

OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE PLEASURE DRIVEWAY AND PARK DISTRICT OF PEORIA, ILLINOIS, HELD AT 6:30 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 13, 2026 HELD AT THE BONNIE W. NOBLE CENTER FOR PARK DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION, 1125 WEST LAKE AVENUE, PEORIA, IL

TRUSTEES PRESENT: Trustees Joyce Harant, Reagan Leslie Hill, Alexander Sierra, Ron Silver, Mark Slover, Vice President Steve Montez (in at 6:59 PM), and President Robert Johnson

TRUSTEES ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Executive Director Emily Cahill, Brianna Cobb, Nick Conrad, Matt Freeman, Becky Fredrickson, Scott Loftus, Karrie Ross, Jennifer Swanson, Willie Howe, Kristi Shoemaker, Chief Aaron Watkins, Spencer Wilson, Attorneys Kevin Day and Kyle Tompkins, Miles Howley, and Alicia Woodworth

1. CALL TO ORDER

President Johnson presided and called the meeting to order at 6:36 pm.

2. ROLL CALL

Roll call was taken and all Trustees were present.

3. CALL FOR MOTION TO PERMIT TRUSTEE TO ATTEND MEETING ELECTRONICALLY

No request was received to attend the meeting electronically.

4. MOMENT OF SILENCE AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

A moment of silence was observed, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

5. MINUTES

5.A. Approval of Minutes of the April 8, 2026 and April 22, 2026 Regular Board Meetings

Trustee Harant MOVED TO APPROVE the April 8, 2026 Regular Board Meeting minutes. Motion seconded and carried unanimously on roll call vote.

Trustee Harant then MOVED TO APPROVE the April 22, 2026 Regular Board Meeting minutes with a modification under Item 11.B. clarifying that the motion stated the item was deferred “until the next regularly scheduled Board meeting.” Trustee Harant noted the same clarification applied to Item 11.A. President Johnson acknowledged that the correction had been made. Motion seconded and carried unanimously on roll call vote.

Prior to proceeding further into the agenda, President Johnson informed attendees that the Board intended to first complete routine business items before returning to Citizen Request to Address the Board and the special topic discussion later in the meeting. Board members agreed to the revised flow of the agenda.

6. STAFF REPORTS

6.A. Executive Director

Executive Director Emily Cahill welcomed newly hired Chief Aaron Watkins to the Park District, noting he officially began employment on May 4, 2026. She stated the Board and public would

hear from him at the next meeting during the monthly police report presentation. Ms. Cahill also thanked Lieutenant Hughes for his continued service and involvement during the transition. Ms. Cahill reminded the Board and community that the upcoming weekend would be the final weekend for the Glow Wild event at the Peoria Zoo. She acknowledged the challenges posed by spring weather and rainfall but encouraged the community to attend and support the event, noting that attractions of this scale are typically found only in much larger metropolitan areas such as Chicago and St. Louis. President Johnson welcomed Chief Watkins and congratulated him on his new role.

6.B. Superintendent of Planning, Design & Construction

Superintendent Becky Fredrickson referenced the April 2026 Monthly Project Report and highlighted the opening of the new inclusive restroom building adjacent to the Glen Oak Park playground. She also noted the new basketball courts at Glen Oak Park had officially opened to the public.

7. COMMITTEE REPORTS

No Committee Reports were presented.

8. CITIZEN REQUEST TO ADDRESS THE BOARD

President Johnson explained that comments regarding Item 13.A., Community Safety in Parks, would be heard later in the meeting during the designated special topic discussion. He invited anyone wishing to speak on matters unrelated to Community Safety in Parks to do so at that time. No individuals came forward to address the Board on unrelated matters.

9. CALENDAR OF CONSENT ITEMS

9.A. Bid – Noble Center Chiller Replacement

9.B. Bid – Equipment Service Center Vestibule Repairs

9.C. Quote – Camp Wokanda Lodge Siding – Phase 4

9.D. Change Order – Semi Annual Fire and Security Alarm Inspection Cost Increase

Trustee Harant MOVED TO APPROVE Calendar of Consent Items 9.A. through 9.E. Motion seconded by Trustee Sierra and carried unanimously on roll call vote.

10. NEW BUSINESS

10.A. Springdale Cemetery Management Authority Bylaws

Executive Director Cahill explained that the proposed bylaw revisions primarily consisted of administrative and statutory updates intended to align the bylaws with current practices and legal requirements, including Freedom of Information Act language and clarification regarding Board member appointments and terms. It was noted that the Springdale Cemetery Management Authority operates under an intergovernmental agreement among the Park District, the City of Peoria, and Peoria County, requiring approval from all participating governmental entities.

Trustee Harant MOVED TO APPROVE the Springdale Cemetery Management Authority Bylaws. Motion seconded by Trustee Sierra and carried unanimously on roll call vote.

