OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF THE STRATEGY AD HOC COMMITTEE/BOARD OF THE WHOLE OF THE PLEASURE DRIVEWAY AND PARK DISTRICT OF PEORIA, ILLINOIS, AT 5:00 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2025 HELD AT THE BONNIE NOBLE ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, 1125 WEST LAKE AVENUE, PEORIA IL

TRUSTEES PRESENT: Trustees Steve Montez, Alexander Sierra, Ron Silver, Mark Slover, Vice President Reagan Leslie Hill, and President Robert Johnson

TRUSTEES ABSENT: Trustee Joyce Harant

STAFF PRESENT: Executive Director Emily Cahill, Nick Conrad, Becky Fredrickson, Matt Freeman, Scott Loftus, Shalesse Pie, Karrie Ross, Jennifer Swanson, Mary Harden, Kristi Shoemaker, Mike Eddlemon, Spencer Wilson, Attorneys Kevin Day and Justin Gunn, and Alicia Woodworth.

1. CALL TO ORDER

President Johnson presided and called the meeting to order at 5:05 pm.

2. ROLL CALL

Roll call was taken.

3. MOTION TO PERMIT TRUSTEE TO ATTEND MEETING ELECTRONICALLY

No request to attend meeting electronically was received.

4. MINUTES

4.A. Approval of Minutes of September 24, 2025 Strategy Ad Hoc Committee Meeting

Trustee Slover MOVED TO APPROVE the minutes of the September 24, 2025 Strategy Ad Hoc Committee meeting. Motion seconded by Trustee Silver and carried unanimously on roll call vote.

5. POLICY/PROCESS UPDATES

None at this time.

6. NEW BUSINESS

6.A. 2026 GO Bond Budget Priorities

Becky Fredrickson reviewed the proposed 2026 General Obligation Bond budget priorities. Staff recommended the issuance of $5 million in GO Bonds to fund various capital improvements across the District. Major proposed projects include:

- Bradley Park Tennis Courts – $700,000
- Bike Trail Path Improvements – $180,000
- Charter Oak Park Playground Replacement – $300,000 (pending OSLAD grant)
- Golf Division Equipment – Replacement of 80 golf carts with new electric models.

Noted was the focus on sustainability, accessibility, and large-scale improvements.

6.B. Capital Improvement Plan Discussion

Due to time constraints, this item was not discussed.

6.C. Police Fund 2026 Budget Discussion

Executive Director Cahill stated that as part of our shared effort to prioritize the District's reputation as a safe, welcoming place to visit, we must also recognize the storms in our environment. Rising community tensions and growing expectations for emergency response place new pressures on our organization. Given the size and scope of our District's physical spaces, it is not reasonable to think that we will be able to place police officers or security staff in all locations at all times, so we have to be strategic and creative in our work to improve our reach and strategic focus.

To stand up to these challenges, we must strengthen the stability of our public safety structure and the knowledge and engagement of our staff beyond our officers to ensure that we are all working to prioritize safety of our patrons and ourselves.

The following proposal represents a single, coordinated strategy to improve safety for patrons, staff, and facilities. It draws from Interim Chief Eddlemon's recommendations and offers a holistic approach that allows us to better adapt to external pressures, maintain stability, and grow trust with the community. Specifically, the 2026 budget includes resource allocation that will:

a. Add a Director of Public Safety position to serve as a counterpart to our current Environmental and Health Safety Manager in order to improve focus on emergency action planning and staff capacity to respond to, or prevent, violence or other disruption to patron experience, while positively influencing staff safety.

b. Modify the Chief of Police job description to focus on administration, coordination with other local and state resources, and improving officer training and capacity, with only limited field duty.

c. Ensure consistent leadership and access to industry trends and best practice by contracting with an outside vendor for placement of local experts in the Director and Chief position via contract, which will reduce cost burden of District vs. increased capacity.

d. Elevate one of the four full-time officers to a Sergeant position to support in-the-field oversight and expectations for all staff.

Support officer retention by:
1. Modifying work schedules to support a better work-life balance AND peak time officer coverage.
2. Offering access to take-home vehicles for officers.
3. Engage them in community supports like restoring the District's Explorer program.

Budget Impact

- + $65,000 annually to cover costs of a fourth officer as added in 2025.
- + $63,000 in 2026 to pilot contractual leadership as described above

Why It Matters

- External Pressures: Rising community tensions and evolving public safety challenges are threats to our District and its ability to serve our community. We must respond with purpose and strength.
- Need for Consistent Investment and Innovation: This change invests in modern leadership and better tools/technology to ensure our District prioritizes safety and stands on the cutting edge by accessing experts in the field.
- Mission Alignment: This proposal supports our Commitments to DEIA and Vibrancy pillars and our District values (PRAISE) by ensuring every facility, program, and park user has the safety they deserve while also investing in workforce development efforts in an underrepresented field.

