



WILMETTE PARK DISTRICT Lakefront Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 4 2021
Virtual Meeting via "Zoom"

Present

Commissioners/Committee: Chair, Bryan Abbott, Cecilia Clarke and Todd Shissler
Staff: Emily Guynn

Staff: Executive Director Steve Wilson, Sheila Foy, Libby Baker

Visitors: Isaac Gaetz, Andrew Levy, Patrick Duffy, Mike Doyle, Suzie LaBelle, Mary Lawlor, Alli Frazier, Mary Shea, Lisa Filer, Kara Kosloskus, Chris Lewis, Walter Keats, Pam Lurie, Pamela Rashid, Darren Taylor, Mindy Chychlyk

Absent

Kristi Solberg

I. Meeting Called to Order

Meeting called to order at 6:32 p.m.

II. Approval of Minutes

A. January 4, 2021

Commissioner Clarke moved and Commissioner Shissler seconded a motion to approve the minutes for the January 4, 2021 Lakefront Committee meeting.

By a roll call vote, voting Yes, Commissioners: Clarke, Shissler and Abbott.
Voting No: none. *Absent*, none; **motion carried**.

III. Public Comment/Recognition of Visitors

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

Chris Lewis – Mr. Lewis expressed his dismay in regard to new fees at the sailing beach for sailing beach members, of which he is one with multiple vessels on the beach. Specifically, he expressed his frustration with the online contract experience, passing the administrative cost for processing the online contracts onto sailors, and a new fee for partners on vessels. He explained that the new fees lead to an extensive increase in fees ranging upwards of 22-36% contrary to the Committee's discussion of the 2021 budget. He further expressed his disappointment that the new fees were not announced in any way in advance of receiving the contracts. Commissioner Abbott encouraged Mr. Lewis to wait until New Business where the topic of fees will be discussed.

Isaac Gaetz – Mr. Gaetz stated he is promoting the addition of disc golf in Wilmette and is happy to answer any questions anyone may have on his prior comments and communications.

Lisa Filer – Ms. Filer said she is in support of what Mr. Lewis said and is interested in hearing the discussion.

Mindy Chychlyk, 613 Central – Ms. Chychlyk said she is in support of what Mr. Lewis said and is interested in hearing the discussion.

Pamela Rashid and Darren Taylor, – They stated their collective concerns about the sailing fees and expressed support for disc golf in Wilmette.

Patrick Duffy – Expressed concern about the future use of Langdon Beach as the waters recede because he feels that the revetment that will possibly be constructed could impede access. He said he feels the design should take access into account and possibly build stairs into the design to guarantee better access to the beach. Commissioner Abbott said the topic will be discussed during Unfinished Business.

IV. Communications and Correspondence

Commissioner Abbott commented that several emails have been received in support of disc golf, and one in support of the comprehensive plan. Director Wilson explained that those emails would be included in the next board packet. Commissioner Abbott also commented that an email was received regarding the fees at the sailing beach and noted that the topic would be discussed later in the meeting. Director Wilson reported that he would forward that email to the entire committee.

V. Unfinished Business

A. Shoreline Protection Project

Commissioner Abbott referred to a memo from staff about the current status of negotiations with the SmithGroup for shoreline engineering at Langdon. He then asked his fellow Commissioners to ask questions and share their thoughts before he gave his impressions. Commissioner Clarke asked about fees associated with a future design stage, and asked if the District would be obligated to pay those fees if we don't do the work. Director Wilson said that since they will do the actual designs, whether the District does the construction or not, the District will have to pay the fees for the design work completed. Commissioner Shissler asked Commissioner Abbott for his impression of the proposed contract and referred to his prior statements that the design work is not complicated as it is a "pile of rocks." Commissioner Abbott said that he did make such a flippant remark in a prior meeting and continues to have reservations about the contract proposal that he will elaborate on in his remarks. Commissioner Shissler said he would like to hear more. Commissioner Abbott spoke about his background in construction is sometimes a strength, and sometimes a weakness because he knows a lot, but he has never done shoreline protection, so this could be a blind spot for him. He said that it is his goal to gather as much information as he can

to understand the level of services being provided to justify the fee being proposed. He said that he isn't saying that the fee is not justified, that he simply does not know enough yet to feel comfortable. Commissioner Shissler proposed that SmithGroup join the board for a meeting so questions can be directly asked of them to gain direct knowledge of the design process to determine if the fees are something the board is comfortable with. Commissioner Abbott says he is a believer that dialogue will help, but that a lot of dialogue has taken place and so he recommends going back out to the market place instead of continuing to discuss with SmithGroup, but if others wish to continue talking directly to SmithGroup, he will go along with it but does not feel it is going to change his opinion. Commissioner Clarke asked Commissioner Abbott specifically what his concern is in regard to SmithGroup. Commissioner Abbott said that he feels the fees may be high for the services rendered. Commissioner Shissler said he wants to make sure that there is no disconnect, or at least what the disconnect is with SmithGroup before going back to the market. Commissioner Abbott said he could accept the direction of the Committee and agreed that SmithGroup should be spoken to in another public meeting. Commissioner Clarke concurred that another discussion would be the preferred next step. She asked whether going back to the market might result in the District having to pay another consultant fees for work that has already been completed by SmithGroup causing a duplication of costs. Commissioner Abbott wrapped up the discussion asking staff to facilitate another meeting with SmithGroup to address the committee's concerns.

VI. New Business

Commissioner Abbott mentioned the stakeholder meetings held by Lakota Group and staff and how good he thought they were and suggested that having an outside group conduct public input is something the District should consider employing in more ways into the future. He also asked Director Wilson to inform the group about the upcoming Virtual Open House on the 18th, which Director Wilson outlined the details for.

