



Wilmette Park District **Board Brief**

Updates of interest from your Wilmette Park District Board of Park Commissioners

Gillson Comprehensive Plan Transitions Towards Next Stage

At the forefront of the board meeting on March 8, was an update from the Lakota Group and Woodhouse Tinucci regarding the Gillson Comprehensive Plan. Scott Freres and Andy Tinucci briefly summarized the feedback and success of the Virtual Open House held on February 18. With over 200 attendees and 150 responses to the online polls, the Virtual Open House provided excellent feedback and direction for the designers to begin organizing and planning. “After listening to all of the feedback, I’m on board with keeping it simple,” said Tinucci. “Your community loves this park, they love the lake, and they know exactly what’s important about it.” Commissioner Abbott commented that, “We are in a period of considerable community dialogue and it’s an excellent opportunity to keep moving forward.”

Freres provided a timeline of next steps for the process. The Envision process will evaluate feedback, gather a variety of options and solutions, and conclude with focused options presented for a second round of feedback. “We’re listening and we want people to know they can continue to reach out to us as we go through the process,” said Freres.

Public Comment

Several topics were brought up during the Public Comment segment of the March 8 meeting. Members of the public expressed concern over the irrigation system recently installed at Community Playfields, historic opposition to disc golf at Gillson Park as well as transparency/accessibility of information from the park district.

Director’s Report - Preparing for Summer

Director Wilson touched on seasonal preparations at the March 8 meeting. Park district staff are making arrangements and planning for camps, beach and pool season, along with other exciting opportunities that come with warmer weather. The Summer Camp Guide will be posted online, along with



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registration opening by the end of the month. “People are anxious and ready to get out and enjoy all that we can offer,” said Wilson.

Progress on Shoreline Protection

Progress was reported regarding Langdon Beach’s shoreline protection during the March 8 meeting. Commissioner Abbott was pleased to announce that a meeting between the Lakefront Committee and SmithGroup had taken place and the designers came prepared to review and engage over their proposal. “We are expecting a revised proposal that we can discuss and take action on at the next Lakefront Committee meeting,” explained Abbott.

Parks & Rec. Committee Topics:

Plans Move Forward at Community Playfields

At the March 8 meeting, Commissioner Murdock was pleased to report that after many months of consideration, the Parks and Recreation Committee anticipates having recommendations for two key amenities at Community Playfields, public restroom locations and fitness path configurations, following their next meeting.

Conversations with the school district are ongoing with respect to use of the junior high exterior bathrooms, and staff have identified new potential locations for the public restroom structure. Commissioner Anderson commented that “Because the restroom will be a permanent feature of the park, cost should not be the primary driver, and we should instead focus on utility of the location, aesthetics and minimal visibility.”

The proposed Community Playfields fitness path is focusing on configurations including a half-mile loop and a three-quarter-mile loop of permeable path on the north end of the park. An optional extension on the southern portion would make the path a mile long, but this extension would require an impermeable surface such as a board walk to protect the existing tree root system. “My recommendation is that we move forward with the two configurations on the northern end, and in the future consider possible alternatives for the southern end,” suggested Murdock.

Continued Discussion of Dog Park Locations

The pros and cons between a dog park at Mallinckrodt Park and Howard Park were discussed at the March 8 meeting. Several commissioners expressed an interest in focusing on Howard Park as the new location with adjustments to the proposed configuration. Commissioner Goebel commented, “I like to look at current use patterns, and it is known amongst dog owners that Howard Park is a location where dogs and their owners gather in the morning – my recommendation is that we develop larger footprint configurations to consider at Howard.”

Expanding Amenities and Other Projects

Commissioner Murdock reported at the March 8 meeting that the Park & Recreation Committee is looking at reconfiguring/expanding options for the Community Gardens in order to ease the wait list for garden plots. While the

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project is ongoing, it is expected that planning will continue into the next board term due to the need for water service at the sites.

Pickleball Courts are also a topic being explore by the Parks & Recreation Committee. There are currently three lined courts available (two at Hibbard and one at Maple Park). With growing interest in the sport the Committee is looking at expanding operations and lining additional courts.

Snow Delays Projects at Golf

At the March 8 meeting, Commissioner Wolfe updated the board that work hadn't yet begun on the Gold Cart Path project due to the significant snowfall earlier in the year. "We need the ground to thaw and dry before bringing any heavy equipment onto the grass so as not to tear up the surface," explained Wolfe. "Staff are still confident the company will have enough people to complete the project in time."

Board Approves Social Equity Policy

The new Social Equity Policy was unanimously approved at the March 8 meeting. Director Wilson explained that this policy was carefully developed through a lengthy process. "It is a great aspiration for the way we all aim to conduct ourselves, and it sets the groundwork for continuous improvement moving forward."

These same sentiments were echoed by Commissioner Goebel who urged that the policy be viewed as a first step in the process – "For every policy there is an action plan, and for every action plan there needs to be follow through."

Park District Presents on Communications and Marketing

A presentation was given at the March 8 meeting by Wilmette Park District Communications and Marketing Manager, Marlon Rodas. An overview of all communications and outreach was given spanning 2020 as well as social media insights and traditional marketing methods. Focus was given to the dynamic adaptations and adjustments in marketing practices over the COVID-19 Pandemic, and the plans going forward as the community and park district rebuilds in its wake. Commissioner Abbott commented, "The pandemic has changed a lot of the habits and expectations of our patrons in terms of what the park district can do. The challenge going forward will be recapturing these expectations and habits as we reopen."

To read the full minutes from our past Board meetings, click [here](#). Minutes are posted after they are approved at a subsequent meeting.

Next Board meeting: Monday, April 12 at 7:30 p.m. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all meetings are being held virtually until further notice. Meetings will be available on Channel 6 locally for Comcast subscribers, as well as available on our shared YouTube channel with the Village of Wilmette. *Please check our [website](#) for updates.*

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