent Foy if there is any reason to believe that the capital spending as reflected in these projects will be substantially different from what is shown here at the end of the year. He also asked if there were anything staff knows cannot be finished in the year. Superintendent Foy advised that the Park District is about a third spent of the capital budget. The roof will be a substantial number. She is unaware of any removals on the capital budget. Staff is also very busy working on the list for capital projects for 2022 and 2023. Director Wilson added that the Shoreline Protection for Langdon is being pursued but will not be spent in this calendar year.

**D. 2021 Projection as of June 30<sup>th</sup>**

Commissioner Murdock stated that given there is more work that needs to happen, he is not sure of how helpful it would be for the Committee to conduct a deeper dive on something that will be revised in two weeks. Superintendent Foy commented that the Park District is going to do better than budget this year. Director Wilson clarified that this a preliminary projection in which staff

takes a very conservative line on being reluctant to put too big of a revenue number and too small of an expense number. Director Wilson stated the Park District will do better than budget but how much better is speculation to a certain extent. Superintendent Foy added that staff will have a more refined number at the August capital meeting after the department heads have discussed with their managers and thoroughly reviewed the revenue numbers.

**E. Current Mask Policy in the Park District**

Director Wilson advised the current mask policy is that if you are unvaccinated, you must wear a mask and if you are vaccinated, a mask is not required for the most part. Campers must wear masks indoors and parents have the option to allow their children to remain masked outdoors as well. He noted that the CDC and APA have revised their policies as of this week. There is an internal Covid task force that consists of managers, department heads and critical employees that process this information and create internal practices. He advised there will be a Covid task force meeting tomorrow at 10:30 a.m. to discuss reverting back to the former mask policy.

**F. Current Sexual Harassment Policy in the Park District**

In light of the sexual harassment claims made by lakefront employees of the City of Evanston and the City of Chicago, Commissioner Clarke asked that Director Wilson provide a brief overview of the current sexual harassment policy in the Wilmette Park District. Director Wilson advised that the Park District has a sexual harassment policy which has been updated more than any other Park District policy because the laws keep evolving. The State of Illinois requires all government agencies to have a sexual harassment policy which applies to elected officials as well. Last year, the State of Illinois passed a new law that requires every public employee go through annual sexual harassment training. Liz Cox, the Park District's Human Resources and Risk Manager, is responsible for ensuring all employees go through this training. Those are the baseline requirements, however, the Park District strives very hard for a harassment free workplace. Director Wilson stated he has not been aware of anything that needs to be addressed and is confident the Park District does not have issues like the City of Evanston.

**VII. Next Meeting**

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The next meeting of the Financial Planning & Policy Committee will be on August 16, 2021.

**VIII. Adjournment**

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There being no further business to conduct, Commissioner Murdock moved and Commissioner Kosloskus seconded a motion to adjourn the Financial Planning & Policy Committee meeting at 7:40 p.m.

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

Minutes Approved by Committee on August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

Respectfully Submitted,

Catherine Serbin  
Executive Administrative Assistant

Unofficial