



Wildwood Park District
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DECENNIAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY
COMMITTEE PRESENTATION MEETING #2 – AREAS FOR
INCREASED EFFICIENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY.

February 20th, 2024

Purpose & Committee



The Wildwood Park District formed its Committee on Local Government Efficiency on May 19th 2023, to study efficiencies and report recommendations regarding those efficiencies and increased accountability pursuant to 50 ILCS 70/1, *et seq.* (the “Committee”).

Committee Membership

- Rebecca Jante, Board Commissioner and Chairperson
- Matthew Brueck, Board Commissioner
- Daniel Corrigan, Board Commissioner
- Anna Nelson, Board Commissioner
- Frank Bruno, Board Commissioner
- Mike Semmerling, Resident Member
- Laura Rudow, Resident Member
- Brandon Magnini, Park District Manager & Board Secretary

General Overview of District



- The Park District was established by a referendum initiated and approved by the voters of the Park District in 1976. All Illinois park districts, including the Wildwood Park District, are governed by the Park District Code.
- The Park District is governed by a board of 5 commissioners. Commissioners must reside within the boundaries of the park district and are elected at the Consolidated Election in odd-numbered years. Pursuant to state law, commissioners are non-partisan and serve without compensation.
- Having a dedicated unit of local government to provide park and recreation services also improves the relationship between the park district and its residents because of the transparency and openness related to the board and park district operations.
- Because the Park District is a separate unit of local government, the revenues it generates can only be used for park district purposes. This assurance is contrasted with general purpose governments like cities, villages, and counties that provide a multitude of services such as fire, police, public works, economic development, etc., where revenues that are generated specifically for parks and recreation can be expended on these other services with limited, if any, input from voters.
- Providing the Community More with Less. The Park District does more with much fewer funding options. Unlike other units of local government that receive direct state funding, and income, sales, use, hotel/motel, motor fuel and other numerous taxes, the Park District's only tax revenues come from a modest portion of a resident's overall property tax bill. In fact, despite its limited funding options, the Park District share is only **4.5%** of the local tax bill.

Transparency to the Community



The following information about the Park District may be obtained by citizens in the location listed.

Document Location(s) Available (Website, Administrative Offices, County Clerk, State Website)

- Annual Tax Levy: [Website, Administrative office, County Clerk, e-newsletter, Daily Herald](#)
- Annual Budget and Appropriation Ordinance: [Website, Administrative office, County Clerk, e-newsletter, Daily Herald](#)
- Agenda and Minutes: [WPD Website under Board of Commissioners, Administrative Office](#)
- Annual Treasurer's Report: [WPD Website under Forms and Financials](#)
- Annual Audit/Annual Financial Report: [WPD Website under Forms and Financials](#)
- Statement of Receipts and Disbursements: [WPD Website under Forms and Financials](#)
- Conduct Ordinances: [WPD Website under Parks Rules and Information](#)
- Capital Improvement Plan: [WPD Website under Capital Projects and Planning](#)

Intergovernmental Fees and Charges



One opportunity for efficiency would be the elimination of fees and charges assessed by other units of government. By way of example, below are amounts that other units of local government charge the Park District even though the Park District's taxpayers are also taxpayers of these other units of local government. Such fees and charges, and the bureaucracy that accompanies them, inhibit the park district's ability to deliver programs, facilities, and services at the least possible cost

- I. *Lake County Building and Permits requires permit fees for majority of Wildwood Park District Special Events that the District has to apply for, go through administrative review (Lake County), and pay between **\$50-\$200** for each event permit. This effects events such as Harvest Fest, Summer Concerts, Movie in the Park, etc. This also takes staff time having to drive to Lake County Building and Permit Facility to pick up these permits.*
- II. *Wildwood Park District must also pay a little over **\$100** per year for both the State of Illinois and Lake County temporary use liquor permit combined (Harvest Fest). Additional cost of stamps and staff time to mail out these fees and applications to the respective regulatory bodies.*
- III. *Any shoreline work permits applied for and to paid to Lake County Building and Permits division as well as US Army Core of Engineers (per projects that qualify for needing a permit).*
- IV. *Yearly licensing fees paid to Lake County Health Department for beach/swimming operation license that is posted at all four beaches are an additional cost that can be a burden. Total fees for licenses range between **\$225-\$245 per license per year**. On the other hand, this license does allow the Lake County Health Department to consistently inspect the beaches and test the water for water quality and safety on a weekly basis.*

Intergovernmental Fees and Charges (Cont.) - PARK SAFETY



PARK SAFETY – PARK POLICE PROTECTION

If a Special Services Agreement from Lake County Sherriff's is requested by the Park District for late night or overnight park supervision by Lake County Sherriff's squad cars; the fee charged was most recently \$75 per man hour. Depending on the amount of weekends/days requested, that could cost the District additional fees. Special Services Agreements are usually considered for one or two parks the Sherriff's will supervise that the Park District wants to prioritize to assist our Park Safety Staff as they do not work 24 hours a day (and to assist with violent persons and areas out of the Park District's skillset and legal jurisdiction). Regardless, given that the Lake County Sherriff already is tasked with providing police protection to Wildwood (and by extension the park greenspaces and parking lots), these fees to lock down specific man hours seem to be redundant. Since Wildwood is unincorporated, Wildwood Residents already pay taxes to Lake County Sherriff's Department for police protection.

