



REGULAR BOARD MEETING
 BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS OF PALATINE PARK DISTRICT
 Village of Palatine, 200 East Wood Street in Palatine
 Second Floor – Village Council Chambers
 June 24, 2024, at 5:00 p.m.



These minutes are not a verbatim record of what was said during the meeting

The meeting was called to order at 5:01 p.m. by President Ruff

Commissioners Present

Terry Ruff, President
 Jennifer Rogers, Vice President
 Susan Gould, Commissioner
 Joe Petricca, Commissioner
 Greg Sammons, Commissioner

Commissioners Absent

Staff Present

Benjamin Rea, Executive Director
 Andrea Fisher, Park Board Treasurer/Director of Finance
 Sonia Austin, Superintendent of Finance
 Dayell Houzenga, Superintendent of District Services
 Jim Holder, Director of Parks & Planning
 Amy Vito, Superintendent of Parks & Planning

Colleen Palmer, Director of Recreation & Facilities
 Katie Waszak, Supt. of Recreation Programming
 Josh Ludolph, Supt. of Recreation Facilities
 Cheryl Lufitz, Communications & Marketing Mgr.
 JP McNamara, Digital Marketing Coordinator
 Lisa Allie, Park Board Secretary/Executive Assistant

Visitors and Citizens' Present

See attached list

Approval of Agenda

Commissioner Rogers moved, and Commissioner Gould seconded that the agenda be approved. President Ruff stated that there are no items on the Consent Agenda and no need for a Closed Session so Agenda items numbered 3, 9, and 10 will be removed. By a roll call vote, the agenda for the regular meeting of June 24, 2024, was approved as amended. The result of the roll call follows:

AYE: Jennifer Rogers, Susan Gould, Joe Petricca, Greg Sammons, Terry Ruff

NAY: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried.

President Ruff stated that we received six requests to speak and that the 30-minute time limit would be waived to allow those to speak. He also shared the Palatine Park District email for those unable to speak due to time constraints but would like to submit their comments to be included in the minutes.

Visitors and Citizens' Comments

Cadence Gehrke: I'm here to discuss the importance of extending the group school lessons to the end of the year. This program is not only vital for the development and enjoyment of our children, but it also aligns with the broader commitments of our community. It is important to recognize the inconsistency in the current policy. While certain programs such as those under NWSRA are permitted to continue, our group school lessons are being prematurely cut short. We strongly urge the board to announce that group school lessons continue just like NWSRA programs; unless there are detrimental findings from the engineers that represent immediate life safety concerns. Furthermore, to ensure fairness and continuity,

all operations should be allowed to run through February 1, 2025. This will provide ample time for all necessary arrangements to be made without causing undue stress. It is not just about logistics, but also the emotional and psychological impact on our children, the potential caretakers, and the entire community that rallies around these programs. Let's work together to make sure that we are supporting all our programs and participants fairly and responsibly.

Tom Gersic: 2.67 million was repair option three presented in the memo dated May 13, 2024, from Mr. Benjamin Rea Executive Director, and later repeated by Board President Terry Ruff to the public on the evening news. 13 pole barn columns were noted in need of repair so let's look at the bids obtained by the Park District to see how we arrived at 2.67 million to repair 13 columns. We have three quotes from Lamp Construction; one quote at \$136,625.00 is for 20 posts and other work that the contractor deemed necessary. That is 7 more columns than what was called for by the engineer, but it's a far cry from 2.67 million. So where did that come from? It is my understanding, that it came from the park district which used the amount quoted by Lamp and then multiplied by 15.65 to get from 20 posts up to 313 posts which is the total number of posts in the barn buildings. Even though the engineer only noted 13 posts needed replacing, and stated that many of the posts were fine, the park district staff multiplied that by 15.65 and added in another \$750,000 of other stuff. The highest quote the park district has obtained is \$136,625.00 which is the number the park district should have given to the public, but the park district still hasn't addressed this discrepancy, and why that isn't the number you gave to the public.

