



REGULAR BOARD MEETING
 BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS OF PALATINE PARK DISTRICT
 Village of Palatine, 200 East Wood Street in Palatine
 Second Floor - Community Room B
 June 10, 2024, at 5:00 p.m.



These minutes are not a verbatim record of what was said during the meeting

The meeting was called to order at 5:03 p.m. by President Ruff

Commissioners Present

Terry Ruff, President
 Jennifer Rogers, Vice President
 Susan Gould, Commissioner
 Joe Petricca, Commissioner
 Greg Sammons, Commissioner

Commissioners Absent

Staff Present

Benjamin Rea, Executive Director
 Andrea Fisher, Park Board Treasurer/Director of Finance
 Sonia Austin, Superintendent of Finance
 Michelle Eckelberry, Director of District Services
 Dayell Houzenga, Superintendent of District Services
 Jim Holder, Director of Parks & Planning
 Amy Vito, Superintendent of Parks & Planning

Colleen Palmer, Director of Recreation & Facilities
 Katie Waszak, Supt. of Recreation Programming
 Josh Ludolph, Supt. of Recreation Facilities
 Cheryl Lufitz, Communications & Marketing Mgr.
 JP McNamara, Digital Marketing Coordinator
 Lisa Allie, Park Board Secretary/Executive Assistant

Visitors and Citizens' Present

Andrew Paine, Tressler LLP/Park District Attorney
 See attached list

Approval of Agenda

Commissioner Rogers moved, and Commissioner Gould seconded that the agenda be approved. By a roll call vote, the agenda for the regular meeting of June 10, 2024, was approved. The result of the roll call follows:

AYE: Jennifer Rogers, Susan Gould, Joe Petricca, Greg Sammons, Terry Ruff
 NAY: None
 ABSENT: None
 Motion carried.

Approval of Consent Agenda

The Board reviewed the previously distributed items posted on the consent agenda. Commissioner Petricca moved and Commissioner Rogers seconded that the consent agenda be approved as presented. By a roll call vote, the following items on the consent agenda were approved: Regular Meeting Minutes of May 13, 2024, Local Government Efficiency Act Meeting Minutes of May 13, 2024, and Warrant #10. The result of the roll call vote follows:

AYE: Susan Gould, Joe Petricca, Greg Sammons, Jennifer Rogers, Terry Ruff
 NAY: None
 ABSENT: None
 Motion carried.

President Ruff reviewed the public comment protocol policy and advised that even though the District's decision to close the Palatine Stables is not on tonight's agenda the Park Board wants to allow time for the community to share its comments. They will extend the standard 30-minute limit for comments to 90 minutes so that they can hear from as many people as possible tonight. President Ruff advised those who don't get a chance to speak tonight to send an email using the Contact Us form on the Park Districts website so that their comments can be entered into the minutes of tonight's meeting. President Ruff advised the visitors that he had received a lot of Spokesperson forms and would be calling them to speak in the order they were submitted before moving to the individuals who signed in to speak.

Visitors and Citizens' Comments

Jamie Berger: I speak not only for myself as a Palatine resident, but for the thousands of voices that have risen in opposition to the proposal to close Palatine Stables. Our petition signed by over 5000 concerned citizens is a testament to the depth of the feelings that this issue has stirred within our community. Additionally, more than 290 heartfelt letters have been sent directly to you pleading for reconsideration of this decision which defies logic and reason. The stables are not only a revenue generating asset, but also a unique and invaluable resource that provides countless benefits to our residents and sets us aside from other municipalities. We stand ready and willing to collaborate with the board and other stakeholders to explore alternative options that do not require significant financial investment or extensive repair work.

Mike Hoffman: My daughter and I have been coming to the Palatine Stables every day for the past four years and somehow along the way that place has evolved into a second home. Today I want to focus on accountability with you showing us that you can take ownership for your missteps leading up to your rush decision to close the stable. I as well as others have looked over the engineering report and have sent out a 52-page summary addressed to each of you. I insist that you take immediate action tonight by bringing this matter back to the table. The previous decision was rushed and was made using inaccurate information. You've had ample time to read the hundreds of letters sent and the breakdown of your engineering report. Show us your leadership, prove your integrity, and communicate with us, your constituents. We're willing and able, let us collaborate and find a solution to the actual problems that do exist.

