

Round Lake Area Park District
Regular Board Meeting
February 10, 2022
6:00 p.m.

PLACE OF MEETING:

Robert W. Rolek Community Center
814 Hart Road
Round Lake, IL 60073

I. ROLL CALL

Park Board President Paul Hollingsworth called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Commissioners in attendance were Timothy Pasternak, Sarah Green, and Nick Metropulos. Commissioner Christine Gentes was absent. Staff in attendance included Executive Director Bob Newport, Finance Department Manager Jennifer Baker, Superintendent of Parks Ane Olivares, Superintendent of Recreation Katie Gamroth, Human Resources and Risk Manager Jennifer Ruehrdanz, Golf Pro/Manager Brad Rouse, and Golf Grounds Manager Sandy Bemis.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. CONSIDERATION OF, AND POSSIBLE ACTIONS ON, ANY REQUEST FOR ELECTRONIC PARTICIPATION IN THE MEETING

None.

IV. CORRESPONDENCE

None.

V. AUDIENCE COMMENTS

Park Board President Paul Hollingsworth thanked those in the audience for coming out and reminded the audience about what audience comments are for and the role the board plays in audience comments.

Janet Slade is the parent of a new participant in the Today Club program. She referred to information from the website about SRSNLC providing services to the surrounding communities, and noted those surrounding communities play a major role in the operation of programs. Slade asked the board if they have visited the Today Club program and if they will be the ones who will tell the program clients that their friends are going to other places. Slade questioned if other services were being looked at and provided the definition of discrimination from the *Oxford Dictionary*. Slade asked the board to visit the Today Club program to see its positive effects. She noted that SRACLCLC budgets are not the District's concern. She also questioned if the Round Lake Area Park District was living up to its reputation and mission by moving away from SRSNLC.

Anna Wetterberg is a 33-year-old participant of the Today Club and has been participating in the program since she was 21. Wetterberg likes going to the Today Club to see her friends every week. Wetterberg stated that if the Park District moves the Today Club to a different program, she will not be able to see her friends because she doesn't live in Round Lake, which makes her very scared and sad. She added that she will miss the mentors of the program, especially Margaret, and noted that she already misses Jessica and Jenny.

Lynn Wetterberg is out-of-district and mentioned that two-thirds of the participants in the Today Club program are out-of-district and assumes that the Special Olympic programs are similar. Wetterberg commented that out-of-district participants make the programs successful, and if Round Lake switched to a different organization with an out-of-district fee, then two-thirds of the participants would leave because they are unable to afford the out-of-district fees.

Christine Lang thanked the Round Lake Area Park District for the amazing Today Club program that has helped her son create some amazing friendships. She praised the SRSNLC staff for their efforts over the years, most notably the virtual programming that was offered. She commented that her son wanted to participate in it and loved that there were participants from out-of-state in the program. Lang commented that this program will not exist if Round Lake moves to SRACLC.

Jeanne Kearby has been involved with Park District programs for over 40 years and has bragged about the district and its commitment to the Round Lake community. Kearby is disappointed that the Round Lake Area Park District is discussing moving to SRACLC, as the additional out-of-district expense to the Round Lake families and travel would be very difficult for families who already may have had to make hard financial decisions. She has seen this first-hand, as she is the grandmother of a special needs grandson whose parents have experienced this situation. Kearby asked the board to suspend deciding until after a year of no COVID restrictions to accurately determine the needs of the community, and to form a public advisory board of parents and special education educators to review the current agreement and any future agreements with special recreation districts.

Mike Findley is the husband of the past SRSNLC Program Manager Jessica Findley. Mrs. Findley had worked with the Round Lake Area Park District since 2001, and her leaving was a very hard decision. He stated that the families she worked with loved her and she didn't want to leave. Mr. Findley believed that COVID was used to make people in the SRSNLC department uncomfortable. He mentioned that Mrs. Findley fought to bring staff back to the department and did a good job in her role. He added that Mrs. Findley received a bonus but was disgusted with the bonus and gave it back. Mr. Findley believed the direction of Director Newport is a liability to the community, and COVID is not an excuse to not run a program. He mentioned that the staff wanted to have three locations for programming but were unable to do so because they were not allowed to bring back the staff needed. Mr. Findley questioned why Director Newport has a vehicle that is paid for by the district. He commented that there are emails between Mrs. Findley and Katie Gamroth regarding the needs of the department, and Katie did not help her. Mr. Findley stated that he believed that this was the plan of the Park District from the beginning, and it was disgusting how the Today Club is a cash cow when Mrs. Findley purchased items out of her own personal funds. He commented that when this was brought up by staff in the district parking lot, they were yelled at. He stated he is angry, but his wife is in a better place serving the community that she loves because this is her passion.

Dawn Kaiser had learned of the discussion going on and was concerned about what will happen to the Today Club. She commented that SRACLCLC programs fill up quickly and asked what participants will do if they cannot get into programs. Kaiser noted that she doesn't want to drive to Vernon Hills for programs. She is concerned about the future for her son and not having a place for him to go and grow.

Scott Jewett thanked the board for the opportunity to speak and is representing four families in his comments. Scott is a 20-year resident with four children. His son is 20 years old and is active in special recreation programming. Jewett commented on the three directions that he believed the Round Lake Area Park District could go: (1) switch over to SRACLCLC programming for Round Lake families, (2) stay with SRSNLC and run the program as is, or (3) partner with the special recreation community to build something great. Jewett commented that staying with SRSNLC will take resources and energy. He asked if there could be a caveat with current participants to be grandfathered in if the switch was made to SRACLCLC. Jewett also asked what metrics will be in place to determine if the change is successful, and what will happen if this didn't work. He commented on how the special recreation community is strong and willing to help to keep programs close to home.

