



COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING MINUTES

Board of Park Commissioners

March 23, 2026

6:30 PM – Mallinckrodt

PRESENT

Commissioners: President Patrick Lahey, Vice President Allison Frazier, Julia Goebel, Mike Murdock, Patrick Duffy, Cecilia Clarke and Julie Adrianopoli (via phone, arrives in person at approximately 6:42 p.m.)

Secretary/Executive Director: Chris Lindgren

Visitors: Mary Lawlor, Lauren Rudowsky, Brett Rudowsky, Katy Khurana

1.0 COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Vice President Frazier calls the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

1.2 Commissioner Murdock moves and Commissioner Duffy seconds a motion to bring Commissioner Adrianopoli into the meeting via phone. By a voice vote; **motion carried.**

2.0 COMMUNICATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE

The board received emails after the deadline which will be included in the next packet.

3.0 PUBLIC COMMENT/RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Katy Khurana – Comments about the sauna.

Brett Rudowsky – Comments about the sauna.

Dave Derrick – Comments about the sauna.

4.0 OLD BUSINESS

None.

5.0 NEW BUSINESS

5.1 FEBRUARY 2026 FINANCIAL UPDATE

Superintendent Foy explains the difference in revenue is 1% off our budget. There are variances all over the programs which are largely attributed to timing. Expenses are all under budget. Utilities are down in usage from Jan-Feb of last year compared to Jan-Feb of this year for every single facility and park in electricity, except for golf (which is almost flat).



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Property Taxes

Commissioner Duffy asks if we are all caught up on property taxes. Superintendent Foy answers that we are only waiting on about \$100,000 from 2024.

Capital

We are off on 2 projects and everything will catch up for capital in March.

President Lahey states that we will have the actual 2025 budget numbers at the Finance COW in April. Superintendent Foy adds that she will see a draft Financial Report from the auditors very soon, as they have finished their inquiry.

5.2 SUMMER CAMP UPDATE – DOUG BUNDY: DEVELOPMENT ANALYST, KATELYNN PUTKONEN: GENERAL RECREATION MANAGER – BLUE TEAM

Superintendent Merrill introduces Katelynn and Doug.

Katelynn Putkonen gives her presentation to the board covering data from 2024-2026.

When she talks about how many students from District 39 are a part of our camps, Commissioner Murdock asks if we will try to encompass the private school kids in our future calculations. Doug explains that we will try to gather those private school numbers as well.

Commissioner Adrianopoli asks, on average, how many different camps does a camper register for? Doug answers that he has looked at those numbers and because we have changed the way we take registration, it makes it a little harder to determine.

Vice President Frazier asks if the Center for the Arts camps will become 3 weeks, instead of 4, to align with the 3x3 camp model. Superintendent Merrill explains that a couple of arts camps likely will not change to the 3 week model, as the entire camp curriculum would need to be restructured. This includes Dance Camp and Broadway Bound because both camps have a production at the end.

President Lahey asks about expenses for programs and how Katelynn balances staffing costs. Commissioner Murdock adds the question of how Katelynn balances quality improvement and expense management when you have counselors waiting to fill in but some days they are not filling in. Katelynn answers that she is very hands-on with her staff when it comes to preparing for camps. Staff are a part of camp committees to help manage expenses by sharing staff and purchases. This creates an environment for collaboration. This also includes shuffling of staff when enrollments change. Doug adds that the institution of ePact allows us to track attendance better. For example, we know that enrollment drops the week of the 4th of July and now we can quantify that. Katelynn adds that with ePact, parents also have the ability to change the pick-up for their child



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just by logging into the system. It has been very helpful for organization.

Vice President Frazier asks for more information on the Customer Service Committee. Doug explains that the idea for the committee came from our Comp and Strategic plans. The first big initiative was getting staff ready for camp registration. Now, the committee is talking about compiling online resources for our frontline staff. We are creating hubs within our Sharepoint system, getting consistent procedural manuals in one place, making sure we have the information for the different facilities, etc. There are eight people on the committee and our first couple of meetings were mapping out where to go, given each facility has its own challenges.

Vice President Frazier inquires about staff improving the quality of our camps, since enrollment is not increasing. She highlights the Kindergarten through fourth grade community, which could be an opportunity for staff to continue to drive the revenue for that group. Vice President Frazier suggests polling families to find out where the park district can improve those services. Katelynn emphasizes that as a general manager she strives to support her staff in such a way that so they can spend more time on creation of programming.