Sabine Zielinski: I started at Palatine Stables in 1989 and over the years I have shown with hundreds of riders in the area. Riding is a family affair, my husband takes lessons, my kids are also enrolled in lessons and have a weekly pony ride on Sundays. I am a concerned member of this community, and I would like to talk to you about the cost of the actual recommended repairs. Using the numbers provided by Lamp, which were suggested, and are not the most cost-effective ways of repairing columns, and without exploring an RFP the numbers to replace six columns would be \$16,630.00. This is nowhere near the 2.67 million cited on May 13th. In fact, it's .62% and we can easily fund that with the revenue from one horse show. How could any decision of this magnitude be made without conducting proper due diligence? Even with my FOIA request ignored, refused, and ultimately delayed I can still do the math with what I have, and the numbers presented on May 13th do not add up. You need to rescind the former motion to close the Palatine Stables.

Aria D'Souza: I am 11 years old and I've been riding at the Palatine Stables for the past 4 1/2 years. This barn is my second home. The barn has not only taught me how to ride a horse, but how to take care of them, including bathing, grooming and feeding them. I also volunteer for pony rides and pony parties and have been able to compete in so many shows because of the barn. This is not just a barn; it is a community and a safe space for me and my friends to learn and grow as equestrians and horse lovers. I do not understand why you want to shut us down and build something in the barns place. I want you to please hear our voices and come learn what palatine stables means to young girls like me. Please do not close us down.

Jamie Lindsey: I'm here as a current border and patron of Palatine Stables for over 25 years. I grew up in Palatine where many family members and friends still reside; all of whom reject the rash decision that was hastily made to close the stables. You must do more to validate how much the necessary partial repairs would cost to keep the stables safe and functional by obtaining additional bids and removing excessive amounts from your current estimates. We all know, that park district facilities are not meant to be for profit institutions, but for the benefit of the community. In the last decade, this is one of the only Palatine Park District facilities that generates revenue year-round. In fact, there are many facilities and parks that do not generate revenue at all and yet thousands of dollars are spent each year to maintain these facilities and parks. Other capital projects approved to be done this year include \$1,000,000.00 to replace an artificial turf on one soccer field. Funds for the stables were not even considered or discussed. We demand that you change course in this decision and open it back up for discussion.

Tom Gersic: I'm a patron of Palatine Stables, a business owner and property taxpayer here in Palatine. My family and I have been involved in the Palatine Park District sports and recreational activities for 15 years. The Palatine Stables is a treasure of this community. It is true that people come from far and wide to enjoy Palatine Stables, like Hoffman Estates or Arlington Heights have with hockey. If there is concern about the balance of residents versus non-residents who use this facility, despite residents being undercounted, there is clearly a huge potential for more engagement if Palatine Park District were to market and promote the stables as they do for other activities. Parks, bike trails, tennis, pickleball courts and pools are being used daily by residents and non-residents alike. Yet those are under no threat of being closed. I and our list of several thousand others in the community are asking for this rushed and irresponsible decision to be put on hold until fully authentic estimates for the stable can be obtained by licensed contractors, shared with the community, and community input can be reviewed and considered.

Elle Haferkamp: I have lived in Palatine for the majority of my life. I have also ridden at Palatine Stables as a rider, a lessor and a boarder. I'm here to share why Palatine Stables is important to the community due to the mental health benefits that horses provide. I'm a licensed Illinois clinical professional counselor and a child LS and trauma professional. We currently live in a society where stress and anxiety often dominate our lives, especially children and teenagers. Palatine Stables provides Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy, or EFP, to help alleviate these mental health struggles. EFP's also help those with a variety of physical and mental disabilities; we can see this as evidenced by the many families who have used services from the NWSRA. They have used equine therapy through Palatine Stables for years. No representative today was able to speak, possibly as a conflict of interest. As noted, Ben Rea is the executive director for the Palatine Park District, but is also on the board for the NWSRA. This is a conflict as no family who relies on these vital services for their children is going to speak against a board member. I would like to submit this for the record.