Edwin Fuhrmann has a son, Carl, who has been participating in the programs offered by SRSNLC and in the Today Club for the last decade. Fuhrmann asked if any research had been done via survey asking for feedback from participants. He didn't recall seeing anything regarding it being a data-driven decision and noted that if there hasn't been any data collected, there should be.

Martin Simpson commented that the general feeling of people in the past months is one of unhappiness. Simpson alleged that Jessica Findley was targeted by Director Newport and believes Newport needs oversight and is out of control. Simpson stated that he believes Director Newport is a bully and picks on females, and that the board needs to talk to residents and employees. He asked how many employees have left the district over the past couple of years. Simpson commented that his wife pushed to get programs back and was met with resistance. He asked what the district's hierarchy structure was and who Director Newport's boss was and how to talk to them.

Members of the audience spoke out that they believe Director Newport is a liability and that staff members have been seen crying.

Cheryl Calcese is a 45-year resident and has stayed in Round Lake because of the good schools. Calcese received custody of Vera when she was two years old. Calcese commented that by taking away Vera's friends, the district would be taking away her freedom and her privileges, and that would be devastating for Vera. Calcese praised SRSNLC staff who helped her find outside resources when she chose to take Vera in. She asked the board to look at the children and families this would be affecting and not just the data.

Commissioner Paul Hollingsworth thanked the audience for their comments.

VI. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

MOTION: Commissioner Timothy Pasternak moved to approve the agenda for the Regular Board Meeting of February 10, 2022, as presented.
SECOND: By Commissioner Nick Metropulos
VOTE: By roll call. All ayes. Motion passed.

VII. DIRECTOR'S REPORTS

A. Annual Golf Committee Report and Recommendations

Golf Pro/Manager Brad Rouse commented that the past two years were the best years that Renwood had seen. The increase in golfers is leveling out and the goal is to maintain use over the next year and staff would like to keep rates the same. Rouse discussed the driving range project set to begin in March, and the success of the new golf simulator in the pro shop. Rouse noted that he is considering the addition of a second golf simulator next year to make the pro shop more of a year-round facility. Additional staffing would be added to assist with an increase in evening and weekend hours.

Golf Grounds Manager Sandy Bemis discussed the four beehives at Renwood that produced 10 gallons of honey in 2021. She is considering using the out-of-play long grass area as a pollinator garden and looks forward to continuing to work with other departments on upcoming programs.

Commissioner Nick Metropulos inquired about the prescribed controlled burn. Golf Grounds Manager Bemis stated that the controlled burn helps to remove the buckthorn and purple loosestrife to allow for milkweed to return.

MOTION: Commissioner Tim Pasternak moved to approve Renwood rates for the 2022 golf season.
SECOND: By Commissioner Nick Metropulos
VOTE: By roll call. All ayes. Motion passed.

B. Project Updates

Superintendent of Parks Ane Olivares commented that North Shore Park and Sports Center Park projects are completed. She noted that there will be some start up components in the spring at Sports Center Park, including volleyball nets and splash pad elements that will need to be installed prior to use. Olivares described elements she is working on for the grand opening of the parks this summer.

Golf Grounds Manager Sandy Bemis described the structure that is to be built over six bays at Renwood driving range.

Superintendent of Parks Ane Olivares commented that the Whitewood pickle ball court fence is up, and that parks staff are looking at the district's Highland Park for additional park amenities.

Superintendent of Recreation Katie Gamroth described the new flooring that has been ordered for the Children's Neighborhood renovation that is currently underway at the Rolek

Center. She stated that the next step would be to determine what exhibits will be constructed in the space once the flooring is completed.

C. Aquatic Season 2022

Superintendent of Recreation Katie Gamroth provided anticipated dates for the 2022 aquatic season and noted that this is staff dependent. She commented that the district is excited to once again be offering membership opportunities and swim team. Facility hours and structure will remain consistent with the 2021 season.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Nick Metropulos thanked the audience for their comments and feedback. He reiterated that the board has the best intentions for the special recreation community, Round Lake Area Park District, and the borders beyond. Metropulos noted that the district is at a transition point and is reviewing discussions and data.

Commissioner Paul Hollingsworth thanked the audience and noted that no decisions by the board are made lightly, and the board is weighing all options.

IX. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of the Regular Board Meeting Minutes of January 13, 2022.
- B. Approval of Cash Expenditure Transactions for the month of January 2022.

MOTION: Commissioner Nick Metropulos moved to approve the Consent Agenda of February 10, 2022.

SECOND: By Commissioner Sarah Green

VOTE: By roll call. All ayes. Motion passed.

X. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Finance

- 1) Monthly Statements

Finance Department Manager Jennifer Baker provided the monthly financial statements.

B. Program and Facility Reports

- 1) Recreation Report

Superintendent of Recreation Katie Gamroth and the Recreation Department staff provided written reports.

- 2) Golf Report

Golf Pro/Manager Brad Rouse and Golf Grounds Manager Sandy Bemis provided a written report.

- 3). Parks Report
Superintendent of Parks Ane Olivares provided a written report.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Commissioner Sarah Green moved to adjourn the Regular Board Meeting of February 10, 2022.

SECOND: By Commissioner Nick Metropulos.

VOTE: By Roll Call. All Ayes. Motion passed.

Park Board President Paul Hollingsworth adjourned the Regular Board Meeting of February 10, 2022, at 7:03 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted.

/s/Paul Hollingsworth
Paul Hollingsworth, Park Board President

/s/Katie Gamroth
Katie Gamroth, Assistant Board Secretary

March 10, 2022
Date Approved