

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE OF THE PLEASURE DRIVEWAY AND PARK DISTRICT OF PEORIA, ILLINOIS HELD AT 12:00 PM ON WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15, 2026 AT THE BONNIE W. NOBLE CENTER FOR PARK DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION, 1125 WEST LAKE AVENUE, PEORIA, IL**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Trustee and Chair Alexander Sierra, Trustee and Vice Chair Joyce Harant, and Executive Director Emily Cahill

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** None

**TRUSTEES PRESENT:** Trustees Joyce Harant and Alexander Sierra

**STAFF PRESENT:** Executive Director Emily Cahill, Nick Conrad, Kevin Davis, Matt Freeman, Scott Loftus, Kristi Shoemaker, and Jennifer Swanson

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Trustee Sierra called the meeting to order at 11:03 AM.

**2. ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Trustee and Chair Alexander Sierra, Trustee and Vice Chair Joyce Harant, and Executive Director Emily Cahill

Members Absent: None

**3. MOTION TO PERMIT COMMITTEE MEMBER TO ATTEND MEETING ELECTRONICALLY**

No requests were made for electronic attendance.

**4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MARCH 18, 2026 PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE MEETING**

Trustee Harant MOVED TO APPROVE the minutes of the March 18, 2026 Programming Committee Meeting. Motion seconded by Trustee Sierra and carried on a unanimous aye of members.

**5. WORK SESSION DISCUSSION**

**5.A. Scholarship Program – Continued Discussion**

Scott Loftus provided an update regarding continued evaluation of the Park District’s scholarship program. Staff recently met to begin reviewing historical scholarship data, including approved and denied applications and the reasons associated with those determinations. The purpose of the review is to identify potential improvements to the program structure and application process, while also evaluating any operational challenges or gaps that may need to be addressed.

Staff indicated that the goal is to develop recommendations for possible implementation beginning in 2027 and to align those recommendations with the upcoming budget development process. Committee members discussed timing for bringing recommendations forward, with staff anticipating that a more formal proposal could return to the Committee by June or July prior to presentation to the full Board.

The Committee reiterated the importance of ensuring equitable access to Park District programs while maintaining a process that is sustainable, transparent, and fiscally responsible.

## **5.B. 2026 Programming Committee Plan – Implementation Update**

Staff provided an update regarding implementation of the 2026 Programming Committee engagement plan and upcoming Talk About It Tuesday sessions. Staff confirmed that the May Talk About It Tuesday session will focus on golf programming and is tentatively planned to occur at the Golf Learning Center or Kellogg Golf Course, pending facility coordination and operational scheduling.

Discussion followed regarding event logistics, public visibility, and strategies to improve participation and awareness for future Talk About It Tuesday sessions. Trustee Harant emphasized the importance of physical signage and more visible promotion at event locations, noting that when visiting Forest Park Nature Center, she did not observe clear on-site notification regarding the upcoming public input session. She suggested additional door signage, improved informational displays, and more visible placement of promotional materials to reinforce awareness beyond digital communication methods alone.

Staff reviewed the District's current outreach efforts, which include press releases, social media promotion, email communication, posters, yard signage, and QR code-based surveys. Staff noted that while attendance at the Nature & Outdoor Recreation session was limited, the District continues to receive significant public interaction through other communication channels, including website "Contact Us" submissions, social media messages, emails, and direct operational inquiries.

Committee discussion focused extensively on evaluating the effectiveness of the current public engagement model and determining whether Talk About It Tuesday sessions are generating sufficient participation relative to the amount of staff time and resources required. Trustee Sierra stated that while the Committee values public engagement, it is important to ensure that outreach methods are producing meaningful participation and measurable outcomes. He noted that the Committee may ultimately consider reducing the number of generalized public input sessions in future years and instead focus on more project-specific or topic-driven engagement opportunities that tend to generate stronger public interest and participation.

Executive Director Cahill and staff noted that project-specific outreach efforts, such as playground selection surveys and focused facility improvement discussions, typically receive substantially greater public response than broader programming discussions. Staff further emphasized that many community concerns are already being addressed successfully through direct staff communication and operational responsiveness before issues escalate to the Committee level.

