**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE OF THE PLEASURE DRIVEWAY AND PARK DISTRICT OF PEORIA, ILLINOIS HELD AT 11:00 AM ON WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17, 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, and President Robert Johnson (in at 11:33 am)

**STAFF PRESENT:** Executive Director Emily Cahill, Nick Conrad, Matt Freeman, Scott Loftus, Willie Howe (v), Jacob Kuban, and Alicia Woodworth
Note: (v) = Attended Virtually

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Yolanda Wallace

**1. CALL TO ORDER**
Trustee Sierra called the meeting to order at 11:00 AM.

**2. ROLL CALL**
Members Present: Trustee and Chair Alexander Sierra, Trustee and Vice Chair Joyce Harant, and Executive Director Emily Cahill

**3. MOTION TO PERMIT COMMITTEE MEMBER TO ATTEND MEETING ELECTRONICALLY**
No requests were made for electronic attendance.

**4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MAY 20, 2026 PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE MEETING**
Trustee Harant MOVED TO APPROVE the minutes of the May 20, 2026 Programming Committee Meeting. Motion seconded by Executive Director Cahill and carried on a unanimous aye of members.

**5. WORK SESSION DISCUSSION**

**5.A. Evaluation of Public Input: Glen Oak Park Programming and Facilities (Talk About it Tuesday June 2026)**
Following completion of the Memorandum of Understanding discussion (item 5.D. below), the Committee returned to the scheduled agenda and reviewed the results of the June "Talk About It Tuesday" public engagement session regarding Glen Oak Park programming and facilities.

Scott Loftus presented a summary of comments received from the public and reviewed the tracking document prepared by staff. He noted that, in addition to comments received during the public meeting, one additional survey response had been submitted following the meeting and had been incorporated into the evaluation.

The Committee reviewed each recommendation individually to determine appropriate follow-up actions and identify items requiring additional research or future Committee discussion.

The Committee first discussed recommendations related to the Glen Oak Park Amphitheater and opportunities to strengthen programming, partnerships, and long-term utilization of the facility.

Executive Director Cahill reported that discussions had already begun with President Johnson and Trustee Silver regarding formation of an ad hoc advisory committee to evaluate the future of the amphitheater. She explained that the proposed committee would include representatives of the Municipal Band Commission and other interested stakeholders and would be tasked with evaluating current operations, identifying partnership opportunities, assessing programming needs, and developing recommendations for the Board regarding the facility's long-term future.

Discussion included evaluating both the current physical condition of the amphitheater and its future role within the Park District's programming portfolio. Committee members recognized that questions regarding the long-term plans of existing users, particularly the Municipal Band, would significantly influence future capital investment decisions.

Executive Director Cahill noted that preliminary conversations suggested the Municipal Band may ultimately be interested in utilizing the new RiverFront amphitheater in the future, making it important to first understand the organization's long-term goals before recommending improvements to the existing Glen Oak facility.

Committee members discussed the importance of maintaining regular communication regarding the ad hoc committee's progress. Trustee Harant recommended that periodic reports be provided to the Strategy Ad Hoc Committee and that meeting minutes from the ad hoc committee be shared with the Board to ensure transparency throughout the planning process.

The Committee expressed consensus supporting establishment of the ad hoc committee and agreed that the group should focus on identifying both immediate operational improvements and longer-term strategic opportunities for the amphitheater.

The Committee next discussed opportunities to strengthen community outreach, neighborhood engagement, and public participation.

Scott Loftus reported that staff had begun compiling an inventory of the Park District's existing outreach efforts, partnership activities, publications, marketing initiatives, and community engagement practices. The objective would be to identify current efforts, evaluate their effectiveness, and determine where opportunities for improvement exist.

Chair Sierra explained that his interest was not simply increasing marketing efforts but rather strengthening relationships between the Park District and the neighborhoods surrounding District facilities. He observed that attendance at the recent public engagement meeting suggested an opportunity to improve meaningful community participation in planning efforts.

Executive Director Cahill noted that attendance at a single public meeting should not necessarily be interpreted as a lack of community outreach, observing that District-sponsored events throughout the year routinely attract thousands of participants. She explained that public participation often varies depending upon the topic under discussion and suggested that staff first identify the various methods currently used to gather community feedback before determining where gaps may exist.

Trustee Harant suggested that the District should consider utilizing existing successful events as opportunities to gather public feedback. She observed that events attracting large numbers of visitors—such as Worldwide Day of Play, Zoo programming, and other community festivals—could provide opportunities to collect public input from residents who might not otherwise attend formal public meetings.