10.B. Agreement – Cricket Association of Peoria at Leslie Rutherford Park

Trustee Silver MOVED TO APPROVE the Cricket Association of Peoria Agreement at Leslie Rutherford Park. Motion seconded by Trustee Hill and carried unanimously on roll call vote.

10.C. Pre-Travel Authorization for Trustees to Attend the 2026 NRPA Conference in Philadelphia, PA September 29-October 1, 2026

Trustee Sierra MOVED TO APPROVE the Pre-Travel Authorization for Trustees to Attend the 2026 NRPA Conference in Philadelphia, PA September 29-October 1, 2026. Motion seconded by Trustee Hill and carried unanimously on roll call vote.

10.D. Post-Travel Expenses Approval for Trustees to Attend the Annual IAPD Legislative Reception and Conference

Trustee Silver MOVED TO APPROVE the Post-Travel Expenses Approval for Trustees to Attend the Annual IAPD Legislative Reception and Conference. Motion seconded by Trustee Hill and carried unanimously on roll call vote.

10.E. HR Policy Updates

Superintendent Pie presented the first reading of proposed Human Resources policy updates. She explained the revisions primarily reflected changes in state and federal law. She further noted that the "Notice to Employee" section included modifications to introductory pages of the policy manual. She advised that several minor grammatical corrections would be made prior to the next Board meeting when the policies would return for formal approval consideration. No action was required at this meeting as the item was presented for first reading only.

11. PENDING BUSINESS

No Pending Business was presented.

12. COMMUNICATIONS

12.A. Kroger Rewards

No formal discussion occurred regarding the Kroger Rewards communication item.

13. OTHER BUSINESS

13.A. Special Topic: Community Safety in Parks

- a. Framing of Topic: Staff/Board
- b. Public Comment - Community Safety in Parks
 - * Speakers limited to 3 minutes each
 - * Total time for this section may be limited

- c. Board Discussions
 - * Board-level discussion of themes raised
 - * Direction to staff, if appropriate. Please note, no final action will be taken at this time.

Executive Director Cahill opened the discussion by acknowledging that recent incidents in Park District parks had deeply impacted the community and reinforced the importance of the Park District's role as a steward of public spaces. She stated that while the Park District alone could not solve community violence issues, it plays an important role through youth engagement, safe spaces, programming, park police presence, and partnerships with community organizations. She explained that the purpose of the discussion was to hear community perspectives regarding safety in parks and to gather ideas for strengthening the Park District's contribution to improving both actual and perceived safety.

President Johnson thanked the community members in attendance and referenced the recent incidents at Bradley Park and Stadium Park. He emphasized that the Board intended for the conversation to be meaningful and ongoing rather than a one-time discussion. He encouraged attendees to share suggestions, concerns, and ideas about improving safety in parks and throughout the community. Staff also noted that written comment forms had been distributed for those uncomfortable speaking publicly, and that submitted comments would become part of the official record.

The following individuals addressed the Board regarding Community Safety in Parks:

Evelyn Young

Ms. Young stated that she had recently returned to Peoria after living in Indianapolis for many years and expressed sadness and disappointment regarding increasing violence in the community. She stated that parks once felt safe for families, gatherings, and children, but that residents now often fear violence in public spaces. She advocated for stronger police presence, stricter laws, greater parental involvement, and more recreational opportunities for youth. Ms. Young thanked President Johnson for initiating the discussion and volunteered to help organize a citizen committee dedicated to addressing community violence and supporting youth.

Jake Ryan

Mr. Ryan commented on the significant community turnout and emphasized the importance of a community-oriented approach to addressing violence. He suggested increased visibility of park police through foot patrols and direct interaction with park users rather than relying solely on vehicle patrols. He noted that because many incidents were occurring within parks, the Park District had an opportunity to focus prevention and intervention efforts directly where problems were occurring. He expressed support for collaborative community partnerships aimed at restoring parks as welcoming and safe public spaces.

Andre McKnight

Mr. McKnight reflected on growing up in Peoria during a time when neighborhoods and families collectively held youth accountable for their behavior. He stated that community responsibility and parental involvement have diminished over time and suggested that stronger accountability for parents could help improve youth behavior. Mr. McKnight expressed support for Ms. Young's proposal for volunteer involvement and emphasized the importance of taking gradual but meaningful steps toward community improvement.

Pete Thomas

Mr. Thomas, identifying himself as a recreation and park administration professional, stated that many youths today lack communication skills and constructive recreational outlets. He discussed the importance of productive leisure activities and the role parks and recreation programs can play in reducing boredom, isolation, and negative behaviors. He encouraged the Park District and community to continue investing in recreational engagement opportunities for youth.