The Committee also discussed the balance between technology-based communication tools and more traditional methods of information sharing. Staff noted that QR codes and digital platforms remain the most cost-effective and efficient means of distributing information, while some patrons continue to prefer physical signage, printed materials, or in-person interaction. Committee members discussed the possibility of future interactive kiosks, enhanced wayfinding systems, and additional signage at key facilities to improve communication and visitor experience. The Committee agreed to continue evaluating public engagement strategies throughout the year and revisit potential modifications to the Talk About It Tuesday framework during future strategic planning discussions.

### **5.C. Evaluation of Public Input: Nature & Outdoor Recreation (Talk About It Tuesday April 2026)**

Staff presented a summary and evaluation of public feedback gathered during the April 7, 2026 Talk About It Tuesday session focused on Nature & Outdoor Recreation programming and facilities. Staff reviewed the broad range of environmental and outdoor recreation offerings discussed during the session, including Forest Park Nature Center, Camp Wokanda, Sommer Farm, Tawny Oaks Field Station, Peoria Zoo, Luthy Botanical Garden, and Peoria PlayHouse programming. Additional discussion included guided hikes, environmental day camps, field trips, traveling educational programs, and outdoor recreation opportunities throughout the District. Staff explained that attendance at the public input session was relatively small but that participants provided constructive feedback and several meaningful suggestions related to outdoor recreation access, communication, and visitor experience.

The Committee reviewed several recurring themes identified during the session, including:

- Improved wayfinding and directional signage at larger parks and multi-use facilities
- Better communication regarding facility amenities, trails, and current programming opportunities
- Continued promotion of hiking, environmental education, and outdoor recreation opportunities
- Concerns regarding overreliance on QR codes and digital-only communication methods
- Interest in additional visitor information kiosks and interactive maps
- The importance of balancing accessibility, visitor experience, environmental stewardship, and operational costs

Staff discussed the challenges associated with providing wayfinding and informational signage across large park systems with multiple access points. Staff noted that while certain facilities, such as Forest Park Nature Center, already include informational kiosks and maps, implementing comprehensive wayfinding systems districtwide would require significant capital investment and careful consideration regarding placement, durability, accessibility, and long-term maintenance. Committee members discussed the possibility of future interactive kiosk systems similar to those used in retail or public gathering spaces, which could provide visitors with maps, amenity information, and event details without requiring patrons to rely exclusively on personal mobile devices.

Discussion also focused on the balance between maintaining natural aesthetics and increasing informational signage within nature preserves and outdoor recreation spaces. Staff explained that QR codes and digital resources reduce paper waste and visual clutter within environmentally sensitive areas, while acknowledging that some patrons continue to prefer more traditional printed materials and signage.

The Committee acknowledged the value of the feedback received and emphasized the importance of continuing to evaluate practical, cost-effective strategies to improve visitor communication, public awareness, and accessibility across the District's environmental and outdoor recreation facilities.

### **5.D. Categorization and Prioritization of Identified Items**

The Committee reviewed the public feedback themes identified during the Nature & Outdoor Recreation session and discussed potential categorization of items into operational improvements, communication enhancements, and longer-term capital considerations.

Operational and short-term considerations discussed included:

- Enhanced physical signage at event locations
- Improved visibility of public engagement opportunities
- Additional printed informational materials at select facilities
- Continued evaluation of outreach methods and communication effectiveness

Longer-term considerations discussed included:

- Expanded park wayfinding systems
- Interactive informational kiosks
- Enhanced visitor orientation areas at major facilities
- Technology improvements related to public information access and programming awareness

The Committee reiterated the importance of evaluating both effectiveness and cost when considering future enhancements.

**5.E. Recommendation Development and Next Steps**

The Committee discussed next steps related to ongoing evaluation of the Programming Committee engagement model and future Talk About It Tuesday sessions. Committee members agreed that additional review and discussion will continue throughout the year as staff gathers additional public feedback and participation data.

Staff will continue refining outreach strategies, evaluating communication effectiveness, and identifying opportunities to improve public participation and accessibility. The Committee also requested continued review of methods for tracking and documenting public interaction across all communication platforms in order to better evaluate trends, responsiveness, and community priorities over time.

**6. PENDING BUSINESS**

None

**7. OTHER BUSINESS**

None

**8. ACTION STEPS REVIEW**

None noted at this time.

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

At 12:30 pm, Trustee Harant MOVED TO ADJOURN. Motion seconded by Trustee Sierra and carried on a unanimous aye of members present.

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Submitted by Alicia Woodworth, Executive Assistant and Board Secretary  
Based on notes from Executive Director Emily Cahill