Mick Ross: One of our children, Lindsey, age 37, has ridden at the stables for the past 25 years. She started riding through a program from NWSRA that was vital to getting Lindsey started with her horseback riding. Lindsey has a severe neurological disorder; it has left her completely dependent on others to care for her and every single part of her life. In addition to the physical benefits, the social and emotional benefits for her include boosting her self-esteem and giving her confidence. The stables have given her a sense of belonging as everyone knows Lindsey. We have spent thousands and thousands of dollars throughout the years on Lindsey's lessons and it has been worth every single penny. Her lessons have made a profoundly positive impact on her life. Other than a cure for her disability, which there is none, riding has helped give her back a part of her life that her disability has taken away. There is no doctor, therapist or researcher that has done more for Lindsey than the Palatine Stables.

Diane Ross: This story is not just about Lindsay, but about all of those who have been served by the programs at Palatine Stables. I too am a mental health therapist and provider and when I think of the stables, I see the emotional benefits to all who ride there. They are so passionate and dedicated to something that is so positively rewarding, and both physically and emotionally healthy for them. Participants will lose something so valuable in their life and I am not sure how they will find a way to fill that void. I know that with much more thought and discussion the stables can remain open. Make the stables a community project, do fundraising, get corporate sponsors. Bring together those who can and are willing to help keep the stables vibrant and alive for Lindsey and the hundreds of others who utilize and need its programs.

Karen Kasparitis: My daughter Charlotte is a member of the Palatine show team and has been riding horses at the stables for the last seven years. Like Charlotte, I was born and raised in Palatine and grew up in the gym of Palatine gymnastics. Like any team sport that is organized or affiliated with the Palatine Park District, let me just name a few: Palatine Park District Baseball, Basketball, Volleyball, Palatine Celtic Soccer, PAFA Football, Palatine Travelers Baseball, Stingray Softball, Tiger Sharks Swim Team, Palatine Gymnastics, Jr. League Golf at Palatine Hills, the list goes on. Palatine Stables Equestrian Team shouldn't be treated any differently. To eliminate an athletic team without discussion in the middle of their season is just outrageous. As a Palatine resident who pays taxes to support this park district, I expect my elected officials to maintain the strictest standards. This decision does not live up to the high standards that Palatine is known for and it is not right for Palatine.

Cadence Gehrke: I grew up in Palatine. I have been a riding student at Palatine Stables for 23 years and a part-time employee for almost 16. I stand before you today deeply troubled by the recent announcement regarding the closure of Palatine Stables. While others have spoken about why the stables should remain open, my concern is of the horses. First and foremost, the timeline provided for this closure is egregiously short. We implore the board to extend the timeline allowing for proper arrangements to be made for the relocation or retirement of these horses. The Palatine Park District must not only facilitate the transition of these horses, but also provide their new caregivers with a financial package to assist in their ongoing care and well-being. They deserve a dignified retirement and it's our duty to ensure that they receive it. In closing I demand the Board of Commissioners reconsider this ill-conceived decision. Take the time to properly research and consult with experts to develop a plan that prioritizes the welfare of both the horses and the community. Anything less would be a grave disservice of the legacy the Palatine Stables has and everyone who calls it home.

Marlo Knapp-Fadani: I stand before you today to discuss solutions that have not been explored. Commissioner Gould presented several alternative more affordable construction options during the previous board meeting. I would like to raise the question as to why these alternatives were not explored formally and, in more detail? Furthermore, we've consulted our own construction experts with your report. It has come to our attention that additional alternative solutions are available that prevent significantly less disturbance to the property and to the horses. One such solution is Perma-Column, per your report only the portions of the post that are underground, or at ground need removing. Perma-Column is regularly used as a permanent solution for rotted wood posts. This amongst the multitude of other available alternatives must be explored more thoroughly by this Board. In addition to construction options, we have identified financial solutions and an abundance of equine specific grants available for projects just like this. The last solution I would like to present to you sits before you today. We are here, we are willing to do what is needed to protect this place and these horses. All you have to do is ask.

