



## **Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan Update**

*February 23, 2004 Meeting Minutes*

**In Attendance:** Chair Doug Varn, Marty Bracco, David Stannard, Laura Kaufman, Patience Nelson, Katie Kelly, Susan Kurtenbach, John Mullins, Rickey Sain, Sr., Kathy Stohr, Gail Moran, David Kindler, Mark Gartland, Tom Phillion, Craig Failor, Gary Balling, Mike Grandy, Kent Newton, Lisa, Lightcap, Diane Stanke

**Guest Speakers:** Ron Vine and Ron Secrist, Leisure Vision

- I. **Welcome** – The meeting was called to order at 7:05pm.
- II. **Approval of Minutes** – Motion was made by Kathy Stohr and seconded by Laura Kaufman to approve the minutes of January 26, 2004. The motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.
- III. **Governance** – Patience Nelson reported the Governance subcommittee met Monday, February 16 with Carl Swenson, Village Manager, and Gary Balling, Park District Executive Director, to get a perspective on the current Village/Park District agreement. A new Intergovernmental Agreement should exhibit clarity and accountability, tie accountability to revenue authority, and be sustainable. This morning, the group met with Ron Vine and Ron Secrist to discuss authority and funding. There are 4 more meetings scheduled for this subcommittee.
- IV. **Benchmarking** – Eighteen benchmarking surveys were mailed out in January and 8 have been returned with commitments from 3 more agencies to complete and return their surveys. Communities we have received surveys from include: Berwyn Park District, North Berwyn Park District, Skokie Park District, Evanston Parks and Recreation, Des Plaines Park District, Westmont Park District, Forest Park Park District, and Mt. Prospect Park District. Surveys are due February 27.
- V. **Governance presentation by Ron Secrist** – Ron presented the four factors being evaluated to determine the Foundation for Governance including:
  - **Community Survey:** which identifies Citizen Needs & Desires
  - **Stakeholders, Focus Groups, Forums:** The input from this group is very important because these individuals are more aware and involved in the community and identified key issues and concerns
  - **Benchmarking Survey:** This information is forthcoming.
  - **Vision/Leadership for a Better Oak Park:** We need to look at where we want to be, then look at the past and present and determine how to get there.

He then discussed the 4 priorities identified by the stakeholder meetings and focus groups including:

1. Funding
2. Citizen Priorities/Needs
3. Governance
4. Unified Approach/Intent by Village, School Districts and Park District

Leisure Vision has identified 4 governance models to be discussed and evaluated by the Governance Subcommittee. These models are not unique in themselves, but rather are on a continuum with common themes. The Governance Committee received a list of 15 criteria of a successful community parks and recreation organization. The committee needs to review, reflect and determine which the most important criteria are by ranking them. Then, they will evaluate each model based on the most important criteria. Ron explained that a likely occurrence could be the creation of a hybrid model, taking different parts from each of the models to create a unique model specifically to fit our needs in Oak Park.

**VI. Preliminary Results of Citizen Survey Presentation by Ron Vine** – Ron explained the survey questions were based on feedback from stakeholder interviews, focus groups and public forums. To date we have received 802 completed surveys. Ron is currently cross tabbing the information based on key factors including gender, age, household size, ages of household members, ethnicity, home owners and renters, years lived in Oak Park, household income, users vs. non-users, tax support and voting. They are also being compared to national averages utilizing the data received by Leisure Vision in surveying over 200 park and recreation agencies across the nation. Ron also compared the data collected with census figures to ensure we had a good representation of Oak Park residents. Ron noted that information is still preliminary and copies distributed are stamped draft. Ron presented 16 findings as follows:

**#1 – Usage of parks is high with average satisfaction**

**#2 – Participation in Programs is significantly higher than national benchmarks with average satisfaction**

**#3 – The Park District of Oak Park is the primary provider of services**

**#4 – Residents have a need for a wide range of parks and facilities**

**#5 – For a wide range of parks and facilities, needs are not fully met**

***Ron will compare teens needs not being met regarding facilities with the national average.***

**#6 – Walking/biking trails, neighborhood parks, and outdoor pools are the most important facilities to respondent households**

**#7 – A high percent of households use the neighborhood centers with most usage being infrequent**

**#8 – Nearly 50% of respondents have some level of support for converting some centers into specialty centers with high percentage of respondents being not sure**

**#9 – Respondents are mixed regarding cutting back operating hours of neighborhood centers to save money for other activities**

***Ron was asked to cross tab what type of users were the ones supportive of cutting back hours at centers.***

**#10 – There is some level of support for ALL CIP projects with highest support for Ridgeland Common**

**#11 – Across all cross tabular areas, there is continued support for partnering**  
*Ron will determine who the non-supporters and the not sure respondents are.*

**#12 – There is interest in a wide variety of improvements and new indoor spaces with particular importance for fitness spaces and water**

**#13 – Respondents are mixed on how to move forward on indoor spaces over the next few years**

**#14 – Respondents would allocate 60% of \$100 to improvements with remainder for new parks, trails, and facilities**

**#15 – More than 70% of the respondents would be willing to pay some additional property taxes to fund projects most important to their household**

**#16 – 50% of respondents would vote in favor or might vote in favor in a bond election to fund projects most important to their household with a high level of respondents being not sure**

**VII. Review of Timeline, Identify Upcoming Issues & Tasks:** Gary stated that we will need to organize a Communication Working Group to inform and educate our residents. We are right on target with the project's timeline. An Indoor Space Working Group, lead by Marty Bracco, is being organized to delve into these issues. If anyone is interested in participating on this subcommittee, please contact Marty or Doug. Gary asked all PDCC members to review the survey results presented, organize any questions you may have and send them to Doug or Gary to pass on to Ron. Gary brought to the group's attention the intentions of Governor Blagojevich to put the OSLAD program on holiday which is a major concern of all IL park and recreation agencies and specifically to Oak Park who would look to this program to fund future park renovation projects. Gary encouraged the group to contact any legislators or decision makers they know to explain the importance of this program.

Doug and Gary explained that the Comprehensive Plan is looking at the larger issues in the Park District and that the next step (not included with the Comprehensive Plan) would be to create individual site master plans for all parks. We need to manage the public's expectations of the results of the comprehensive plan and inform our residents that individual site plans are not part of this comprehensive process. We are looking at community interests and setting a general direction for the District.

**VIII. Closing Remarks –** Doug thanked everyone for their involvement. The meeting was adjourned at 9:00pm.

**Next Meeting – Monday, March 29 at 7:00pm,  
Hedges Administration Center, 218 Madison St.**