



**REGULAR BOARD MEETING**  
**BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS OF PALATINE PARK DISTRICT**  
 Village of Palatine, 200 East Wood Street in Palatine  
 Second Floor – Village Council Chambers  
 September 9, 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 5:00 p.m. by President Ruff

Commissioners Present

Terry Ruff, President  
 Susan Gould  
 Joe Petricca  
 Jennifer Rogers

Commissioners Absent

Greg Sammons

Staff Present

Benjamin Rea, Executive Director  
 Michelle Eckelberry, Director of District Services  
 Dayell Houzenga, Supt. of District Services  
 Sonia Austin, Superintendent of Finance  
 Colleen Palmer, Director of Recreation & Facilities

Jim Holder, Director of Parks  
 Amy Vito, Superintendent of Parks  
 Katie Waszak, Supt. of Recreation Programming  
 Josh Ludolph, Supt. of Recreation Facilities  
 Cheryl Lufitz, Communications & Marketing Mgr.  
 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 Petricca seconded that the agenda be approved. Executive Director Rea stated that there was no need for an Executive Session. By a roll call vote, the agenda for the regular meeting of September 9, 2024, was approved as amended. The result of the roll call vote follows:

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

Approval of Consent Agenda

The Board reviewed the previously distributed items posted on the consent agenda. Commissioner Rogers moved and Commissioner Petricca 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 July 22, 2024, Executive Session Meeting Minutes of July 22, 2024, Regular Meeting Minutes of August 12, 2024, and Warrant #13. The result of the roll call vote follows:

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

Prior to the start of visitors and citizens comments President Ruff said we believe an engaged community strengthens the park district mission work and services. At every meeting, we've set aside 30 minutes for public comment. We have seven people who've signed up to speak tonight so we will go 35 minutes, but we will stop at 35 minutes. We've extended this time at our last several meetings to hear from residents regarding the Palatine Stables. Tonight, we have a full agenda so we will return to the original 35 minutes. This evening each speaker will be allotted 3 minutes. We ask everyone to respect the time so that as many people as possible can be heard. Public comment is an opportunity for you to share your thoughts and for the Board to listen and take notes. Therefore, we will not be responding to the individual comments this evening.

President Ruff also gave a brief update on the activities at the stables and said that we deny any allegations of abuse. These claims are unfounded and only harm our dedicated staff, volunteers, and the partnering sanctuaries. All of whom are working diligently to ensure a smooth transition for the horses. The decision to close the stables was not made lightly. It was driven by our duty to ensure the safety of our staff and volunteers and the well-being of the horses. Two independent engineering studies revealed significant structural deficiencies making it unsafe for the horses, visitors, and the staff. Some horses have already moved to new homes and are thriving. For example, 1 mother and daughter pair are now at a local sanctuary receiving the highest quality care and attention as they start their retirement. All horses and ponies will receive full medical exams, necessary treatments, new turnout blankets, and safe transport. Our focus now turns to the use of the stables land which will remain part of the Palatine Park District. Next year we will begin our 2025 comprehensive master planning process that will shape the next decade of our programs, more information on the future sessions will be forthcoming.

#### Visitors and Citizens' Comments

*Sharol Gersic:* I'm here today to speak to you about the horses at Palatine Stables. Since your May 13th decision to close the stables, we have pointed out time and time again that the welfare of the horses should be put first. You have for some reason stayed firm on your arbitrary date of fully closing the stables by November 30<sup>th</sup>. Your decision has affected thousands of people and 56 horses. It is a trickle-down effect further than we can know right now and it remains to be seen just how far it will go. As the staff of Palatine Stables works tirelessly trying to find homes for all these horses who currently live at the barn, I know they are coming up short to find enough stalls. We ask that you give the staff more time to find all these horses homes and that the doors of the Palatine Stables remain open until they all have a place to live.

*Frank Skorski:* I'm appalled at the level of disdain that this Board has for the citizens to whom you're supposed to be responsible. Somehow the Board seems to think that Ben is more important than the citizens who pay the taxes. Ben's already hiring friends from Arlington Heights so he'll have his little cadre of yes people and anybody currently working for this Board who happens to see the truth will be overridden by the mafia that Ben's bringing in. For 100 days you have sat here in silence and there's no reason for it. A highly regarded man at the village, Reid Ottesen, is willing to sit down and negotiate a ceasefire between you, Hamas, and us citizens. Obviously, you're not listening to us so we may have to do something drastic, and Springfield does still have the last laugh because what you're doing is unethical.

