



Wildwood Park District
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DECENNIAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY COMMITTEE PRESENTATION

January 22, 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.

General Overview of District



As part of good governance and implementing best practices in the management of day-to-day operations, the Park District has also adopted the following ordinances, rules, policies, and procedures:

- **Policy and Procedure Manual.**
- **Board Policies and Procedures Manual**
- **Parks General Conduct Ordinances**
- **Personnel Policies/Part-Time Employee Manual**
- **Safety and Risk Management Policy Manual**
- **Customer Service Policy Manual**
- **Summer Camp Staff Policies Handout/Park Safety and Boat Ramp Monitor Staff Manual**
- **Volunteer Manual and Application/Waiver**
- **Required two check signers (one from Park District Manager and one from either Board President or Treasurer).**
- **Independent Contractor Accountant executes payroll and major financials. Reports directly to Board.**

List of Shared Services and Partnerships



The Park District works diligently to provide the best possible programs, services, and facilities to our community at the least possible cost.

One of the many ways the Park District achieves this goal is by partnering with neighboring park districts, school districts, other units of local government within or near the community, the State, non-profit organizations, and for-profit corporations.

The following will be a comprehensive list of the current partnerships, agreements, and other relationships that assist the Park District's mission of delivering the best possible services at the least possible cost to our community.

WSRA (Warren Special Recreation Association)



- By partnering together, local communities can effectively and efficiently deliver more successful program opportunities to community members who have special needs. Furthermore, by participating in the SRA, the Park District networks with THREE other local governments to provide many more program opportunities for our community members who have special needs and offers a choice between participating in the SRA's programs or in programs that are provided by the Park District.
- WSRA utilizes all Park District Facilities (Wildwood, Gurnee, Grandwood Park, Lindenhurst) in addition to their own facility and the Warren Township Center.
- In 2023, WSRA successfully served [REDACTED] Residents in [REDACTED] programs. WSRA also supported TWO Wildwood Park District participants with inclusive services in programs that were provided by the Wildwood Park District (Summer Camp and Preschool)

Intergovernmental agreements with other Park Districts, forest preserve districts, conservation districts, or municipal recreation agencies



- **Grandwood Park Park District** co-operative programming and space use agreement for events such as Daddy Daughter Dance, Cookies & Milk with Santa, STEM robotics classes, various cooking/culinary classes, and other events that WPD does not have space for.
- **Park District Risk Management Agency (PDRMA):** Self-insured pool of numerous member Park Districts that share cost and resources of risk management, property/casualty coverage, legal resources, health insurance coverage, claims coverage, and safety trainings.
- Collaboration with other Park Districts on best practices: Because Park Districts are not in competition with one another, they are more willing than the private sector to share best practices. These best practices help to avoid unnecessary costs and deliver services more effectively and efficiently.

Intergovernmental Agreements with other Local Governments



- **Warren Township Highway Department** (Valley Lake Stormwater Improvement Projects)
- **Lake County Stormwater Management Commission** (Valley Lake Stormwater Improvement Projects)
- **Lake County Sheriff's Office:** Provides Special Services Detail and Overnight Supervision at Parks When Able.
- **Grayslake Fire Protection District**
- **Warren Township High School:** Park District allows temporary/off-season use of Pebble Beach for school kayak/canoe program that benefits Wildwood teens in that program that attend WTHS.

Informal Cooperation with Other Units of Local Government which Save Taxpayer Dollars by Eliminating Redundancy



- **Warren Township Highway Department:** – chips up, removes, and mulches all loose brush, buckthorn, fallen tree branches, twigs, and leaves gathered from Wildwood Park District Parks by our Parks Maintenance Team at no charge to WPD or additional cost to taxpayer beyond what the Highway Department already levies. Highway Department also will grind up tree stumps located near the road in Wildwood Park District parks at no cost. Highway Department will lay down grass seed cover to restore any damage to Wildwood parks grass from their snow plowing or grinding out stumps at no charge. Highway Department in 2023 made several substantial deliveries of prepared wood mulch that took care of ALL 11 Wildwood Park District parks and associated facilities mulching and landscaping needs for 2023 at ZERO charge. Will also occasionally remove dead trees for WPD at no additional charge if they need it removed for a project. Snowplows select park parking lots.
- **The Highway Department** will also temporarily lend their equipment to the Wildwood Park District for no charge. The most recent example was the fall of 2023 where the Wildwood Park District borrowed a hydraulic log splitter to split firewood and logs from trees that had been previously removed in the parks. Using this tool allows the Park District to properly split and store a plethora of firewood that will be used for a multitude of community special events throughout the year and to heat Rule House Community Center fireplace on especially cold days – saving the Park District funds from purchasing overpriced firewood bundles at local hardware stores throughout the year. This process allows fallen trees in Wildwood Parks the chance to be reused continue to serve a purpose.

