



Kankakee Valley

PARK DISTRICT

Kankakee Valley Park District Committee of the Whole Minutes September 25, 2023

The Board Meeting was called to order at 4:35pm by Commissioner Skelly. Those present for roll call (in person or by electronic means) were Commissioner R. Eads (arrived at 4:46pm), J. Frey, M. Matthews, D. Palmer, D. Skelly. Others present (in person or via Zoom): Dayna Heitz, Executive Director, Rick Collins, Superintendent of Building & Grounds, Melissa Woodard, Superintendent of Business, Attorney David Freeman & Patrick Miner. Not present: Lisa Krenkel, Superintendent of Recreation

Public Present: Jeff Bonty – Daily Journal, Conner Stroud – SKDO, Dan Dandurand

Public Comment:

NA

Communications

NA

Old Business

New Business

A. Discussion – Board of Commissioners Vision

Commissioner Skelly said we will meet for a half hour before board meeting to talk about the commissioner's vision. Mostly relates to arborist and naturalist. Commissioner Frey broke down an outline he provided to the board members on how to implement a transition to a conservation-based approach to the park district. Also, how to start a nature program and a special recreation program. Tried to put together some ideas for sensory. It's very vague but would like to use this framework. The more vision we have and the more unified we are, it will be easier to implement.

Commissioner Matthews said this started with some ideas we had. There are some unhealthy trees out there. What are the needs of the district? There is an obvious need for stewardship in the district. Every park district is responsible for natural resource. We have a lot greenspace. What is the ecosystem? Then comes education and we need to educate ourself so we can educate others. We should have someone on staff who is a general naturalist. Arborist will be

more detail and the naturalist will understand there is a problem. Think we need some board appointed administrator that talks about finances and reports to the board. It would be a “checks and balances.”

Commissioner Palmer has been about the trees. (Commissioner Eads arrived at 4:46pm) He thinks Commissioner Matthews idea would make us stay relevant. We need to become aware and reach out to Morton arboretum or botanical garden to see what resources they receive. If the staff does not have a personal interest in it, they won't be as good at their job. Need people that have a passion for what they do.

Commissioner Skelly said this is a philosophy. When Commissioner Matthews first started talking about it, I don't look at things to same but was happy to listen. We are stewards of the park. Don't want this to fall by the wayside. If Dayna and Rick embrace it and pass it on down. Want to be cognizant of the resources. Need to figure out what the naturalist job is. More of a philosophy and will take time. Hopeful that these programs will take root in the community. Been fine with what Dayna has presented. Comes down to us when deciding the budget and she has provided different options.

Commissioner Frey says there is an opportunity to look at different revenue streams. A placard with a QR card for a save a tree program. Create opportunities for the public to invest in the community. There are a wide variety of conservation groups, youth camps, you give them the platform to share what they have been doing.

Commissioner Eads talked about an adopt a park program. They could help keep an eye on the park and keep us informed. If they want to see a certain program, they can bring that to us and we are dealing with the residents of the wards. All that Dayna has on her plate, you guys are awesome. The park district they couldn't hold a candle to what we have down here. With the money we have, we are doing an awesome job.

Director Heitz said the district did have an adopt a park program before she was here. Tried to do a lot of sponsorships but did not bring back adopt a park program. Do tree memorials now.

Commissioner Eads said we don't give enough credit to the personnel. Like to hear you are doing a good job and that your work is valued. Same for the adopt a program. Give them a dinner to show our appreciation.

Commissioner Palmer said the planting area in Cobb Park that was abandoned. Like the idea for the adopt a park but it's hard to keep people doing it.

Commissioner Eads hopes the program can be passed down. Another consideration to take into account.

Commissioner Matthews said the naturalist would be responsible for those areas but have to get the community buy in.

Commissioner Frey said you need to tailor it to the nearby community that it is relevant to. Like the idea of community organizations adopting a park, you could let them utilize the park like a picnic to recruit involvement.

Commissioner Frey asked for all notes from Commissioners and will consolidate and send to Dayna.

Commissioner Eads asked about Lisa's meeting with the naturalist. Dayna said she has spoken with multiple people and will get her thoughts.

Commissioner Palmer said there is someone that takes kids from a school to Cobb. They like it because of the shade. Not all our parks have enough shade.

ADJOURN MEETING

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made at 5pm by Commissioner Eads, seconded by Commissioner Frey. Upon voice vote, all ayes, motion carried.

Respectfully submitted: Melissa Woodard