Jodie Diegel: I am the president and founder of the Soul Harbor Ranch animal therapy program. We're located in Barrington, and we have miniature therapy horses that you might have seen as you walked in tonight. I want to echo Elle's sentiments regarding the emotional and mental well-being that comes along with horses.

All of my horse knowledge is from Palatine Stables; it's where I started my three-year old horse that arrived in 2002. I was a Palatine resident for many years while my horse was boarded there. I moved to Barrington so that I'm able to have this wonderful Soul Harbor Ranch on my own property, but again what we're able to do out in the community impacting the mental health of everybody that we visit. Please consider the incredible children that are here, let the children ride, let the adults ride. Please, please come out to the stables and understand what it really means to be a part of Palatine Stables.

Frank Skorski: I'm shocked and saddened to hear what you guys decided on May 13th and wanted to come here to see if I can find out what we can do to convince you to reverse the decision. Back in 1967 my first job was to tear down a steel mill that was built when Abe Lincoln was alive. The reason that a steel mill could last for 120 years was because of the quality of the construction. What I'd like you guys to take a look at, feel, touch, and try and bite is it 2 x4 from the old days. Now the stable was built by the World War II heroes, and they used the greatest materials around. As an engineer working in the 60's we had a lot of problems because stuff that was built in the 1910's, 20's and 30's was far superior to the junk that was built in the 70's. So that said I'd like you to look at some of the ideas that have been offered by our people. My daughter went to Palatine Stables through NWSRA. My son was an Eagle Scout; his troop painted fences and did other projects. I'm sure that the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts or whatever they're called would be willing to do the same to help you out. We built stables for a horse rescue, our troop 335 did this so, the kids can do it. Parents are willing to give in their time and all you guys have to do is say go for it.

Jennifer Rosegay: I am a board member of the Horsemen's Council of Illinois, HCI. HCI supports the continuing operation of the Palatine Stables and emailed each of you a letter of support. For over 70 years the Palatine Stables have been a fixture in the Northwest Suburbs of Chicagoland offering the opportunity to interact with horses, agriculture, and rural life. Financially the Stables are part of a thriving industry, as of 2023 the horse industry contributes \$177 billion to the nation's economy annually, up from \$122 billion in 2017. Over 2 billion of that comes from Illinois, over 19,000 jobs in Illinois are directly in the equine industry with another 6,000 plus in equine-related facility industries. There are grants available from the Illinois Equine Research and Promotions Board. In fact, the stables received such a grant for \$8,500.00 in 2018. There are currently two bills in the Illinois legislature in support of increased insurance coverage for equine therapy and for the development of a five-year equine therapy pilot program. As one of only approximately 10 Park District equestrian programs out of 360 Park Districts in Illinois, the stables are a unique feature of the Village of Palatine, that are worth highlighting and promoting for years to come.

Jenny Hulen: I'm a resident of Palatine and I rise to speak against the closing of Palatine Stables. It was February of 2022, a few weeks shy of my 57th birthday that I had my first horseback riding lesson ever and it was at Palatine Stables. Let me tell you something about what happens when we middle-aged women get in the saddle. Our balance improves, we drop some weight, our joints are more flexible. We are stronger physically, mentally, and emotionally. Riding opens an entirely different path to wellness than any other sport and I don't want our community to lose that. Members of the board thank you for your service to our community. I call you to remembrance of your mission which others have already reminded you of, but especially to provide a variety of safe and enjoyable affordable activities that bring well-being to everyone in our community. It is a rare and beautiful thing to have Palatine Stables. Please continue to be good stewards of this unique life and joy-giving resource and asset that is here for our community.