Intergovernmental Agreements with the State of Illinois



- Illinois Funds (Local Government Investment Pool)
- Informal cooperation with Illinois IDNR (Illinois Department of Natural Resources) for fish stocking in lakes and fishing/boating rules enforcement
- Member of IAPD (Illinois Association of Park Districts). Membership provides access to park and recreation professionals from many agencies across the state as well as training, networking, continuing education, information about legislative advocacy, and statewide conference opportunities.
- Full-Time Staff have membership with IPRA (Illinois Park and Recreation Association). Membership includes similar benefits as IAPD.

Partnerships with Community Non-Profits



Partnering with and Utilizing the Resources of Community Non-Profits has Proven to be Crucial in a Smaller Park District like ours to keep costs down, while still executing the services and parks stewardship that the Park District is tasked with:

- **Boy Scout Troop 671 (Wildwood Park District Chartered Organization).** Frequent volunteer assistance with numerous District Special Events, Eagle Projects, and park clean-ups.
- **Boy Scout Troop 672.** Collaboration at Harvest Fest.
- **Gages Lake Conservation Committee (GLCC).** Collaboration and cost sharing on aquatic weed/lily pad treatment of Gages Lake in Park District-owned parcels along with yearly fish stocking/shoreline cleanup among other projects.
- **Gagewood Lions Club** (Collaboration on Harvest Fest food sales, monetary contribution and design input on Willow Point Park wooden piers/Pebble Beach Park swing-set, Little Free Libraries in parks, Sunset Park Pavilion, Cove Park trees, various park playgrounds).
- **Warren-Newport Public Library** (Joint Special Events and Programming)
- **Warren Township Senior Center** (Joint Programming and Program Awareness)

Partnerships with For-Profit Organizations



Financial:

- State Bank of the Lakes

Park Safety:

- Wildwood Service (Vehicle Towing)

Recreational Programming:

- RoboThink STEM Robotics Classes
- Magic of Gary Kantor
- Various Other Private Recreation Providers

Other Examples of Efficient Operations



- **Volunteerism:** In 2023, 72 individuals gave 80 total hours of their time and effort to assist the Park District with various Special Events, Maintenance (in 2023 removing buckthorn, cleaning up tree lines/shorelines, assisting with the installation of park signs, and our largest event of the year – Harvest Fest).
- **GARDEN CLUB:** Volunteer-led Garden Club uses set budget allocated from WPD to assist Park District in native plantings, seasonal flowers, and beautification of parks at no direct labor cost to the Park District. Several members of the Garden Club are also Master Gardeners.
- **Efficient Staffing:** Wildwood Park District employs 1 (one) full-time staff person (Park District Manager). All other staff are part-time year-round or seasonal. Cost savings to District include less money spent on staff hours, benefits, IMRF, etc. Park District engages with Independent Contractor for all Accounting tasks and Special Projects (saving employment tax, benefits, IMRF, etc.).
- **Joint Purchasing:** In 2022-2023, Wildwood Park District used joint-government purchasing contracts and pricing through OMNIA/Sourcewell to obtain a 2023 John Deere Gator UTV, 2023 Grasshopper Zero-Turn Mower, Ariens Snow Thrower, and a John Deere Automatic Salt Spreader at a lower price than the typical market rate. This was done to improve processes; and have in place newer assets to account for other aging capital equipment.