Dan Ruffin spoke about the importance of long-term community collaboration and stated that addressing violence requires a collective effort rather than reliance on any single organization or law enforcement agency. He emphasized the need for stronger partnerships between neighborhood groups, schools, churches, families, and local government entities. Mr. Ruffin stated that community members must remain actively involved and visible within neighborhoods and parks rather than only responding after

incidents occur. He encouraged the Park District to continue serving as a gathering point for positive community interaction and youth engagement.

Adam Catuna discussed the role that active and well-utilized parks can play in preventing crime and improving community perception of safety. He noted that when parks are consistently programmed and occupied by families, recreational users, and organized activities, negative behavior is less likely to occur. Mr. Catuna encouraged continued investment in programming, events, recreation opportunities, and park maintenance to help foster positive use of public spaces. He also spoke about the importance of creating environments where residents feel welcomed and comfortable spending time in parks throughout the day and evening hours.

Kendale Johnson emphasized the importance of mentorship and positive role models for youth. He stated that many young people need stronger support systems, guidance, and opportunities for constructive involvement within the community. Mr. Johnson encouraged the Park District and community organizations to continue creating programs that provide leadership opportunities, recreational outlets, and positive interactions for youth. He stated that investing in young people before problems arise is critical to creating safer communities in the future.

Pastor Irene spoke about the emotional and spiritual impact violence has had on families and neighborhoods throughout the community. She encouraged churches, faith-based organizations, community leaders, and residents to work together to provide support, encouragement, and healing opportunities for young people and families affected by violence. Pastor Irene emphasized the importance of creating environments where youth feel valued, supported, and connected to positive influences within the community.

Brother Duane Harris addressed the importance of accountability, mentorship, and direct engagement with young people. He stated that community members must be willing to build relationships with youth and remain actively involved in helping guide them toward positive choices. He spoke about the importance of consistency and follow-through, noting that meaningful change requires long-term commitment from both organizations and individuals. Brother Harris also stressed the importance of restoring stronger family and neighborhood support systems.

Harry Harris discussed concerns regarding residents feeling unsafe in public spaces that were once viewed as community gathering places. He reflected on earlier years when families regularly utilized parks without fear and stated that many residents now hesitate to attend public events or allow children to use parks independently. Mr. Harris encouraged increased community visibility within parks, stronger neighborhood involvement, and efforts to reclaim parks as welcoming spaces for recreation and family activities.

Karrie Alms thanked the Board for allowing a public discussion regarding community safety and expressed appreciation for the opportunity for residents to speak openly about concerns. She emphasized the importance of transparency, continued communication, and maintaining public involvement as the Park District evaluates future safety strategies. Ms. Alms stated that residents want to remain engaged in the process and encouraged the Board to ensure the conversation continues beyond a single meeting.

Pastor Young spoke about the need for unity and collaboration across the entire community. He stated that violence prevention efforts require participation from schools, churches, parents, neighborhood

groups, law enforcement, and local government. Pastor Young emphasized the importance of creating hope and opportunities for young people and encouraged the community to work together to restore a stronger sense of safety and trust within public spaces and neighborhoods.

Christine [Last Name Unavailable] spoke regarding concerns about community violence and its effect on families and residents utilizing Park District facilities and programs. She encouraged continued dialogue centered on prevention, youth outreach, and constructive community engagement. She also expressed support for additional efforts that help create safe and welcoming environments for residents of all ages.

Demario Boone discussed the importance of creating positive opportunities and support systems for youth within the community. He emphasized the need for mentorship, recreational opportunities, and stronger relationships between community members and law enforcement personnel. Mr. Boone stated that young people benefit from consistent guidance, positive interactions, and visible community investment in their success and well-being.

Additional members of the public also addressed the Board throughout the extended discussion regarding park safety, youth engagement, police visibility, family involvement, community partnerships, and opportunities for increased programming and outreach. Several speakers emphasized the importance of collaboration among residents, law enforcement, schools, churches, parents, and community organizations to improve safety and create positive opportunities for youth.

Board members listened to the comments and expressed appreciation for the public participation and willingness of residents to engage constructively in the discussion. Trustees acknowledged the emotional impact recent incidents had on the community and reiterated the Park District's commitment to continuing the conversation and evaluating potential operational improvements and partnership opportunities moving forward.

14. ACTION STEPS REVIEW

Board members briefly reviewed discussion themes and acknowledged the importance of continued dialogue regarding community safety and engagement initiatives. No formal action steps were adopted at this time.

15. ADJOURNMENT

At 8:27 PM Trustee Sierra MOVED TO ADJOURN. Motion seconded by Trustee Silver and carried unanimously on voice vote.

Full discussion can be viewed at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MTOnCpvaubA>

Submitted by Alicia Woodworth
Executive Assistant and Board Secretary