Alissa DePue: I have a vested interest as our family did provide two nice horses to the stables so I just want to say I really think you should reconsider. I think you should dive all in on a state-of-the-art equine facility and make Palatine stand out even more. We had a Superintendent of Facilities that kicked this can down the road for a couple decades. I hear he's gone so let's take some time and attention to our facilities now. You have a stable; it's so different than anything anyone around us has. It draws people from Barrington, it draws

people from Inverness, it draws revenue from Barrington, it draws revenue from Inverness. Use these, you've got them. I know you do because I worked with you for three years.

Colleen Fisch: There's nothing wrong with the facility that \$100,000.00 wouldn't fix beautifully; better than it's been maintained in years. You are missing the biggest opportunity of any park district in the entire area. I want you to know this is an Olympic sport and this is a college sport, kids get scholarships to college to do this. It's a real sport, watch the Olympics this summer you'll see. If you guys had an ice arena in Palatine, a really nice complex that somebody spent millions of dollars to build it in 1952 and it needed \$100,000.00 worth of roof repair. Is your answer, we're going to spend \$500,000.00 to bulldoze it and tell kids you can't ice skate or play hockey? That is what you're doing. You're literally talking about spending our money to bulldoze a facility that would cost you millions and millions to recreate so please do the right thing. Rescind the decision, learn about the sport and get some revenue coming in. It's the jewel in your crown.

Elaine Ramesh: I'm the founder and chair of the Equestrian Coalition of McHenry County. I'm here asking you to reconsider your decision because I think you have some factors that you didn't consider. One of those factors, being these wonderful people here. We're all here because we want to keep this stable open, and we are able to help you do that. This is an Illinois Association of Park Districts award. The McHenry County Conservation District got this award in 2016 because we worked together with the McHenry County Park District to raise the funds necessary to open trails at the Brookdale site. We were awarded by the State Park District for that work, and I believe that the same thing can be done here. We ask you to take advantage of this resource; understand that equestrians have a track of being successful in raising money and coming alongside local government to make things happen. Please reconsider your decision.

Lili Kilbridge: I was the Stables Coordinator in 1989. After I left the stables, I worked for NRPA, in 2007 I was elected to the Hoffman Estates Park Board and was president in 2009. I brought some articles because marketing seems to be lacking. These articles are from some of the coverage that we got in the local papers because I was dedicated to management, but also marketing. When I left Tony replaced me, but Tony can't do everything. In 1992 we worked to create a stables marketing plan; this is the best thing I've ever done in my entire life. I have a degree in Parks and Recreation, my entire career was in Parks and Recreation. I learned more from this, and I'd be happy to share it with you, because what we went through is what I think you should go through again. As a Commissioner I know how tough your job is. Take this opportunity to do the best that you can for the community. You know the difference you've made in the lives of all these people here. I'd be happy to share this marketing with you and I'd be happy to work with you on a committee.

Peter Ciesielski: My wife and I are both attorneys living here in Palatine. We love the stables and just had my daughter's 3rd birthday there. I'm here because I believe this decision has already been made to close the stables. I feel terrible for all the people here that have put so much thought and love into what they are going to say and present to you today. So that being said I want you guys to know that myself and my law firm are going to be filing suit. I'm going to name each, and every one of you individually. We're going to go through your emails, through your phone calls and your text messages. We're going to go through everything unless you decide to reconsider this ill-advised decision that you made you made on May 13th. Thank you for your time. I don't know who will represent you, but I look forward to meeting you.

Mike James: I'm not going to say anything better than what these people have said tonight. Maybe next time make accommodations for all these people and everybody out there can hear the hear the meeting. You have a nice room over there, a nice podium and speakers. Maybe you use it next time.

Fiona Connelly: I'm here today because you want to close the stable where I ride. I don't think that's a good decision. I have ridden there for over 4 years, and I hope you realize how much the horses there mean to us. We love them, they are our family, the stables is our home. The horses have worked hard for us. They have

served our district for years and they deserve better than you shutting down the stable. We are going to protect our horses because the horses have always been good to us so we will be good to them. They deserve protection and we will give it to them. We will fight for our horses

Madilyn Haack and mother Caryn Haack: My name is Madilyn. I've been riding since I was 3 at the same stable. She started off with pony rides which turned into summer camps which turned into weekly riding lessons followed by birthday parties. She feels that it's very unfair that if the property hadn't been maintained that it shouldn't be now taken away. In terms of sports and activities, this has been her one thing, her big passion. I don't want what I took all my life to be taken away.