President Ruff told Mr. Skorski that his time is up to which Mr. Skorski replied, your numbers up, come next election.

*Jenny Yocum:* We know that Misty and Windy, that mother and daughter you talked about who were hard-working school horses were retired to an animal sanctuary, but we have three horses Charlie, Rennie, and Yeller that need to be retired. These three horses are not eligible to go to a sanctuary. They can no longer be school horses so they cannot go to another riding program. Yes, people are willing to take these horses and retire them, but it is not fair that extremely poor planning on behalf of the park district should have a negative impact on these horses. Why should the community have to donate money to pay for the

care of these horses when we have been paying taxes year after year for the park district to take care of them for life? Sounds like once again another misuse of the park district funds, just as the upkeep of the building was so misused. The community has shown how they care about these hard-working horses and it's your responsibility to provide adequate funding for their retirement.

*Archer Graham:* I know you guys care about the money, the taxes, the budget. I think you should also consider these kids and people out here and their feelings, thoughts, and emotions. Because I think emotions, feelings, and thoughts are more than just money and all that stuff. I have agreed with a lot of the people that have already spoken about these animals that are very old and I do not think that they can handle moving to another barn. My sister rides at the barn, she's made lots of friends and I feel like this would take that away from her. I did used to ride for a couple of months but then I quit and now I'm regretting that because I don't have as much of an opportunity to stand up. I'd recommend to change your decision right now because you do not know the outcomes that will come from this.

*Linni Pesch:* Now that the taxpaying residents of this community need never accept this. I'll be urging them to move forward banding together to make sure this type of mismanagement non-transparent culture and untrustworthy business practices never happens again in Palatine. There's a slogan that we've all heard over the past several years and if that slogan was tweaked it would describe the current state of our community. Now this is not indicative of any political party. The slogan stands alone. I'm a cap person and I had a cap made that I think best describes it: Make Palatine Great Again. Now I'm going to wear this all over town and when people come up to me and say Linni what up with the cap? If they're not already aware, that will be my cue. That this swamp, with the exception of the great, respected, honorable Sue Gould. This swamp needs to be drained.

*Karen Petersen:* I've been a resident of Palatine since 1974, that's 50 years during which I've been very proud to be part of this community. I've taken lessons at the Palatine Stables, and I've been very happy that we've had a stables here where I could do that. I've taught at Palatine High School for 35 years and I'm simply going to ask you to please consider seeking bids to find out how much the repairs would be that were shown to be needed in the most recent engineers report. I ask that you would consider that. I also ask that you consider the welfare of the horses who have served their lives being school horses who have been very dedicated and who now need to have a decent retirement. I urge you to consider these things.

*Cindy Carrasco:* I've been a resident since 1977, and I've also enjoyed and have taken children there. Those who are incapacitated to the point where they can't function almost 24/7. The last time I spoke I asked all of you to tell me if you have a neighbor or relative who is non-ambulatory. They can't play baseball, they can't play soccer, they can't golf; swimming is an option for them. They come to the barn and the calmness they receive from hugging the horse, smelling the horse, and the horse responding to them, you can't put in words. This has been a deaf ear we've gone through this now since April and everybody here has a deaf ear except for Sue. I'd suggest that all of you look for another job because the next election, most of you or all of you won't be here because we're not going to put any of you people back in office. I'm disappointed in all of you. I've been in Palatine forever and I'm just disgusted.

President Ruff announced that was our final speaker and moved on to new business.

### New Business

The Board reviewed a previously distributed board summary pertaining to the approval of an IGA with CCSD15 for the CARE program. Commissioner Rogers moved and read the motion aloud, Commissioner Petricca seconded that the Board of Park Commissioners approve and authorize staff to enter into a one-year agreement with CCSD15 for the Park District to operate CARE programs at CCSD15 schools. The motion was approved by a roll call; the result follows:

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

The Board reviewed a previously distributed board summary pertaining to the approval of purchase for a Toro Groundsmaster Mower. Commissioner Petricca moved, and Commissioner Rogers seconded and read the motion aloud, that the Board of Park Commissioners approve the lowest responsible bidder, Reinders of Elm Grove WI, in an amount not to exceed, \$46,785.15 for the acquisition of one Toro Groundsmaster 3500-D bank mower through the Sourcewell Cooperative contract number 031121-TTC. The motion was approved by a roll call; the result follows:

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

The Board reviewed a previously distributed board summary pertaining to the approval of the 2025 Benefit Insurance Renewal. Commissioner Petricca moved, and Commissioner Rogers seconded the motion that the Board of Park Commissioners approve the recommendations as outlined in the Board Summary and read aloud by Commissioner Rogers. The motion was approved by a roll call; the result follows:

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

The Board reviewed a previously distributed board summary pertaining to approval for an update to the Weather policy. Commissioner Petricca moved, and Commissioner Rogers seconded that the Board of Park Commissioners approve the update to the Weather policy. The motion was approved by a roll call; the result follows:

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

The Board reviewed a previously distributed board summary pertaining to adoption of Resolution #24-10, recognition of Ray Esunis. Commissioner Rogers moved and Commissioner Petricca seconded that the Board of Park Commissioners approve Resolution #24-10 for the recognition and appreciation of Ray Esunis. The motion was approved by a roll call; the result follows:

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

The Board reviewed a previously distributed board summary pertaining to adoption of Resolution #24-11, recognition of Mark Turf. Commissioner Rogers moved and Commissioner Petricca seconded that the Board of Park Commissioners approve Resolution #24-11 for the recognition and appreciation of Mark Turf. The motion was approved by a roll call; the result follows:

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

The Board reviewed a previously distributed board summary pertaining to adoption of Resolution #24-12, recognition of Jeff Greene. Commissioner Rogers moved and Commissioner Petricca seconded that the Board of Park Commissioners approve Resolution #24-12 for the recognition and appreciation of Jeff Greene. The motion was approved by a roll call; the result follows:

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

#### Executive Director Reports

Executive Director Rea gave an update on the Meadowlark project which has slowed down the last couple of weeks due to the discovery of a gas line, which is believed to be abandoned and used by one of the old buildings previously on the property. Commissioner Gould asked Director Rea to explain to the audience what Meadowlark Park is; Director Rea explained that Meadowlark Park is the OSLAD (Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development) project just due east of what is the stable property. That was a grant submitted in 2023 for that property and redevelopment of the existing open space east of the stables. That project is underway at this time; there will be a playground, walking paths, a new shelter, and some improvements to the parking lot. Commissioner Gould thanked Director Rea who had nothing else to report.

#### Commissioner Reports/Future Agenda Items

Commissioner Gould said that she wanted to thank everyone for coming. You guys have been heroes to the horses and to the kids. I usually project pretty well, I used to sing in a choir. Thank you for coming I really appreciate it, and I'd like you to know that I have tried to put this idea back on the agenda and have been blocked so that's why it's not on the agenda. An audience member replied, we know you're trying, and they all applauded. Another comment from the audience said that the comments tonight were not directed at Sue but at the rest of you. Commissioner Gould said I realize that, and I thank you. She responded I love you to the audience member who said we love you; followed by applause. Commissioner Gould continued to say that our legacy is tied to one another and to the decisions that we make, and I don't want this to be my legacy. A comment from the audience replied that it won't be, and her legacy will be trying to help the community. Commissioner Gould added I'm not looking for any kind of heroism award believe me. I'm just very sad that it's come to this in a town that I grew up in, and that my family has been in since 1892. Holding offices of various school boards, Township all of those. Dad was a volunteer firefighter for 25 years; my husband was a full-time firefighter paramedic for 30 years for Palatine. Talking about roots; this is an embarrassment, and I apologize that it's happening to you, your children, and your horses. Thank You. Applause from the audience.

Commissioner Petricca said that he wanted to compliment the staff. He picked his grandson up from the camps at Falcon Park each night. It was unbelievably well run and he wanted to thank the staff. Audience members yelled at Commissioner Petricca to speak up and that they can't hear him. Commissioner Petricca apologized for his voice and Commissioner Gould asked him to repeat that for the audience. Commissioner Ruff told the audience they don't need to be rude and shared what Commissioner Petricca had shared. Sarcastic comments were made by several members of the audience.

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. The motion was approved by a voice vote; the result follows:

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

NAY: None

ABSENT: Greg Sammons

Motion carried at 5:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Allie  
Park Board Secretary

Attest:

Approved:

Lisa Allie  
Secretary

Terry Ruff  
President

<b><u>2024 Park Board Meetings</u></b>		
September 23, 2024	November 11, 2024	December 9, 2024
October 28, 2024	November 25, 2024	