Executive Director Cahill agreed that staff should inventory all methods currently used to collect community feedback, including:

- post-event evaluations;
- periodic community surveys;
- online comment opportunities;
- customer service contacts;
- neighborhood meetings;
- special public engagement sessions; and
- other existing communication channels.

She recommended completing the inventory before identifying areas where additional outreach strategies may be warranted.

Trustee Harant emphasized that stronger relationships with neighborhoods surrounding parks could contribute positively to both park usage and public safety. She suggested that intentional outreach—including neighborhood invitations, door-to-door communication, informational materials, and localized engagement efforts—could help strengthen community ownership of nearby parks. Discussion referenced the successful neighborhood relationships that have developed around Proctor Recreation Center as an example of sustained community engagement. Committee members noted that staff assigned to Proctor have established meaningful relationships with neighborhood residents and organizations through consistent communication and programming.

Chair Sierra agreed that Proctor Recreation Center represented an effective model and suggested evaluating whether similar neighborhood engagement practices could be adapted to other Park District facilities while recognizing that each community possesses unique characteristics and needs.

Executive Director Cahill emphasized that neighborhood engagement strategies cannot be identical throughout the District, observing that each park serves different populations and presents different opportunities and challenges. Nevertheless, she agreed that strengthening neighborhood stability and encouraging greater community ownership of parks represents an important organizational objective.

The Committee also discussed methods of increasing participation in future "Talk About It Tuesday" meetings. Members acknowledged that formal public meetings often attract limited attendance unless particularly controversial issues are under consideration. Discussion focused on exploring methods of meeting residents where they already gather rather than relying exclusively on attendance at scheduled public meetings.

Ideas discussed included utilizing existing community events, neighborhood festivals, recreation programming, and other District activities as opportunities to solicit public feedback while continuing to offer traditional public engagement meetings for residents wishing to participate more formally.

**5.B. Categorization and Prioritization of Identified Items**

Using the Glen Oak Park public input tracking document, the Committee began organizing comments and recommendations into categories based upon operational responsibility, strategic priority, and anticipated implementation timeframe.

Staff explained that organizing recommendations in this manner would allow the Committee to distinguish between operational matters that could be addressed administratively, projects requiring future budget consideration, and long-range strategic initiatives requiring additional Board direction.

Committee members generally agreed that recommendations should be evaluated according to several considerations, including:

- public impact;
- operational feasibility;
- available resources;
- partnership opportunities;
- relationship to existing strategic initiatives; and
- anticipated implementation timeline.

The Committee expressed support for continuing refinement of the tracking document as additional public input is received and as staff evaluates implementation opportunities.

**5.C. Remainder of 2026 Calendar/Recommendation Development & Next Steps**

The Committee discussed how recommendations generated through the Glen Oak Park engagement process should be incorporated into future Programming Committee work plans during the remainder of 2026.

Rather than attempting to address all recommendations simultaneously, Committee members favored assigning related topics to future meetings as supporting information becomes available.

Discussion emphasized maintaining momentum while allowing staff adequate time to develop research, evaluate operational impacts, and prepare meaningful recommendations.

Committee members agreed that future meetings should continue reviewing progress on action items identified during the public engagement process, including:

- development of the Glen Oak Park Amphitheater ad hoc committee;
- evaluation of community outreach strategies;
- continued assessment of neighborhood engagement opportunities;
- refinement of the public input tracking document; and
- development of recommendations for future Committee consideration.

**5.D. MOU – Jon Buckley Memorial Garden Care and Maintenance**

Chair Sierra announced that the Committee would address Item 5.D prior to the remaining agenda items to accommodate Ms. Yolanda Wallace's attendance. He explained that the proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which had originally been scheduled for consideration by the Board, had been removed from the Board agenda at his request to allow the Programming Committee an opportunity to conduct a thorough review.

Chair Sierra invited Yolanda Wallace, Executive Director Cahill, and Committee members to review the document section by section. He explained that the objective of the discussion was to ensure that all parties shared a common understanding of the agreement and that any necessary revisions could be incorporated before presentation to the Board.

The Committee reviewed the purpose statement and agreed that it accurately reflected the intent of the partnership.

Discussion then turned to the ownership provisions. Executive Director Cahill explained that although the City of Peoria owns the underlying property and the Park District manages the RiverFront pursuant to its intergovernmental agreement with the City, the memorial elements installed by Ms. Wallace and Mothers Against Violence—including memorial bricks and other donated improvements—would remain the property of the organization unless otherwise agreed to in writing.