Elle Haferkamp: I'm a licensed therapist in the state of Illinois predominantly working with children and adolescents. I speak today to emphasize a crucial aspect of childhood development that is currently being overlooked by the profound impact of sports, particularly equestrian sports like riding. The bond between a rider and the horse is a partnership that teaches responsibility, empathy, and trust; values that are invaluable in the development of a well-rounded individual. When a sport is suddenly taken away from a child the repercussions are far-reaching. They experience a loss, not only of their passion, but also the structure and routine that sports provide. This can lead to feelings of confusion, frustration, and even a loss of identity. It can also cause and increase anxiety, depression, and other mental health struggles. I encourage you to consider the impact of the decision to close the riding program to the other riders who do not necessarily benefit from NWSRA and allow operations to continue until February 1, 2025

Cary Lisota: I'm a horse mom and a soccer mom too; both bring me some of the greatest joys in life. What tugs at my heart even more than adding another part district field, facility, playground, or outdoor space to our community, is having a place where kids of all abilities can be seen and feel they are capable. Able and capable; the Palatine Stables is the one place in our community where all abilities can thrive. There's so much opportunity here if we can just open our eyes together. That being said, if Palatine Park District stays their course, ignoring this opportunity to change your narrative, then I challenge you guys to take the higher road. You have an opportunity to come out on top, give the Palatine Stables, a year or at least until February 1st to allow this to continue, to find humane care for these horses, and to let our team and riders continue riding; or better yet sell it to us. The Palatine Park District will be free of this inconvenience and then we can continue keeping Palatine Stables thriving as it should, in this beautiful able community.

Frank Skorski: As I said last week, we got to think outside the box. That's all I'm asking, and the people in back of me are more than willing to sit down if you want to put together a citizens advisory committee. Nothing in any of the reports said immediate danger in fact, the same items were brought up in 2014. Nothing was done then and we're still here. Horses haven't died, ponies haven't died, nothing. So there's no immediate life safety. I'm offering my help as an old electrical, engineer, contractor, and father of two to work with us to avoid any more embarrassment to this park district. All you got to do is say I made a

mistake and I'm going to readdress it with the input of everybody. Maybe you could get a couple of people to put a name on the stable? You go to Northwest Community Hospital and there are names all over the place so please let us do that.

Sabine Zielinski: I started at Palatine Stables in 1989 and I am a concerned member of this community. On Tuesday, May 14 the park district rushed to release the press release with a fabricated 2.67 million price tag. Yet not one whisper publicly about the cost of the other side of the coin, how much to demise the property to turn a property that was a stable into residential? The park district claim that they have no designations for the property. Of course not, the Village of Palatine does and has the entire peninsula marked for redevelopment which we found out at the Village of Palatine Comprehensive Plan Open House on June 5th. While the park district issues the fear, mongering language about costing taxpayers' money they intentionally ignore the other side of the coin, that's because the park district has no intention of it being their problem. While the other side of this coin may not have to be paid from the allocated 6.5% property tax, which funds the park district it will still need to be paid for by the taxpayers of the Village of Palatine. Govern yourselves accordingly and rescind the motion to close the stables.

President Ruff stated that concludes our public comments that were already extended and anyone that didn't get a chance to speak is welcome to send their comments by email to the PPD website. Audience members became upset as there were still people wanting to speak. Commissioner Gould objected to President Ruff concluding the public comments and said that she thinks we should let them speak.

Dave Hammer: I speak to you as a taxpayer in the park district, but I am also a historian, and I have watched the Palatine Stables. It's a Cultural institution in Palatine. It's part of what makes Palatine very special, and it helps to define the entire Northwest part of Palatine, so I'm asking you please, let's keep it open.

Amira Zaben: I'm speaking as a member of the Zaben family which has been paying Palatine taxes for the last 53 years and also as a mother of these two beautiful children who take riding lessons at Palatine Stables. The stables have had a profound impact on our lives. Last week I watched my daughter ride a pony named Tinker Bell. My daughter hasn't ridden Tink in a year and when I saw her on top of Tinker Bell I started crying. A year ago my daughter had several rough rides on Tinker Bell that spooked her to the point that she considered quitting riding horses altogether. Thankfully with the guidance and encouragement of her amazing riding instructor Miss Katie, my daughter got back on that horse. I pay over \$400 a month to provide this to my children but truthfully, that is peanuts because what they get from riding is priceless. As elected representatives of Palatine residents, such as my family, why are you stripping this away from my children, from all these children, and all the others who are currently at the stables riding right now? Your refusal to halt the closing of Palatine Stables makes no sense unless your goal is to close the stables regardless of the public's wishes and the engineering company's findings. If that is the case, I ask you to step down so that other people can uphold the park district values that you were voted into office to promote

Ruby Stutzman: My name is Ruby and I ride at stables. I love the ponies with all my heart. The stables are a second home to me, and it would break my heart to not see the ponies. My life will have very little meaning to me if the stables close. My soul might disappear if I couldn't see the ponies. I'll cry on my last day at the stables. The ponies are my friends and I have connections to them. Volunteering is hard but fun. I make tons of human and animal friends. I've learned a lot from my instructor Ms. Katie. If you close the stables, it will change my life, health, mind, body, and soul. Please save Palatine Stables.