Other Examples of Efficient Operations



- **Consultants:** Have used consultants in the past to expedite strategic planning/operations and focus groups for the District to assist Board and Park District. Conducted Playgrounds Safety Audit in 2022 with CPSI (Certified Playground Safety Inspector) at a lower cost through Consultant's network at the time when Park District did not have CPSI Certified or Playground Maintenance Technician Certificate employees.
- **In-House Maintenance Team:** The Wildwood Park District is very proud of our in-house maintenance team. In 2020, the Maintenance Team took over full in-house mowing operations of all parks, Prior to 2020, there were a couple of parks that were contracted out to be mowed while WPD staff mowed the rest. Since that change, mowing has become more efficient, speedier (without sacrificing quality), and higher quality. Park District leadership will always attempt to task our in-house Maintenance Team with a project that can be done in-house before searching for outside contractor proposals (unless task is beyond scope and safety of Maintenance Team). Full responsibilities and operations of in-house Maintenance Team can be found on the WPD website under "Capital Projects and Planning".
- **Sponsorships/Advertising:** The WPD's Marketing and Events Coordinator has been able to secure consistent high-dollar level amount of local community sponsorships to offset some costs of Special Events; as well as offset some of the cost of printing 8,100 season program brochures with local business brochure advertisements in the WPD Brochures.

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)
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- 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](#)

Public Input from the Community



The Park District offers residents many opportunities to provide feedback. These include:

- The Board of Commissioners meets **1 Time** each month. Residents may provide public comment at every meeting.
- The Park District's annual Budget and Appropriation Ordinance is available in tentative form at least **30 days prior** to its adoption at an open meeting of the Park District board. Additionally, at least one public hearing is held prior to final action, and notice of the hearing is published in the newspaper at least one week prior to the hearing.
- The Park District's annual property tax levy is approved at an open meeting of the Park District board in accordance with the Open Meetings Act. The Park District follows all public notice and hearing requirements under the Truth in Taxation Law prior to the adoption of this annual tax levy
- Residents may contact or request information from the Park District by phone at 847.223.7275 or email at info@wildwoodparkdistrict.com.

Public Input from the Community (cont.)



A variety of surveys are used to gather participant feedback including:

- Community Needs Assessment and Satisfaction Survey (2024). Current.
- Harvest Fest Post-Event Surveys (2021, 2022, 2023)
- Strategic Planning Resident Focus Group Questionnaire (2021)
- General Parks/Facilities Satisfaction Survey (2021)
- General Programming Satisfaction Survey (2021)
- Preschool Parent Survey (2023)

Groups:

- Gages Lake Conservation Committee (GLCC)
- Gagewood Lions Club

Advisory and Focus Groups



Citizen Advisory and Focus Groups Allow for Community Input and Feedback Including:

- Valley Lake Committee
- Harvest Fest Planning Committee
- Park Safety Resident Focus Group (April 2022)
- Strategic Planning Resident Focus Group (December 2021)

- Several Advisory Groups may be Forthcoming as a Result of Resident Responses to 2024 Community Needs Assessment Survey.

Public Meetings are Common Ways to Gather Community Input. Past Meetings Include:

- Wildwood Area Stormwater Improvements Project Open House (2023, organized by Lake County Stormwater Management. Several Wildwood Residents were in attendance).
- Valley Lake Treatment Proposals Special Meeting (2021)
- Pebble Beach Boat Ramp Committee Meetings (2019)

District Awards and Recognition



Park District Achievements and Awards

- Park District Risk Management Agency (PDRMA) Loss Control Program Review
 - Excellence Level A 2015-2018
 - Excellence Level B 2012-2014
 - Excellence Level C 2010-2011
- Park District Risk Management Agency (PDRMA) Loss Control Award – Most Improved Score – 2015
- Yearly \$1,500 PDRMA Loss Control Review Incentive Received for Completion of Risk Management Tasks and Goals Assigned by PDRMA to Wildwood Park District.

