



**MINUTES OF THE OF THE
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
PUBLIC HEARING ON SKOKIE PARKS AND NATIVE AMERICAN NAMES
COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSION
Weber Leisure Center
9300 Weber Park Place, Skokie, IL
June 1, 2023 - 6:30 P.M.**

ATTENDANCE AT MEETING

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

Others Present: Executive Director/Secretary Michelle J. Tuft
Superintendent of Business Services William G. Schmidt
Superintendent of Parks, Planning & Facilities Corrie Guynn
Assistant Superintendent of Recreation Mary Amato
Executive Administrative Assistant Ann Perez
IT Application/Help Support Specialist Amanda Catania

Remote Attendance: Superintendent of Recreation Breanne Labus
Risk and Safety Manager Amanda Hanson-Putziger

CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Aberman called the public hearing of the Board of Park Commissioners for the Skokie Parks and Native American Names Community Listening Session to order at 6:30p.m.

OPENING REMARKS

Commissioner Aberman is the chairperson for the parks committee and welcomed the attendees. She thanked the attendees for coming to the meeting in person and via zoom to assist in the process.

Executive Director Tuft said Kim Vigue, the Executive Director of the Mitchell Museum of the American Indian in Evanston, will be attending. The district has a contract with the Mitchell Museum to assist the park district with this process.

Ms. Tuft said two topics will be discussed: the draft Land Acknowledgement Statement and Native Named Parks.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The park district has drafted a land acknowledgement and is soliciting public comment. Ms. Tuft provided some background on the land acknowledgement statement and explained that Amanda Hanson-Putziger and Emily England from the Skokie Heritage Museum wrote the statement. The draft was then forwarded to the Mitchell Museum where Ms. Vigue

reviewed and tweaked it. The land acknowledgment was displayed for the attendees to view.

Ms. Tuft asked for any comments or questions. Mr. John Low (attending via zoom) said he did not think the acknowledgement was historically accurate. Mr. Low felt that the list of homelands is not accurate, and that the Potawatomi tribe should be the only tribe listed. Ms. Tuft said staff can take a look at the list.

Mr. Les Begay is a citizen of the Dene nation. He is hoping that the district will be engaged and involved in the community and provide programming.

Ms. Tuft asked Ms. Vigue to introduce herself to the attendees. Ms. Vigue explained that she is a descendant of the Menominee. She has been working with the Village of Skokie and is looking forward to beginning this process with the Park District.

NATIVE NAMED PARKS

Ms. Tuft said the second topic on the agenda involves the eleven parks that are named after native tribes and historical figures. The intention is to meet individually with each of the tribes to discuss how the tribe feels about the park name and to allow input into how the tribe should be recognized. Ms. Vigue will be facilitating the meetings. Ms. Tuft displayed the names of the parks and the historical figures for the attendees to view.

The Park District plans on acknowledging the tribes at each park by installing a sign with a QR code that will link to the district's website. The information regarding the tribe or historical figure will reflect the input provided by each tribe. There may be some tribes that do not want a park named after their tribe. If this occurs the board would go through the process of renaming the park. Ms. Tuft also said the park signs could be altered to include name in the tribe's native tongue.

Amanda Hanson-Putziger wrote a draft of what would be on the website for Shabonee Park, and this was displayed.

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

Ms. Tuft asked the attendees how they felt about the park names as residents of Skokie.

Mr. Begay is Navajo and not a resident of Skokie but suggested having programs at the parks that were related to the tribes.

Ms. Jasmine Gurneau has two children in District 73 ½ and attends the SPACE program and summer camps. She is currently collaborating with residents on a three sisters community garden plot by Madison School.

Ms. Gurneau said the collection of park native names are random and not local. She is excited to be thinking about naming the parks and foresees something dynamic.

President Reid said the parks were named in the 1950's and were named after tribes familiar at the time. Moving forward, he would like the names to be historically accurate and educational.

Commissioner Jaffe appreciates the attendees' insights and wants the parks to represent Native Americans as they wish to be represented. Ms. Vigue said tribe names are often used as sports team names and does not feel this is right. Commissioner Jaffe said that likely in the end, some park names will change, and some will stay the same. He also stated that programming will be dynamic.

Mr. Begay said November is Native American Heritage Month and he would like to see a program for each of the tribes in the parks. Ms. Tuft said the staff has already talked about it and loves that idea.

Ms. Vigue would like to see something in the Native American language that describes the land.

Mr. Guynn said staff are also considering commissioning an artist from each tribe to do something in each park. Ms. Tuft said that is why it is so important to discuss the park's name with each tribe.

Amanda Hanson-Putziger clarified the background of how the parks were named. She said in the 1950's and 1960's the names were chosen because they were familiar or popular at the time. Scout groups were allowed to submit names as suggestions.

Mr. Low suggested the park district collaborate with the tribes and ask what their feelings are about the park names. This will be a long process. Ms. Tuft said that is exactly what the park district plans to do.

Ms. Gurneau said to honor tribal sovereignty. Ms. Tuft said the staff and board have been educating themselves and are open to where the journey leads.

Commissioner Aberman said this is a starting point. It would be nice to know why the names were selected historically but we will probably never know. We need to move forward and make it meaningful.

Ms. Vigue said one small step would be to change the website to the correct Native American names. Ms. Tuft will send the list to Ms. Vigue to update.

Mr. Joshua Mark said he commends the park district. He lives between Weissburg Park and Shabonee Park. Weissburg Park is named after a former park commissioner and there is a plaque. At Shabonee Park there is nothing. He really commends the park district for becoming involved in this process.

Ms. Vigue said there is a resurgence of lacrosse in school gym classes. Commissioner Jaffe said there was a great documentary about it. The Seneca nation invented the sport.

Commissioner Jaffe said this is huge undertaking. He asked if there is any prioritization of the parks based on the park renovations? Ms. Tuft said there is no prioritization and that the process will be long and challenging, but we will get there.

Commissioner Aberman asked attendees to share the information from the meeting with other Skokie residents who are Native American. It would be thrilling to get a lot of input. This is what

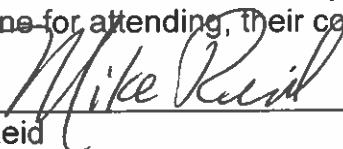
community outreach is about, to get people together.

Ms. Tuft explained that the next steps are to have the board officially approve the land acknowledgement statement and to begin scheduling meetings with the tribes.

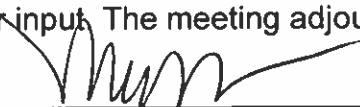
Ms. Gurneau asked that the district not put-up land acknowledgment plaques at the parks. She said it is too permanent and there are so many more creative ideas. She works at Northwestern University and explained that their land acknowledgement is a large canoe and said feels this is more powerful than a plaque.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further comments or questions, Commissioner Aberman and Ms. Tuft thanked everyone for attending, their comments and their input. The meeting adjourned at 7:36 p.m.



Mike Reid
President



Michelle Tuft
Secretary

June 20, 2023

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