

**PARK BOARD MEETING MINUTES
NOVEMBER 20, 2023**

Chairman Jay Schulz called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. Committee members present: Chairman Jay Schulz, Alderman John Lavalley, Alderwoman Lori Lancaster, Alderwoman Rosa Luna and Scott Logan. Member Pep Saucedo was absent. Also present were Mayor Kelly, City Administrator Lou Leone, Alderwoman Lisa Haderlein, Alderman Charles Gorman and Supt. Ryan Knop.

Public Comment

Naomi Perales, 4890 Thistle Ln., LITH and Justin Leith, 2660 Braven Way, Woodstock addressed the Park Board on behalf of the Chi Upsilon Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa at McHenry County College. Their research topic this year is “the Art & Science of Play”. They visited Northfield Park and Milky Way Park as part of their research. Justin reviewed the results of their survey, as attached.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Scott Logan, seconded by Alderwoman Luna to accept the Park Board Minutes of September 18, 2023, as presented. All ayes. Motion carried.

Project Update/Status

Supt. Knop updated the Park Board on the following projects:

- Dog Park: Public Works was able to tap into the main to run the water line for the water fountain. The cement slab was also poured for the project. The project will be finalized in the spring.
- The pool has been winterized. The water lines have been blown out, fill plugs installed and check valves removed. As time allows, Ryan will work with Public Works to clean out the DE tank.
- Park Pointe Walking Path: Supt. Knop confirmed with Powell Gravel to move forward in the spring.
- Christmas Tree at 5 points: The tree is set up and decorated for the holiday season. Ben’s Christmas Trees donated the tree.

Programs and Events

Supt. Knop updated the Park Board on active programs and events as included in the agenda packet.

- Egg Nog Jog- 40 Registered
- Concha's and Cocoa: Free Event for the Community on December 9th from 2pm-5pm. We will have free Concha's and Hot Chocolate and taking a picture with Santa. The Library will be joining in this event and handing out free take home crafts for the kids to do.
- Limber Life: Session one is currently underway with 7 participants.
- Zumba: Currently only 5 signed up at the moment
- Gingerbread Showdown: Gingerbreads can start arriving at City Hall on Monday, November 27th.
- ESL Program: Waiting on one more to confirm availability. Goal is to start promoting this by December 1st.
- University of Illinois Extension Office: Ryan met with Mary Flores for the U of I extension office to discuss ways to work together to drive health and activity related recreation and programming to our residents.
- Harvard Jr. Hornets Travel Basketball: Practice has started and going very well. Numbers were down from last year, but enough for full 5th – 7th grade teams. Program sponsors: US Medical Glove, Brown Bear Day Care, Jay and Kelley Schulz, and The Harvard State Bank.

Rebuild Illinois Grant

No update at the current time.

Community Garden

Ryan met with Alderman Schulz and Alderwoman Haderlein the end of October to discuss the community garden at Lion’s Park. Their consensus was to start in spring of 2025. Following the meeting, Ryan started working on the details with Donovan and City Administrator Leone. They felt the project could start before the growing season of 2024, which would be around Mother’s Day. The estimated cost for 16 raised container garden beds and fill would be \$3896.50 or \$243.54 per bed. The beds could be rented out for \$40 a year for one, or \$60 a year for two. There was discussion regarding mowing and maintenance around the beds with the renter being responsible for a 1’ area around the bed. Alderwoman Haderlein related that Woodstock has a similar program, with a variety of sizes, with good results. Woodstock also found grant funds to get their program started; Alderwoman Haderlein has reached out to Terri Wilcockson, who is Woodstock’s retired grant writer, to get additional information.

Milky Way Park Soccer Fields

Supt. Knop reviewed the spread sheet in the packet outlining expenses for high, middle and low end soccer fields and the cost from Langton Group to perform the grading. At Alderman Gorman's inquiry, Ryan related that most of the soccer fields in the county are mid to mid-high end fields, with a couple mid to mid-lows. Chairman Schulz inquired about running a starter 12 team tournament with a minimal entry fee. Ryan replied that he is still working towards a 12-team recreation style two-day tournament in the summer. The numbers presented were more for bringing in outside athletic tourism into the community. Chairman Schulz would like to see how a smaller tournament would run for a couple years to see if there is a greater demand before investing a lot of money. Alderwoman Luna concurred with Chairman Schulz' recommendation. Mayor Kelly suggested reaching out to some of the local landscapers who might be willing to rake and level the fields in the spring as a donation to the parks which would allow for a tournament in the mid-summer/fall. Alderman Lavallee said that Dacy Airport has a big highway asphalt, double drum roller that they might be willing to let the City use.