Commissioner Abbott then introduced the topic of the sailing fees that people commented on during Public Comment. He stated he was surprised by the email from Mr. Lewis when he received it as he did not know about the fee. He then apologized to everyone for that fact. Commissioner Clarke asked Director Wilson to provide the committee with the background to the fee. Director Wilson stated that he too regrets that the fee was not better communicated to the sailors. He explained that during the budget process, the Financial Planning and Policy Committee did set guidelines that there would be no fee increases. He said that at the Lakefront Committee meeting staff highlighted the fees at the lakefront were budgeted to increase by 3% and that this was a departure from the budgetary guidelines. Subsequent to the budget meeting with the Lakefront, staff looked at the sailing contract process trying to make it less labor intensive. The process itself was made online, but to the comments made tonight, there is room for improvement. Specific to fees, he stated that the fees being charged to the District to process the contracts online by a third-party service provider were passed along to the customer in addition to the 3% increase. He then explained that the new \$120 partner fee for vessels that have a partner was put in place in response to feedback provided to our staff about a loophole or inequity on how fees are charged depending on the type of vessel someone

has on the beach, or even between the same vessel type if there is a partner or not. For example, if there are multiple owners on a vessel, the same fee is charged whether there is a partner or not. The vessels with a partner will get a rack space, and four passes for each partner, making it a total of eight passes. Comparatively a single owner vessel will pay the same fee, but only receive four passes. This was the inequity that staff aimed to try and make more balanced. He stated that historically, anyone who needed more passes for their vessel were charged \$30 for each additional pass. Staff used this \$30 fee and multiplied it by the additional four passes a partner would get to arrive at the \$120 fee. Ultimately, the 3% increase, plus the processing fees, plus the \$120 fee does arrive at the percentages quoted by Mr. Lewis.

Commissioner Abbott opened the floor to the other Committee members, and Commissioner Shissler said that he had no questions. Commissioner Clarke said that she feels that for the same price, the same number of passes should be issued, no matter how many owners a vessel has. She is not looking to change the fee at this point for this year, but in the future we should consider the same number of passes per contract no matter the ownership structure. Commissioner Shissler said that the fee was instituted to try and make the fees fairer, not otherwise, so he says it sounds like an improvement. Commissioner Clarke asked if the sailing beach pass also gives access to the swim beach. Commissioner Shissler then asked Director Wilson what the cost for the swim beach is and he stated that a 4 person pass for a resident is \$136 for 2021 which is more than the \$120 fee that gets a sailing beach person access to the sailing and swim beaches.

Commissioner Abbott stated that from his perspective, he doesn't want to start with talking about the validity of the fee. He said that over his eight year tenure on the board, fees at the sailing beach have been increased at a greater rate than the rest of the District. He acknowledged that the reason for the increased fees was to try and address the long waiting list that exists at the sailing beach. In his recollection, the fees are reviewed in more detail at the committee's budget process than what happened at the end of 2020. He also said he didn't ask for one as he thought that fees were not going up. When it was pointed out by the committee that there was a 3% increase, he objected to it but the rest of the committee, and ultimately the board, were in favor of the increase at the lakefront. He said he feels the processing fee should not have gone to the sailors, and should have been absorbed by the district. He also said that a new partner fee after the budget process was a mistake and should not have happened. He thinks that the fee should be rescinded and do it the right way in the future. Commissioner Shissler said he is not sure he thinks a mistake was made because as a board he does not feel it is a Commissioner's job to set fees, it is to make policy. He did state he wishes to be better informed in the future about fees, but he does not feel that it needs to be rescinded as it was done to try and make things more equitable. Commissioner Clarke stated that she feels that a fee should get everyone the same number of passes for the same fee, regardless of the number of owners. With that said, she sees the inequity that some get more passes for the same fee, and therefore she is not looking to rescind the fee but would like to consider a different structure in future years. Commissioner Shissler stated he does not want to get into the mindset of micromanaging staff in regard to fees and Commissioner Clarke agreed with him. Commissioner Abbott said he appreciates the opinion on his fellow committee members but he does not agree.

VII. Manager's Report

Superintendent Guynn reported on the following:

- Superintendent Guynn informed the Committee that both the Lakefront General Manager and Lakefront Supervisor positions have been filled. Ben Wozney is the new Lakefront General Manager. He previously served as the fire Lieutenant, Deputy Chief, and most recently filled the role of Chief for the Wilmette Fire Department. He brings a high level of safety and training skills, but also a great vision for the entirety of the park. The Lakefront Supervisor position is being filled by Megan White who is coming to us from New Jersey where she worked both for the YMCA system and also oversaw a 332 acre lakefront park site for the Girl Scouts, so she has some very applicable skills. She said that planning for the summer is underway for camps, outside camp visits, park permits, and rentals. She said that parking decals went on sale this week and are available online and at facilities. She then informed the Committee that the sailing contracts went out on Monday this week and thus far 153 have been completed and returned. At this time last year contracts had been out 2 weeks and about 50 had been returned, so the online option seems to have helped expedite the process. Ultimately, once the contracts are back in, staff will turn their attention to the waitlist which currently has over 1,100 names on it. Commissioner Abbott asked about whether or not daily passes will be available this year. Superintendent Guynn said that at this point all options are still available to us and no definitive decisions have been reached.

VIII. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Lakefront Committee is scheduled for March 1, 2021.

IX. Adjournment

There being no further business to conduct, Commissioner Clarke moved and Commissioner Shissler seconded a motion to adjourn the Lakefront Committee meeting at 7:53 p.m.

By a roll call vote, voting Yes, Commissioners: Clarke, Shissler and Abbott. Voting No, none. *Absent*, none; **motion carried.**

Minutes Approved on: 4/5/21