5.3 VERIZON WIRELESS AGREEMENT AMENDMENT

Superintendent Wallace explains the current Verizon Wireless agreement and the proposed changes. The agreement is proposing to stabilize the chimney structure to hold the new equipment. For FY 2026, the park district budgeted \$49,176.28 from lease revenue from Verizon under the existing agreement. The agreement includes annual rent escalations of 3 percent. Verizon has requested an amendment to the agreement to modify and add to the existing equipment configuration. However, there are necessary structural repairs that need to take place on the chimney, before any additional equipment can be added to the structure. For these repairs, the park district budgeted \$75,000 this year, however, \$52,000 of those repairs will now be funded by Verizon.

Commissioner Murdock asks what the exchange of additional years on the contract is for the \$50,000 payment from Verizon. Director Lindgren answers that we are basically restarting the contract, so adding an additional seven years. Commissioner Goebel adds that she would like staff to make sure we can go back to Verizon for more money for repairs, if there are additional substantial repairs over the next 20 years. President Lahey asks if we have any clarity on what the Village might say about these repairs. Superintendent Wallace explains that the district will need to go to the review appearance committee. The Village will give us the information we need to get through the process successfully. Commissioner Duffy explains that this will be considered a modification of the original use because Verizon is changing their equipment. Director Lindgren explains that this is for the good of the community and the district will support the changing of equipment to allow the community to have better coverage.

5.4 CAMPFIRE SAUNA CONTRACT UPDATE

Director Lindgren explains that the original lease was from September 5, 2025, through September 3, 2026, with some to-be-determined details within the agreement. We are looking to define some of the unknowns



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in the agreement after seven months of usage and feedback. We are looking to reset that lease to a 1-year lease. Campfire Sauna and Social LLC is a Wilmette-based business that provides a unique service aligned with community values of physical, mental, and emotional wellness. Staff will be bringing a policy forward regarding vendor relationships throughout the district, and will specifically call out how we handle those relationships at the Lakefront. However, without a policy currently in place, staff is bringing this renewed agreement to the board for discussion and input.

Commissioner Clarke expresses her concern over the sauna being parked on Overlook Drive, given the heavy use of Overlook, even through the winter months. She goes on to express her concern that, though the off-season for the sauna is July and August, we continue to get very warm days beyond August which makes her concerned about where the sauna will be placed. She asks how that is being addressed with the sauna company. In addition, when the sauna was parked on Overlook Drive, the board received emails regarding the use of space and blocking off prime parking in winter.

Commissioner Duffy asks how staff came up with parking the sauna at Picnic Area 4. Superintendent Merrill states that locations have been vetted through the Lakefront staff. This picnic area could still be used if the sauna is parked near the area.

President Lahey asks if the location is untenable, can it be moved again. Staff answer that it can be moved. Commissioner Duffy recaps that last year during this conversation, the sauna was not intended to be at the lakefront at all during the swim season because they would be using it at other events. However, this year the park district is being asked to store the sauna. He asks the sauna owners if they see this as an evolution of the use of the device. Brett Rudowsky answers that that they didn't know last year how this would look. It has evolved and the experience and demand has increased. They expect the sauna to be non-functional, unless a Wilmette resident requests to use it. Commissioner Duffy summarizes that the sauna is probably going to remain at the lakefront for the remainder of this lease term and the next lease we are discussing today.

President Lahey says that having the sauna in the beach parking area during off-season worked well, however when it was on Overlook Drive there were issues and comments. He hesitates about having the sauna at the lakefront in the June, July and August stretch of time. President Lahey hopes staff can close the gaps in third party vending with a policy.

Commissioner Duffy suggests that, in the forthcoming policy, staff assess vendor contracts that have to go out to bid and which do not require a bid to make sure we are following the law. Generally speaking, we do not allow third-party vendors to operate activities at Gillson Park. We might allow them in other parks. Related to the lease agreement, Commissioner Duffy says that he aligns with Commissioner Clarke regarding Overlook Drive. He is concerned the sauna is blocking the few spots where visitors can sit in your car and view the lake in the winter time.

Commissioner Adrianopoli thanks Campfire Sauna for working with the park district while we work through



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making our policy and determining what is the right use of the lakefront for our community. She is in support of extending the life of the beach throughout the winter months. She goes on to emphasize that the placement of the sauna is an operational decision.

Commissioner Duffy asks how the district liability is addressed for this activity, given that the trend is for folks to do a sauna and then a cold plunge. Director Lindgren answers that from a liability and protection standpoint, the contract with the sauna does protect our liability. Commissioner Murdock states that the liability is the same for anyone, regardless of whether they use the sauna. Commissioner Clarke emphasizes that the park district discourages anyone from going into the water when it's not guarded. She does not want the sauna to encourage cold plunges because it would go against what the park district was doing when they implemented controlled access to the lake.

Vice President Frazier requests that staff address the liability with the district's attorney. Director Lindgren agrees.

5.0 ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Murdock moves and Commissioner Duffy seconds a motion to adjourn the Committee of the Whole meeting.

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

Minutes Approved on: April 13, 2026