District Awards and Recognition



Grants/Donations Received

2019: **Illinois Secretary of State Grant PA: 100-586**

\$72,000

Funds allowed for completion of Sunset Park Boat Launch Steel Seawall, Pebble Beach Park Permanent Pier (at Boat Launch), Rule Park Permanent Asphalt Walking Paths, and Boulder & Lake Shore Drive Parks Rip Rap

Yearly: **Tree and Bench Donations** (annual average)

\$1,000

Staff Credentials and Training



Park District Manager Brandon Magnini:

- *B.S. Sport and Recreation Management (Business Studies Concentration) University of Iowa 16'*
- *Certified as Playground Maintenance Technician (PMT) on the road for eventual CPSI certification.*
- *MEDIC First Aid CPR/AED/First Aid Certified for Infants, Adults, and Children*
- *IPRA Professional Development School (November 2023)*
- *HELP 1 – Essentials of Human Resources Training (PDRMA December 2021)*
- *Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and Open Meetings Act (OMA) Training*
- *Park District Risk Management Agency (PDRMA) Risk Management Institute Trainings (RMI) & Seminars*
- *PDRMA Safety Coordinator Seminars*
- *Supervisor's Role in Managing Risk in Parks and Recreation (PDRMA)*
- *Lake County Health Department Temporary Food Service Sanitation Training*

Maintenance Lead Michael Dykes

- MEDIC First Aid CPR/AED/First Aid Certified for Infants, Adults, Children*
- Certified as Playground Maintenance Technician (PMT) on the road for eventual CPSI certification. PDRMA RMI*

Staff Credentials and Training (cont.)



STAFF

- *MEDIC First Aid CPR/AED/First Aid Certified for Infants, Adults, and Children (all Recreation/Administration, and all Appropriate Maintenance staff are Certified)*
- *Continued Education in Children in Grief/Effective Communication with Young Children (Preschool Teachers)*
- *Mandated Reporter Training*
- *Child Development, Health, and Safety Training (Preschool Teachers)*
- *Yearly Sexual Harrassment Training through State of Illinois*
- *Certified American Red Cross Water Safety Training Instructor (Swim Lessons Coordinator)*

Benefits and Services



The Park District serves the entire community from the youngest child to the oldest adult and all ages in between. It does so in a variety of ways. The Park District owns roughly 32 acres of greenspace.

Facilities/Greenspaces/Amenities

The Park District offered the following to the community last year:

- Rule House Community Center
- Rule Cottage (Camps and Storage)
- 2 Boat Ramps/Launches
- 7 Grills
- 50 Sitting Benches
- 11 Boat Trailer Parking Spaces
- 1 Volleyball Net (Permanent)
- Parks Maintenance Buildings
- 4 Licensed Beaches
- 3 Picnic Pavilions/Gazebo
- 5 Bike Racks
- 7 Piers (5 Permanent)
- 2 Baseball Backstops
- 1 Soccer Field
- Troop 671 Maintenance Garage
- 7 Playground Sets/Swings
- 7 Walking Paths (4 paved)
- 48 Picnic Tables
- 84 Parking Spaces (7 ADA)
- 8 Mutt Mitt Dispensers
- 4 Little Free Libraries

-9 Fishing Locations

Benefits and Services



The Park District offered the following major park improvements since 2019

2019: Seal coated Rule Parking Lot, Paved Rule Park Walking Paths, Steel Seawall at Sunset Park Boat Launch, Pebble Beach Park Boat Launch Permanent Pier and Boat Launch Upgrade, Rip Rap at Boulder/Lake Shore Drive, Pebble Parks, Various Work on Park Border Posts/Cables Systems. Replacement of Windows and Entry Doors at Rule House with ADA Accessible Doors and Energy-Efficient Windows.

2020: Willow Point Park Secondary Walking Path Paving and Drainage Install (end of Rule Ct.), Willow Point wooden permanent piers installed (Lions Club donation), Rule Park Flagpole Install (Eagle Project), Various Tree Trimming and Removals.

2021: Sunset Park Gravel Trailer Parking Spots, Rule Park Entry Planter Bed and Cottage Planters/Beds (Garden Club), Picnic Tables Restorations, Various Tree Trimming and Removals, Tree Plantings (Donations). Buoy Replacements.

2022: New Beach Sand Added, New EWF Playground Mulch Added, Pebble Beach Park ADA Path Repaving and Greenspace Drainage Install, Sunset Park Boat Launch Platform Restoration, Pebble Beach Park Bay Swings Added (partial Lions Club Donation), Picnic Tables and Sitting Benches Restorations, Park Grill Replacements, Tulip Planting in Parks (Garden Club). Various Tree Trimming and Removals, Tree Plantings (Donations), Reset Pebble Trailer Parking Posts/Cables, Repainted Park Garbage/Recycle Cans and Swing Set Frames. Buoy Replacements.