Anticipated Benefits

- Strengthens leadership AND emergency planning
- Prioritizes INNOVATION
- Focuses the Chief role on COORDINATION and TRAINING, increasing his/her impact
- Ensures consistent best-practice LEADERSHIP through contracted expertise
- Elevates in-field supervision and ACCOUNTABILITY
- Supports officer RETENTION and community connection with a focus on growing our own officers and supporting our neighbors
- Expands our use of technology to support SAFETY and CAPACITY
- More effective EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS across District facilities
- Faster, smarter RESPONSE capabilities through updated TECHNOLOGY
- Stronger ALIGNMENT with best practices in community policing
- Increased community and peer TRUST and officer support

Risks or Trade-offs

- Contracted leadership requires careful oversight and accountability
- Budget increase requires reallocating or pruning in other areas if not offset

Staff asks for Board support of its proposal to pilot a one-year contract via RFP for provision of embedded Director of Public Safety and Chief of Police roles, while maintaining the additional officer added in 2025.

Executive Director Cahill explained that these adjustments aim to reduce turnover, strengthen team cohesion, and promote accountability. She also outlined ongoing retention strategies including modified work schedules (four 10-hour shifts), and a take-home vehicle policy designed to provide flexibility, reduce fatigue, and enhance officer availability during emergencies.

Executive Director Cahill announced a plan to rebuild the Park District's Police Explorer Program, previously suspended prior to COVID-19. The program would serve middle and

high school youth interested in law enforcement, conservation, or community policing careers, and would tie into the District's "Be Anything" workforce development initiative. Chief Mike Eddlemon elaborated that the program previously had strong participation and community impact, with one current Park District officer being a former Explorer. It was noted that existing funds of approximately $7,000 remain in reserve from the former program and could be used for youth stipends or national conference participation. He emphasized that the program offers mentorship, builds community trust, and cultivates future officer candidates.

Trustees expressed support for re-establishing the Explorer program as a positive engagement tool, highlighting its potential to foster long-term local recruitment.

Executive Director Cahill then discussed the broader challenges of maintaining a small, independent police force, noting that competition with larger regional departments has made recruitment increasingly difficult. She summarized that while the Park District Police Department provides a vital community-based service, staffing limitations and training demands have revealed capacity gaps—particularly in areas such as emergency planning, technology, and inter-agency coordination.

To address these gaps, Executive Director Cahill proposed a hybrid operational model that would include contracting both a Chief of Police and a Director of Public Safety through a professional services agreement. This model would ensure access to specialized expertise while reducing benefits-related overhead costs associated with full-time employees. The estimated net increase to implement this approach would be approximately $63,000 after reallocating existing salary and benefit line items.

The proposal prompted a robust and candid discussion among Trustees regarding the model's structure, ethics, and implications:

- Trustee Sierra expressed concern about potential conflicts of interest, given that Chief Eddlemon's firm (ICMG) currently contracts with the District and might participate in the upcoming RFP and emphasized the need for a transparent process. He questioned the appropriateness of having a potential bidder present during strategic discussions about contract scope.
- Attorney Kevin Day clarified that the meeting and dialogue remained compliant with the Open Meetings Act, and that while Chief Eddlemon's presence was lawful, he would not participate in writing or reviewing the RFP to ensure fairness.
- President Johnson spoke at length about his personal experiences with law enforcement and expressed deep concern for ensuring that any future police leadership reflects the values of fairness, accountability, and cultural awareness. He underscored that the Park District's approach to policing must be equitable, community-minded, and representative of Peoria's diverse population.
- Trustees echoed the importance of ethical integrity and DEIA (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility) alignment in all aspects of the RFP process, including vendor selection and officer recruitment.
- Executive Director Cahill reiterated that the RFP would be open, competitive, and structured to prioritize local, qualified, and diverse applicants capable of delivering both law enforcement and public safety coordination expertise.

Chief Eddlemon responded to Trustee questions, affirming that while his firm might submit a proposal, it would be one of several respondents. He emphasized his firm's minority and female ownership and its mission to strengthen community policing through innovative safety practices. He also detailed improvements already achieved under his temporary contract, including modernization of technology, enhanced coordination with local and state agencies, and stronger incident response procedures.

Following extensive discussion, the Board reached consensus to authorize staff to prepare a formal Request for Proposals (RFP) for contracted Police and Public Safety leadership services. The RFP will:

- Require demonstration of local knowledge and community engagement;
- Emphasize DEIA values and cultural competency;
- Include clear performance indicators and accountability standards; and
- Ensure that any evaluation and selection process is conducted without participation from current contractors.

President Johnson closed the discussion by reiterating the Board's commitment to ensuring that the Park District Police Department serves the community with professionalism, transparency, and respect for all citizens.

6.D. Aquatics 2026 Budget Discussion

Due to time constraints, this item was not discussed.

7. PENDING BUSINESS

None at this time.

8. CITIZEN REQUEST TO ADDRESS THE BOARD

None at this time.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

None at this time.

10. ACTION STEPS REVIEW

1. Staff to develop and present a draft RFP for contracted Police Chief and Director of Public Safety positions.
2. Follow-up discussion on Capital Improvement Plan and Aquatics Fund to be scheduled at an upcoming meeting.
3. Attorney Day is to explore the legalities of a residential requirement for applicants for the Chief of Police position.

11. ADJOURNMENT

At 6:31 PM, Vice President Hill MOVED TO ADJOURN. Motion seconded by Trustee Montez and carried unanimously on roll call vote.

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Respectfully Submitted by Alicia Woodworth

Executive Assistant and Board Secretary