Natasha Ruiz: The case I would like to make to keep the stables open begins with a story on how I was able to help my daughter through her autism. A lot of her challenges included being nonverbal and when I brought her to Palatine Stables it was magical. She not only became verbal, but just this last month she graduated from Harper College with an Associate Degree getting straight A's. I always credit the time she had at the stables that helped pull her out of being more or less locked in. The important message is how equine therapy and learning about how to ride horses is so very important to this community. This is very unique to have here in Palatine and I could go on about all the ways that it's a wonderful sport for everybody, but for me particularly it's that personal connection that I have with what it did for my daughter. Please don't trample on stables because that's what the horses are supposed to be doing.

President Ruff stated that we also received emails from Jennifer Yokum and Erin Murphy, which will be entered into the record; that conclude the comments portion of the meeting. President Ruff thanked everyone for their emails and for coming to share their thoughts tonight. In response to a question regarding the next steps President Ruff replied, that we are going to continue on with the meeting at this point.

New Business

The Board reviewed a previously distributed board summary pertaining to the Approval of Resolution #24-08 –Authorization of Bank Signatures for the First Bank of Chicago. Commissioner Sammons moved, and Commissioner Rogers seconded that the Board of Park Commissioners approve Resolution #24-08, a Resolution amending the bank account signatures with First Bank Chicago by adding Andrea Fisher, current Director of Finance as an authorized signature member for the payroll and operational accounts held by the Palatine Park District. The motion was approved by a roll call; the result follows:

AYE: Joe Petricca, Greg Sammons, Jennifer Rogers, Susan Gould, Terry Ruff,
NAY: None
ABSENT: None
Motion carried.

The Board reviewed a previously distributed board summary pertaining to the Approval for Authorization of Bank Account Signatures for Palatine Bank and Trust. Commissioner Sammons moved and Commissioner Rogers seconded that the Board of Park Commissioners amend the bank account signatures with Palatine Bank and Trust by adding Andrea Fisher, current Director of Finance as an authorized signature member for the payroll and operational accounts held by the Palatine Park District. The motion was approved by a roll call; the result follows:

AYE: Joe Petricca, Greg Sammons, Jennifer Rogers, Susan Gould, Terry Ruff
NAY: None
ABSENT: None
Motion carried.

The Board reviewed a previously distributed board summary pertaining to the Award of Bid; 2024-27 Janitorial Services. Commissioner Rogers moved and Commissioner Petricca seconded that the Board of Park Commissioners award the 2024-2027 Janitorial Service contract to the lowest responsible bidder, Best Quality Cleaning LLC of Franklin Park, IL, and sign the contract for the amount of \$56,000 for the first year of janitorial service. The motion was approved by a roll call; the result follows:

AYE: Jennifer Rogers, Susan Gould, Joe Petricca, Greg Sammons, Terry Ruff

NAY: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried.

Commissioner Reports/Future Agenda Items

Commissioner Gould stated that she would like to add a future agenda item to reconsider the motion to close the Stables.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Park Board on this date Commissioner Rogers moved that the regular meeting be adjourned. Commissioner Petricca seconded the motion which was unanimously approved by a voice vote as follows:

AYE: Susan Gould, Joe Petricca, Greg Sammons, Jennifer Rogers, Terry Ruff

NAY: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried at 6:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Allie
Park Board Secretary

Attest:

Approved:

Lisa Allie
Secretary

Terry Ruff
President

<u>2024 Park Board Meetings</u>		
June 24, 2024	August 26, 2024	November 11, 2024
July 8, 2024	September 9, 2024	November 25, 2024
July 22, 2024	September 23, 2024	December 9, 2024
August 12, 2024	October 28, 2024	