2023: Sunset/Willow Point Pavilion Restorations, Picnic Table and Sitting Bench Restorations, Old Plank Park Split-Rail Fence Replacement, Power Washed Playgrounds, New Park Signage, Permanent Stone Bike Racks, Rule House Carpet and LVT Flooring Replacement, Pebble Secondary Fishing Pier Replacement, LED Lights Replacement inside and outside all Facilities and Rule Parking Lot Lights (FREE – ComEd Grant), Pebble Beach Park Permanent Pier Sitting Benches Install, **Valley Lake Stormwater Improvement Projects:** (Valley North Outflow Structure Replacement/Berm Enhancement and Drainage, Valley Lake South Plunge Pool Stormwater Inflow Retrofit and Rip Rap Enhancement – all apart of Federal Grant administered through Lake County Stormwater Management – WPD only paid \$33,164.00).

Benefits and Services



The Park District offered the following programs last year. Registration numbers are also provided:

- **Summer Camps/Tot Camp/Junior Counselor Program:** 139R/76NR
- **Swim Lessons on Gages Lake:** 66R/44NR
- **Early Child/Youth Programming:** (T-Ball, Pumpkin/Gingerbread Decorating, etc.): 58R/39NR
- **Preschool:** (3's and Pre-K Program): 13R/14NR
- **Adults:** (Yoga, Zumba, Walking Club, Dog Obedience, Paddle Board, Baggo, etc.): 44R/20NR
- **Special Events:** (where Pre-Registration is Required): 19R/10NR. Other Events (Harvest Fest, Concerts, etc. no Registration Taken.
- **Pavilion and Room Rentals (Residents ONLY):** 48 Pavilion and 35 Room Rentals Respectively
- **Boat Launch Keys (Residents ONLY):** 139 Total

Benefits and Services



While the Park District is a special purpose district, its impact to the community is multi-faceted and far reaching.

- **Recreation and Leisure Opportunities:** Park Districts provide a wide range of recreational facilities and programs, including parks, playgrounds, sports fields, trails, beaches, fitness centers, and community centers. These amenities offer opportunities for physical activity, social interaction, and leisure activities for individuals of all ages and abilities.
- **Green Spaces and Environmental Preservation:** Park Districts contribute to the preservation of green spaces, natural habitats, and biodiversity within urban and suburban areas. Parks and open spaces serve as valuable ecological sanctuaries, promoting environmental education and appreciation of nature.
- The Park District's open space and trees help improve air and water quality and mitigate flooding.
- **Health and Well-being:** Access to parks and recreational facilities encourages a more active lifestyle, promoting and improving better physical health and mental well-being, thereby reducing health care costs.
- **Community Building:** Park Districts play a vital role in bringing communities together. Parks and recreational programs provide spaces where people from diverse backgrounds can interact, fostering a sense of community and social cohesion.

Benefits and Services



While the Park District is a special purpose district, its impact to the community is multi-faceted and far reaching.

- **Youth and Family Development:** Parks offer safe and supervised environments for children and teenagers to engage in constructive activities. They provide opportunities for skill development, teamwork, leadership, and character-building experiences.
- **Economic Impact:** A well-maintained Park District can enhance property values in the surrounding area, making it an attractive place to live and work. Parks and recreational amenities can also attract tourists and visitors, boosting local businesses and the economy.
- **Environmental Education and Sustainability:** Many Park Districts focus on promoting environmental awareness and sustainability. They offer educational programs on topics like conservation, recycling, and sustainable practices to instill a sense of responsibility for the environment among community members.
- **Emergency Preparedness and Public Safety:** Park Districts often collaborate with local authorities to develop emergency preparedness plans and provide spaces that can be used for disaster relief or evacuation centers during emergencies.
- Overall, Park Districts play a crucial role in enhancing the overall quality of life for residents by providing opportunities for recreation, social interaction, education, and community engagement while contributing to environmental conservation and public health.

Recommendations for Increased Efficiency and Accountability



Homework:

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