Inefficiencies of other Governments



Project and Shoreline Permitting:

I. Any shoreline work permits applied for and to paid to Lake County Building and Permits division as well as US Army Core of Engineers (per projects that qualify for needing a permit). Current Pebble Shoreline Stabilization Project is still being held up by the US Army Core of Engineers not responding to our multiple follow-ups after WPD having submitted the necessary permits/paperwork months ago. Once USACOE approves the permit, the WPD will still have to send that approved permit through Lake County Building and Permit Division to fully approve the project.

Unfunded Mandates



a) **Non-resident FOIA Requests.** In 2023, the Park District spent roughly **\$140.00** in staff time to fulfill FOIA requests. Often the individuals/businesses submitting the FOIA requests are from outside of the park district boundaries, and they appear to be serving a specific agenda, rather than assuring better local government.

b) Zero legal fees were spent on responses to 2023 FOIA Requests.

*I. In 2023, the Wildwood Park District responded to **8** Commercial FOIA requests. They derived from Smart Procure, and FOIA Professional Services. The Smart Procure requests typically request all Park District purchasing records every 6 months, and a list of current staff/their office contact information/position/department (usually we get about 3 of these requests per year). FOIA Professional Services asked for a list of current contracts with various professional software systems for 2023 (ex: QuickBooks, ACTIVE Net, etc.). Other FOIA request in 2023 derived from the Better Government Association / Illinois Answers Project requesting records from 2021 Wildwood Park District payroll.*

Unfunded Mandates (Cont.)



- a) **Criminal Background Checks.** All park districts are statutorily required to conduct criminal background checks on all employees pursuant to Section 8-23 of the Park District Code. The background checks must be done through the Illinois State Police (ISP). Last year, the park district spent **\$148.00** for criminal background checks. The Park District does not recommend eliminating this mandate because it is necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of children and other park district patrons. However, the State should explore ways in which it could improve the current system and make it less costly for park districts to comply with the law.

The mandate also raises the fundamental question as to why one layer of government is forced to charge its taxpayers to comply with a State mandate when the State made the determination to impose the mandate. Put another way, if the State has determined that criminal background checks are necessary for public safety, the State should assist with compliance.

- a) **Prevailing Wage.** One way to reduce burden on local government staff is to limit the prevailing wage requirement to larger capital contracts. This would free up tracking of the paperwork on small repairs and projects. One reason for creating a threshold requirement is the cost of the administrative burden relative to the cost of the actual project. For example, eliminating prevailing wage on smaller projects, e.g., those less than \$50,000, will result in more local bids and decrease the overall cost for these smaller public works projects.
- b) **Newspaper Publication.** The newspaper is no longer the most effective way to provide notice. Websites are cheaper and reach more people. Permitting the park district to post the information on its website in lieu of newspaper publications would reduce costs.

Opportunities for Increased Transparency



As illustrated previously, the Park District is very transparent in its operations. The following are some opportunities for increased transparency (amongst others):

- I. Include “history of the Wildwood Park District” on the Park District website and highlight major achievements and changes over the years.*
- II. After putting together, publish ADA transition and accessibility plan on website.*
- III. Strategic and Master Plans (when they are eventually done)*
- IV. Will be shortly publishing on Park District website highlights and major findings from 2024 Community Needs Assessment online survey.*

Opportunities for other Intergovernmental Agreements



- *Additional programming/space intergovernmental agreements with other local Park Districts for programming/events/meeting space.*
- *Additional space usage intergovernmental agreement with Warren Township Center for larger amenities for indoor events.*
- *Continue to explore further relationship with Lake County Sherriff's Auxiliary Unit (they assisted with Harvest Fest security and crowd control in 2023. Will ask them to assist with volunteers parking control and crowd control at 2024 event. Auxiliary Unit did not charge the Park District for their services). Will also continue to work with them to assist with Park Safety operations if regular Highway Patrol deputies cannot give the Wildwood Park District enough man hours and lack of availability.*

Opportunities for Savings such as Energy Efficiency Projects, Joint Purchasing



- I. District continues to work with ComEd Energy Efficiency Program where possible to receive incentives for existing structures for replacement, and lower electrical bills with LED lights.*
- II. District continues to seek out and utilize OMNIA/Sourcewell government joint purchasing programs for future capital equipment if appropriate/needed to save dollars on those purchases.*
- III. District will continue to seek out energy efficiencies and joint purchasing to save future taxpayer dollars.*

Recommendations for Increased Efficiency and Accountability



Homework:

At the next meeting will discuss any further ideas or suggestions that potentially could increase accountability and efficiency.