

Special Meeting (Referendum Open House)
February 21, 2019

A. Call to Order & Pledge to the Flag

At the call of President Sue Gulas, the Joliet Park District Board of Commissioners met for a Special Meeting (Referendum Open House) on Thursday, February 21, 2019, at the Hartman Recreation Center, 511 N. Collins Street, Joliet, IL 60432. The meeting began at 6:30pm.

The Pledge of the Flag was led by Commissioner Clement.

B. Roll Call

Commissioners Present: McGuire, Clement, Gulas
Commissioners Absent: Mutz, Tatro

C. Details on the Proposition of Increasing the Limiting Rate for the Joliet Park District at the April 2, 2019 Consolidated Election

Deputy Director Brad Staab presented details on the Proposition of Increasing the Limiting Rate for the Joliet Park District at the April 2, 2019 Consolidated Election. Mr. Staab informed the public that the Park District is responsible for operating and maintaining 65 community parks, 23 facilities, 3 golf courses, the Joliet Regional Airport, and Splash Station Waterpark along with numerous programs and events such as Taste of Joliet and Back to School Fest. Mr. Staab acknowledged that the Park District did go to the Joliet Park District residents for a 19.5 referendum in 2014 for specific projects. It was noted that the projects from the 2014 referendum were completed on time and within budget. Projects included improvements to 20 community parks; Pilcher Park roads, trails and security improvements; reforestry; lighting, camera and other safety and security improvements; as well as the construction of the Nowell Park Recreation Center.

Mr. Staab stated that there are still many facilities and about forty parks that need to be improved. Improvements include replacing outdated playground equipment; improving walking trails, gazebos and pavilions at the remaining parks; and renovating ballfields and facilities. Seven facilities that need renovations are Joliet Memorial Stadium, Bird Haven Greenhouse, Inwood Athletic Club, Splash Station Waterpark, Hartman Recreation Center, Inwood Ice Arena, and Joliet Regional Airport Main Hangar. It was noted that the Park District is 97 years old and many facilities are aging.

Mr. Staab noted that the Park District also needs to address a Park Police program and other outstanding safety and security needs; resurfacing deteriorated parking lots; adding or improving Wi-Fi in district facilities; and maintaining existing operations, maintenance and programming.

Mr. Staab stated that the Park District does not have sufficient funds for the specific projects as well as ongoing operations and maintenance since the Park District has operated at a deficit the past four years and the reserves are being drawn down by hundreds of thousands of dollars each year. It was also noted that the Park District's current tax rate is less than one half of one percent and the average annual budget of other comparable park districts is more than double that of Joliet

Park District. Mr. Staab addressed the fact that the local property taxes currently fund about 32% of the Joliet Park Districts operations compared to 50% and higher of other park districts. Mr. Staab stated that the estimated tax impact of the limiting rate increase of 0.2558 is \$7.10 per month per \$100,000 of a home's market value.

D. Opportunity for the Public to Speak - 3 minute time limit
The floor was opened to the public for questions and comments.

Resident Rose Corley expressed her support for the Joliet Park District. Ms. Corley stated that the Park District reaches many people in the community and increases the property value with the renovated parks and facilities.

Resident Faye Cartwright inquired about the safety of the parks, does it include all parks. Mr. Staab stated that the Park District would like to implement an enhance partnership with the Joliet Police Department where parks are patrolled and areas that have a higher safety concern are closely monitored.

Resident Donald Stevens expressed his concerns regarding the condition of Forest Park. There is no water or bathrooms and the soccer field cannot be used. Director of Planning/Parks, Larry Burich, stated that the Forest Park has been an ongoing project. City Councilwomen, Bettye Gavin, has been involved and the Park District is working with the City of Joliet on the water situation. It was noted that Forest Park was not one of the parks renovated with the 2014 Referendum but did receive some improvements such as a walking track and pavilion. Staff is aware that there are still improvements to be made.

A resident stated that he is happy with the improvements made to Pilcher Park however he would like to see more security.

There was a question from a resident about the allocation of the taxes brought in if the referendum passes. It was stated that there are many critical issues that need to be addressed such as aging facilities with structural issues and outdated playgrounds.

President Gulas noted that staff has taken measures to increase revenue and reduce cost. Some programs fees have been increased, staff positions have been combined, lease agreements for the pro shop and the restaurant at Inwood Athletic Club have been renegotiated, the Park District rented additional space to ATI Physical Therapy along with extending the life of the turf at the ATI Field. President Gulas also stated that within two years, replacement parts will not be available for the aging Ice Arena's cooling system.

It was noted by Mr. Burich that Park District staff is always looking for grants to fund specific projects.

E. Adjournment

With all agenda items discussed, a motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner McGuire. The

motion was seconded by Commissioner Clement and it carried unanimously. The time was 6:58pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Theresa Talarico
Recording Secretary