



**MINUTES OF THE OF THE
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
PUBLIC HEARING ON LAWLER PARK IMPROVEMENTS
Weber Leisure Center
9300 Weber Park Place, SKOKIE, IL
SEPTEMBER 6, 2022 - 7:00 P.M.**

ATTENDANCE AT MEETING

Board Members Present: President Susan Aberman
Vice-President Mike Reid
Commissioner Ezra Jaffe

Others Present: Executive Director/Secretary Michelle J. Tuft
Superintendent of Parks Corrie Guynn
Executive Administrative Assistant Ann Perez
Joe Brusseau, Hitchcock Design Group

CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Ezra Jaffe, Parks Committee Chair, called the public hearing of the Board of Park Commissioners for the Lawler Park improvements to order at 7:00 p.m.

INTRODUCTIONS

Commissioner Jaffe introduced himself, President Susan Aberman, Vice President Mike Reid, and Executive Director Michelle Tuft.

Ms. Tuft explained the purpose of the public hearing is to inform residents of the proposed Lawler Park renovation and get feedback from citizens. The park district will be applying for an Open Space Land Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) grant which is a matching grant with a maximum match of \$600,000.

Ms. Tuft introduced Superintendent of Parks Corrie Guynn and Mr. Joe Brusseau of Hitchcock Design Group. Ms. Tuft said Mr. Brusseau will go through the presentation and then there will be time for comments, input, and questions.

**CONCEPTUAL PLAN PRESENTATION OF RENOVATIONS TO LAWLER PARK BY
HITCHCOCK DESIGN**

Mr. Brusseau thanked everyone for coming out and shared a Power Point presentation with the design plan which included:

- New playground area with new engineered wood fiber surfacing
- Six swings; two bucket swings, two belt swings, one parent/child swing and one ADA swing.
- A 16" x 16" shelter
- Four pickleball courts

- A Teqball court
- A native plant area including an interpretive sign and woodchip path
- New picnic tables and benches
- Replacing the concrete walks
- An ADA water fountain

Generally, playgrounds are replaced within 15 – 20 years and Lawler has not been replaced in approximately 30 years Mr. Brusseau explained all of the proposed changes including the playground design and said if the grant is awarded there could be another public meeting to finalize the playground equipment. The application deadline for the grant is September 30.

Mr. Brusseau explained the timeline for the grant application and the proposed renovation schedule. The park district should receive notification regarding the grant in June or July 2023. If the park district received the grant, bidding would begin in August 2023 and demolition work in fall/winter of 2023. The installation would be completed by summer of 2024.

Vice President Reid asked what would happen if the district did not receive the grant. Mr. Guynn replied that the renovation would be downscaled with certain amenities eliminated. The playground and path would remain, and the native plant area would get a little smaller. The pickleball courts, shelter and Teqball would likely be eliminated.

PUBLIC INPUT

A resident said that restroom facilities are lacking. Mr. Guynn said staff is looking into installing a screened port-a-potty area that would service pickleball and soccer. A resident asked if it could be located near the playground area. Mr. Guynn said staff will look into it.

Another resident expressed concerns about residential parking. She is concerned that adding pickleball courts will cause more parking issues. Corrie said staff will reach out to IDOT to see if the parking on the south end can be paved, to make more parking spots in the area. She said there is a lot of traffic, and she does not see people parking in that area.

Another resident has difficulty parking in front of his home and said the people do not park on the park side of the street but on the residential side of the street. With only one way in and one way out the cars are turning in the cul-de-sac, and it poses a safety risk to the children that live on that street. Signage was suggested. Ms. Tuft said staff can reach out to the Village of Skokie regarding the parking issues but ultimately the Village is responsible for parking issues.

Another resident did not want the playground area to decrease. It is the only playground that her children can go to in the area. Mr. Guynn said it would not decrease significantly.

