



Given the challenges that our community, state and nation are currently facing, we thought it prudent to clearly share the Peoria Park District's philosophy for summer programming and clarify the philosophy that we are using to make decisions that have an impact on our users and employees.

During the pandemic, the District is focused on offering high quality experiences for those in our region. By ensuring access to our nearly 9,000 acres of open space and more than 50 miles of trails, the District has been a key recreation opportunity during this crisis. Research shows that even 20 minutes of time spent outside daily can help to improve physical and emotional health. This becomes even more critical during difficult times like these and should not be forgotten during the good times either.

When the Governor directed people to shelter at home, he also encouraged people to enjoy the outdoors by walking, hiking and biking. Our residents have responded responsibly, and the District is supporting record numbers of users in our parks and on our trails across the community.

The Peoria Park District offers amenities across our community at a quality and scale not seen in most other communities of our size. This should not be taken for granted.

We all must face the fact that we are currently living in a different time and that simply because we want something to happen does not mean it will happen. Park Districts across the state are making very tough decisions – decisions we do not like but must make. As a public body whose mission is to offer high quality parks and recreation experiences to those who live, work and play in our District, we must make decisions that protect the well-being of everyone we serve. Until the time that state and local health officials give us the approval to return to partial or full capacity, the Peoria Park District will be adhering to the state mandate. Doing the right thing is always the right answer.

The Peoria Park District's Mission is as follows: We contribute to a healthy and vibrant Peoria community by responsibly using our District resources to offer

high quality parks and recreation experiences to those who live, work and play in our District.

\*At all times, especially now, our focus must be on supporting the health and vibrancy of Peoria. In these challenging times, we must prioritize the health of those in our Park District family...

**First, Those who live in our District:**

Throughout the Stay at Home order, we have supported the care and maintenance of parks and trails for all users. We have had to limit access to some amenities based on social distancing requirements and additional direction from the State. Throughout, we have made difficult decisions, and will continue to do so... even when it isn't popular, to keep our users safe by electing not to open facilities or offer programming that is not essential. We will err on the side of not doing things that might exceed crowd limits and/or that may not allow for social distancing or safe usage.

When the difficult decisions are made, we are communicating them in real time and explaining why we came to these conclusions. These decisions are based on science and data and not emotion or politics and will follow guidelines put forth by our community health experts including the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) and the Peoria City/County Health Department (PCCHD) among others.

The District is committed to prioritizing its program delivery based on the health and wellbeing of our residents during this difficult time.

**Next, those who work in our District:**

As part of daily communications to staff and our board, we have shared our commitment to supporting our full-time staff for as long as we can.

In the workplace, the District is stressing the health and wellbeing of our staff while they are on the job through prioritization of practices that focus on smart, safe workplaces.

With nearly half of our revenue coming from fees and charges, the District must work to control expenses in order to minimize losses during this time. Its *Work Smart. Work Safe.* initiative has allowed the District to re-assign many full-time staff from closed facilities and programs to work in our park system and, most

recently, in golf operations to help keep costs controlled while keeping our staff working.

In addition, with our facilities closed, the District has focused its efforts on providing engaging recreational activities offered primarily on its social media platforms to support its users. These activities are facilitated by the District's staff for attractions that cannot welcome visitors into their locations and we have been able to entertain and educate thousands of people online.

Further, while we have been proactive in our approach, we know that current modifications to our programming are not enough to support the long-term financial stability of many of the District's programs and facilities.

**Finally, those who play in our District:**

Our high-quality regional parks and trail system continues to be available for all users. We encourage users to practice social distancing and safe, hygienic practices as they use our amenities to ensure that they can continue to be a resource for all. We also encourage those who do not feel well to stay home.

District facilities like Peoria Zoo, Peoria PlayHouse Children's Museum, RiverPlex Recreation and Wellness Center, and our other recreation centers that are visited by regional visitors will limit their scope in compliance with the Governor's Reopen Illinois strategy and the guidelines set forth by IDPH and PCCHD for as long as it takes to keep the citizens of our region safe and healthy. Further, facilities will only open when it is determined safe to do so.

In addition to adhering to the Governor's guidance, the District is also focusing on making responsible decisions regarding its allocation of financial resources. District operations are supported by a variety of revenue streams including property and replacement tax and fees/charges. While our facilities are closed, the District has frozen relevant membership fees for all users during the shutdown. Some of our users have elected to continue to financially support the District and we are grateful for that support.