Charlotte Kasparaitis: I have been riding at Palatine stables for seven years I'm a Palatine resident I've been boarding at the barn for four years. In 2020 I started leasing one of our horses Annie. Annie taught me how to become the rider I am today. I would not be where I am without her. Today, Annie teaches tons of kids how to be a tough rider and be successful in the sport. Without our school horses me, or any of the kids at

Palatine Stables wouldn't know how to be a great rider. Our school horses really are something special and knowing there's going to be a day when they will have to leave their home will hit our stable community hard. We would like to ask the Board and park district to consider giving us more time with these horses so we do not have to end our sport in the middle of our season.

Unnamed Speaker: I've lived in Palatine for 53 years and we have enjoyed the park district, mostly soccer and swimming. Our four children have excellent memories of the park district. Now I am enjoying my grandchildren, Amira is my daughter, and to deprive them of something that is fun for them and fun for me is a shame. The condition of the stable and the place where you find yourselves at now should not be rectified by penalizing the children or the residents. It should be rectified by penalizing those who managed the affairs of the stables for the last 40+ years. The failure of the stables; whatever the condition is the failure to manage whoever is working under you to take care of the stables. Please do not let that penalty fall on our children and grandchildren. That's wrong.

Unnamed Speaker: I live right next to Palatine Stables in Ethans Glen. I love having the horses there and driving by is very peaceful. If we all had a crystal ball we'd be very happy right? My family had a riding stable for about 10 years and at some point we were forced to close. Kind of like what's going on here. So it's kind of a crystal ball. I can say in all those years I know it changed my life, but it changed tens of thousands of people's lives. It becomes part of you, and it seems like you're trying to take this away from everybody. You can't take away what everyone's got so far, but you're depriving future kids and adults from the same opportunity and that is heartbreaking.

Jennifer Rosegay: I last spoke to you last as a board member and representative of the Horsemen's Council of Illinois. Today I am speaking to you as an approved humane investigator, sponsored by the Hooved Animal Rescue and Protection Society (HARPS). For the last 15 years, I have investigated concerns of equine neglect across Illinois. Many of the cases have been well-meaning people who were excited to get their own horse, but did not have the education, knowledge, or experience to properly care for them. Some of these horses were free to a good home much as you have announced that the horses who have faithfully served the Palatine Stables will be donated to new owners. I strongly encourage you to work with your stable staff and HARPS to ensure any respective owner is thoroughly qualified by verifying their equine veterinarian, their farrier and feed supplier, and conducting a home visit to inspect the property. Not everyone is capable of caring for a horse; good intentions and excitement do not provide a sufficient quantity of good wholesome food and water, adequate shelter and protection from weather, vet care when needed to prevent suffering, and, humane care and treatment. Those four items compose the owner's duties in the Humane Care for Animals Act, and that is what I write the majority of my violations on.

President Ruff announced that we would be moving on to New Business

New Business

The Board reviewed a previously distributed board summary pertaining to the Approval of purchase for a John Deere HD300 Select Sprayer. Commissioner Petricca moved, and Commissioner Sammons seconded that the Board of Park Commissioners approve the lowest responsible bidder, Deere & Company, Cary, North Carolina, in an amount not to exceed \$57,101.11 for the acquisition of one John Deere HD300 Spray Tank through the Sourcewell Cooperative. The motion was approved by a roll call; the result follows:

AYE: Susan Gould, Joe Petricca, Greg Sammons, Jennifer Rogers, Terry Ruff,

NAY: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried.

The Board reviewed a previously distributed board summary pertaining to the Approval for purchase of an Electronic Sign. Commissioner Sammons moved and Commissioner Rogers seconded that the Board of Park Commissioners approve the proposal for the replacement of the existing Electronic Message Center Display on Northwest Highway with new WATCHFIRE LED RGB Electronic Message Centers, provided by Olympik Signs, a Sourcewell provider in the amount not to exceed \$107,428.00. The motion was approved by a roll call; the result follows:

AYE: Joe Petricca, Greg Sammons, Jennifer Rogers, Susan Gould, Terry Ruff

NAY: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried.

