

Special Meeting (Referendum Open House)
March 12, 2019

A. Call to Order & Pledge to the Flag

At the call of Commissioner Bill Tatro, the Joliet Park District Board of Commissioners met for a Special Meeting (Referendum Open House) on Tuesday, March 12, 2019, in the Kathy Green Multi-Purpose Center - Room 4 North, 3000 W. Jefferson Street, Joliet, IL 60435. The meeting began at 6:00pm.

The Pledge of the Flag was led by Commissioner Tatro.

B. Roll Call

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

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 did acknowledge 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 parks that need to be improved. Improvements include replacing outdated playground equipment and improving walking trails, gazebos and pavilions at the remaining parks and renovating ballfields and facilities.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.

Mr. Staab noted that the Park District is 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 stated 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.

Joliet resident, Fred Tijan, expressed concern about funding the Joliet Regional Airport since it's used by a small population of the Joliet area and cannot compete against other local airports such as the Lewis University airport.

Joliet resident, Judy Studer, expressed her gratitude for the improvements at Pilcher Park but would like to see more of a police presence.

Joliet resident, Jane Schmig, questioned why this issue of lack of tax revenue was not brought to the voters in 2014 and what has the park district done to reduce cost. Mr. Staab stated that in 2014 the Park District was addressing specific projects, however, looking back the Park District should have considered an operating component to the referendum.

Executive Director Tom Carstens stated that staff has taken measures to increase revenue and reduce cost. Some programs fees have been increased, staff positions have been combined, and facility hours reduced.

There was a discussion regarding the new minimum wage increase and how it will affect the Park District financially.

Joliet resident Larry Warren, asked about what the Park District priority list is. Mr. Staab stated that if the referendum is passed the Board will discuss in open meeting what facilities will be addressed first. It was noted that the Ice Arena is one of the top priorities along with Park Police and the Joliet Memorial Stadium.

A resident asked what the actual cost is for the Park Police. There was a discussion regarding the Park Police program.

There was concern from some of the public regarding how high the tax increase is and how it will be hard for seniors on a fixed income. It was stated by a few people that they would rather see specific items to vote for not a permanent tax rate increase.

Sherri Reardon and Suzanne Schuler, Joliet resident, questioned a mailer that was sent out from current Park Board Commissioner, Joe Mutz, who is running for city council, stating that the Park District has \$8 million in surplus. It was stated by Mr. Staab that the \$8 million surplus is not a true statement.

There was a discussion regarding the sale of a parcel at the Wedgewood Golf Course. It was stated by Mr. Staab that the funds from the sale can only be used for improvements to Wedgewood Golf Club.

There was a question from a resident regarding free memberships at the Inwood Athletic Club. It was stated by Mr. Staab that the City of Joliet pays a corporate membership for their employees.

The public brought up other ways to generate revenue and cut cost such as increase tax base by bringing in local communities that are not currently in the Park District and selling facilities such as the Airport.

Mr. Staab noted that the top three revenue generators for the Park District is the Recreation Department/Kathy Green Multi-Purpose Center, Inwood Athletic Club, and Taste of Joliet.

There was a discussion regarding what type of actions will be taken if the referendum, does not pass. Mr. Carstens stated that staff has been working on a budget constraint program. Items will include reduction in staff, reducing hours and possibly closing facilities.

There was a discussion regarding the Park District's tax cap and how it has affected the park district.

Commissioner Clement stated that the Board and staff are taking this very seriously and thanked the public for coming out.

E. Adjournment

With all agenda items discussed, a motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Tatro. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Clement and it carried unanimously. The time was 7:25pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Theresa Talarico
Recording Secretary