A resident suggested eliminating the pickleball courts and Ms. Tuft explained that in order to qualify for the grant, the project must have five elements. If pickleball is eliminated another element would need to be added.

An advocate for pickleball said it is easier to find a court on weekdays than on weekends and does understand the parking situation. Ms. Tuft said the courts are so popular it has caused issues between users and in order to meet the needs of the community staff thought it was a good idea to add four more courts. After this discussion, Ms. Tuft stated that it sounded like residents' biggest concern with adding pickleball is the parking issue.

A resident asked for more swings to be included in the plan. A saucer swing was suggested and will be considered.

A resident requested fitness equipment be added to the park and Mr. Guynn said it may be an option. The resident also requested that the futsal court be changed to a basketball court. She feels it is important to have a basketball court in the park. Mr. Guynn said there is a potential to add hoops over the soccer goals and staff is looking into it.

A resident asked why only one Teqball was being installed. Mr. Guynn said only one is necessary and Ms. Tuft said if it becomes more popular another one can always be added.

A resident expressed that it is normal for people to come from other villages or towns to play pickleball in Skokie as there are not many dedicated pickleball courts in neighboring towns and villages. He said there needs to be dedicated parking and port-a-potties.

Mr. Guynn said staff is working on a concept to build six pickleball courts next year at Oakton Park in the unused sand volleyball area behind the pool. There are restrooms and parking so it may be a better option. Ms. Tuft said if a decision is made to not add additional pickleball courts at Lawler Park, the proposed project at Oakton will become more important.

A few children requested a zipline. Mr. Guynn said we do not have the space needed for a zipline and there is the expense to consider, but staff can take a look at it. He reminded them that we have a zipline at Hamlin and Lorel Parks. A parent said the ziplines are not close to their home.

Parking was discussed and Ms. Tuft said a parking lot is expensive and the costs associated do not qualify for the grant.

A suggestion was made to move the new pickleball courts to where the native area plants were to be located as that may solve some of the parking issue. Mr. Guynn said there are Village storage water tanks in that area and staff do not want to remove trees. The area slopes down and is a drainage area. Another suggestion was to move the pickleball courts to the southwest corner of the park and Mr. Guynn said it can be considered.

A resident asked if they had to wait two years to rectify the parking issues. Ms. Tuft said she would reach out to the Village and encouraged residents to contact the Village with any issues. President Aberman and Commissioner Jaffe suggested asking the Village for zone parking for residents only.

Vice President Reid asked what could be added to the renovation if the pickleball courts were eliminated. Mr. Guynn said the fitness equipment is a good idea. A zip line was also suggested in the proposed new pickleball area. Mr. Guynn explained that the fall zone for a zipline may be a space issue.

President Aberman said applying for the OSLAD grant is a great opportunity that we need to take advantage of. The park district should be creative to compete with others applying for an OSLAD grant. Vice President Reid said the deadline to apply is at the end of the month and if

received another public hearing can be held to finalize the playground amenities.

CLOSING COMMENTS

Mr. Guynn asked the residents to email letters of support to him, Ms. Tuft, or the Board of Commissioners. The letters will be added to the grant application.

Ms. Tuft said to send any other comments or questions to her or Mr. Guynn.

Mr. Guynn said the PowerPoint and his email address will be posted on the Lawler Park website page.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Jaffe thanked everyone for attending and providing input, and adjourned the meeting at 8:11 p.m.



Susan Aberman
President



Michelle Tuft
Secretary

September 14, 2022

Vision Statement

The Skokie Park District envisions a community where all of its residents enjoy a high quality of life through leisure time pursuits, beautiful open spaces, and first-rate facilities.

Mission Statement

The Skokie Park District will realize its vision through teamwork, community partnerships, sound fiscal management, and creativity in every area of its operation.

Core Values

The Skokie Park District will fulfill its mission through:

- Commitment• Integrity• Innovation• Service• Openness• Environmental Stewardship• Inclusiveness