Department Reports

The Park Board reviewed the previously distributed written Parks and Planning Department report. Director Holder shared the following highlights: Meadowlark is still waiting for MWRD before he can get the Village permit approved, they do have permission to start demolition but that will be a separate permit so he's going to wait for MWRD to be completed and finish the process up with the village. The expiration date for the project is next April and he is able to extend that as he didn't take the upfront grant payment. Cedar Park is moving along, everything has been ordered and on schedule. Kids Around the World will remove the old playground the week of Labor Day with construction expected to start in September. Hamiltoin Parking lot was completed last week and opened up on Saturday which is good timing with baseball having their end-of-the-year tournament this weekend. The golf course reported that rounds were up for May compared to last year and driving range revenues are catching up to YTD totals from last after being closed down for 2 weeks for net repair. Holder also shared that the Womens' Qualifier is this Wednesday with an 8am tee-off time. They have also been prepping the grounds for Hometown Fest, the underground utilities will be marked out by end of the week. The carnival will arrive in the south parking lot on Sunday night and they will start their set-up on Monday. The Fest opens on Wednesday at 5pm; a tentative schedule is included in his report. He will email everyone with the parade lineup as soon as he has the information.

The Park Board reviewed the previously distributed written Recreation and Facilities Department report. Director Palmer said that May was a busy month as we wrapped up our Spring and Pre-school programs, as well as our indoor activities in preparation for Summer programs and events. They have spent a lot of time on training seasonal and pool staff and had a successful opening day at the pools. We also finished up the Falcon Park Turf paint project at the end of May and had a bunch of successful events including PCC Spring concert at Cutting Hall, Big Trucks event at the Family Aquatic Center and the Mari-Rae Sopper Gymnastics Show at Community Center on May 17th and 18th. Overall, Summer Registration in May was up 15% over last year.

The Park Board reviewed the previously distributed written District Services Department report. Superintendent Houzenga said that May was also super busy for District Services with hiring, on-boarding and training all the seasonal staff to prepare for Summer. We hired three full-time staff as well in May. We worked on Job descriptions and all of the processes that come with the reorganization in our HR systems. We didn't have any volunteer events in May, as the one that was scheduled with the library was canceled due to lack of volunteers.. Marketing was also busy with several of the events mentioned in the recreation report. They also attended parks day at the capital and the booth was well received, people really liked the trail maps. IT has been working on updating the aging camera servers that we have at Falcon Park and Birchwood. This replacement allows us to add cameras or update the cameras that we have there, which are hitting their end of life. They are also working on the fiber connection project with the Village for Falcon Park, Birchwood, Harper and CSF. Risk Management has been busy with programming and preparing emergency response plans for all of our outdoor locations.

The Park Board reviewed the previously distributed written Finance Department report. Director Fisher shared the addition of Marcy Laney to the Finance Team who joined us 2 weeks ago as a seasoned AP Professional and hit the ground running. Fisher also shared that we are moving to a weekly accounts payable run; historically we were running it every 2-3 weeks which bogged down our ability to get our vendors paid in a timely manner. It is also beneficial for staff, as they don't have to wait to get their bills paid. Our Accounts Payable was up in May 2024. The increase was due to our Village of Palatine Intergovernmental Loan, as well as the MRMA Pay Out and interest was also paid during the month of May. There were 3 payroll months in May compared to 2 payrolls in 2023. Fisher reviewed the financial reports included with her Department reports. She also stated that the finance team has been preparing for the 2025 budget with a budget kick off meeting scheduled for July 15th. An audit update was given which included that the final audit was received today. The goal is to present it at the July 8th Board Meeting with Lauterbach and Amen present to discuss their findings. Fisher also released an audit RFP today to solicit auditing services from 9 different firms including our current auditors, Lauterbach and Amen; we are requesting a 3-year auditing contract.

Executive Director Reports

Executive Director Rea reminded the board that the RFP for the Comprehensive Master Plan is due on July 12th and shared that they have had 3 professional service firms reach out to say that they were considering submitting a proposal. He will continue to update the board on where we are at with the process.

Commissioner Reports/Future Agenda Items

Commissioner Gould shared that she saw a notice that real estate taxes for Cook County will be due on August 1st, which is much earlier than the last 4 years. She also said that this is the most peaceful protest; she appreciates everybody being polite and likes to see democracy in action. She thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

Commissioner Sammons gave a shout out to Tiger Shark Vera who had an outstanding performance in Indianapolis. It was a great experience for all the swimmers who had a watch party at Birchwood.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Park Board on this date Commissioner Rogers moved that the regular meeting be adjourned. Commissioner Petricca seconded the motion which was unanimously approved by a voice vote as follows:

AYE: Susan Gould, Joe Petricca, Greg Sammons, Jennifer Rogers, Terry Ruff

NAY: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried at 6:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Allie
Park Board Secretary

Attest:

Approved:

Lisa Allie
Secretary

Terry Ruff
President

<u>2024 Park Board Meetings</u>		
July 8, 2024	September 9, 2024	November 25, 2024
July 22, 2024	September 23, 2024	December 9, 2024
August 12, 2024	October 28, 2024	
August 26, 2024	November 11, 2024	