Recreation Center Survey Update

The recreation survey has closed with 427 responses on the English survey; 15 on the Spanish survey. Ryan is compiling the information and will have a full report to be presented at the December Park Board Meeting.

Budget Discussion

There was discussion of the preliminary budget which will be gone over line by line at the December 11th meeting. Chairman Schulz suggested budgeting park program equipment over 2-3 years. He asked the board to direct questions to Ryan individually so he can respond and bcc the full board. Ryan was directed to itemize the high ticket items.

Financial Report

The report was provided by Finance Director Deb Bejot and included in the agenda packet.

Vandalism Report

A police report was filed on November 4th due to vandalism at Moose Field and Mary's Park. Over 19 tags were found on various park items. The responsible party was identified and arrested. Ryan is working with the Police Dept. on the cost.

Mayor's Report

No report.

Supt. Knop's Report

Supt. Knop reviewed his report as submitted.

Harvard Parks Foundation Report

No new report.

New Business

City Administrator Leone commented that earlier in the year the City was identifying some lots to sell; the task has been given to Donovan to complete to either auction or entice buyers for infill.

City Administrator Leone suggested a couple items to add to the dog park and has asked Public Works to take out cut up logs next time a tree needs to be taken down; also dummy fire hydrants.

The next meeting is Monday, December 11, 2023, at 6 pm. The Park Board will be discussing the upcoming budget.

At 6:49 pm, a motion was made by Scott Logan, seconded by Alderwoman Lancaster to adjourn the meeting. All ayes. Motion carried.

Submitted by:
Chairman Jay Schulz

Dear Superintendent Knop,

Hello, we are with Phi Theta Kappa, the official international honor society for two-year colleges, and specifically we are from the Chi Upsilon chapter at McHenry County College. Each year we do a project that helps our local community based on research around a specific topic. This year's research topic is "The Art & Science of Play," and we did research around the inclusivity and accessibility of community parks and conservation areas in McHenry County.

Our research found that members of marginalized communities need encouragement and universal design practices to fully participate in play. We further learned that play is necessary for good mental and physical health. Including spaces that are free of obstacles, adding equipment that is designed or adapted for people with physical and mental disabilities, and including gender-neutral facilities will bring more ability to play to members of our communities. To achieve these goals, some best practices for parks and recreation areas are:

- Handicapped Parking
- Ramps & wide walk paths on trails and play equipment made with a solid surface
- Specific interactive structures for the differently abled (handicapped swings, puzzles, musical toys, interactive toys at various heights)
- A calming seating area for caregivers and those who are feeling overstimulated
- Welcoming artwork that shows representations for all races, the differently abled, and LGBTQIA+ people
- Public access to clean, appropriately stocked, and unlocked bathrooms
- Gender Neutral handicapped-enabled bathrooms
- Baby changing tables available in all bathrooms
- Menstrual products available in all bathrooms

We took time to visit and survey Northfield Park and Milky Way Park. After analyzing our research, we noticed that your parks include playgrounds with rules displayed for children to enjoy themselves while ensuring good behavior, shaded areas to relax, and quiet areas for children to decompress if they become overstimulated. Milky Way Park is a helpful location to facilitate community soccer games, which is an important recreational option for citizens. In addition, we observed that the bathrooms at Northfield Park were locked, and the bathrooms at Milky Way Park had been missing amenities like changing tables and menstrual products. The bathrooms were gendered and rated not clean. The parks did not have interactive equipment nor inclusive and welcoming artwork; however, we were happy to see that your parks had wheelchair accessible walkways and that the bathrooms are handicap accessible, which ensures admission and enjoyment of your parks for everyone.

Northfield Park and Milky Way Park are important to the citizens of Harvard, and we appreciate your service to our community. Thank you for taking the time to read about our findings and observations. We hope that you will consider these issues when making future improvements to your space.