Ms. Wallace requested clarification regarding ownership of memorial bricks that are purchased by donors but installed by Park District staff. Executive Director Cahill explained that while District staff performs installation, ownership of the memorial elements remains with Mothers Against Violence. Ms. Wallace indicated that the explanation resolved her concern.

The Committee agreed the ownership language accurately reflected the parties' understanding.

The Committee reviewed the section outlining responsibilities of Mothers Against Violence, including:

- Coordinating seasonal volunteer planting activities;
- Providing plant materials and decorative elements through fundraising;
- Coordinating significant changes with District staff prior to installation;
- Conducting volunteer activities in accordance with Park District safety policies;
- Raising funds necessary to support memorial improvements;
- Following District rental procedures when utilizing District equipment or facilities beyond the scope of the agreement; and
- Meeting annually with District staff to coordinate programming and future planning.

Committee members also discussed language intended to ensure District maintenance staff remain aware of the underground irrigation system serving the Memorial Garden and its operational requirements.

Ms. Wallace indicated that the language accurately reflected the organization's responsibilities and expressed appreciation that the operational expectations were now being formally documented.

Executive Director Cahill reviewed the District's proposed responsibilities under the agreement, including:

- Administrative support for memorial donations through the Peoria Park District Foundation;
- Periodic financial reporting regarding the Memorial Garden account;
- Continued support of the Garden as part of RiverFront operations;

- Installation of memorial bricks purchased through the program;
- Routine maintenance including watering, weeding, pruning, and general public safety maintenance;
- Annual planning meetings with Mothers Against Violence;
- Exploration of opportunities to introduce additional perennial plantings to reduce long-term maintenance costs; and
- Providing support for one annual Memorial Garden event, including tables, chairs, tent, stage, audio support, and alternate indoor accommodations when necessary due to inclement weather.

Ms. Wallace requested clarification regarding routine pruning of the rose bushes. Executive Director Cahill explained that District staff would continue providing pruning services due to safety considerations associated with maintaining the rose plantings. Ms. Wallace confirmed that this reflected the longstanding maintenance practice.

A significant portion of the discussion centered on Ms. Wallace's desire to preserve the collaborative relationship between Mothers Against Violence and the Park District. Ms. Wallace expressed concern that while the proposed agreement formally documented many existing practices, it did not substantially expand opportunities for collaborative programming. She explained that when the Memorial Garden was established, her vision had been for the space to serve as a community healing resource rather than solely a memorial maintained by her organization. She hoped the partnership could eventually include additional joint programming with the Park District.

Executive Director Cahill explained that the District's commitment consisted of providing substantial logistical and operational support while recognizing that trauma-informed programming falls outside the District's primary area of expertise. She noted that District staff devote significant personnel and equipment resources each year to support the annual Memorial Garden event without charge and continue providing specialized maintenance throughout the year.

Executive Director Cahill further explained that the District welcomes participation by Mothers Against Violence in broader community events, including resource fairs and similar programming, while recognizing that the District generally does not co-sponsor standalone events centered on memorial organizations. She emphasized that the agreement memorializes the support the District has historically provided so that future administrations and Boards clearly understand the expectations of both parties.

Trustee Harant observed that documenting the relationship now would help preserve the partnership for future Boards and staff.

Chair Sierra acknowledged Ms. Wallace's concerns regarding community collaboration and expressed his personal commitment to assisting in identifying additional community partnerships and volunteer opportunities that could further support the Memorial Garden outside the scope of the formal agreement. Although Ms. Wallace noted that many of the commitments reflected practices that had existed for years, she agreed that documenting those commitments would ensure continuity regardless of future staff or Board changes.

The Committee conducted an extensive discussion regarding language allowing relocation, restoration, redesign, or removal of the Memorial Garden under extraordinary circumstances such as flooding, public safety concerns, infrastructure improvements, environmental conditions, or other significant events.

Executive Director Cahill explained that the intent of the language was not to diminish the Garden's permanence but rather to ensure that, if unforeseen circumstances made relocation necessary, the District would preserve the memorial bricks, signage, and other memorial elements while working collaboratively to establish an appropriate new location.

Ms. Wallace acknowledged that the Garden has experienced flooding multiple times during its history and recognized the value of discussing contingency planning.

Committee members discussed characteristics that would be appropriate for any future relocation should it ever become necessary, including:

- compatibility with the Garden's mission;
- accessibility for visitors;
- availability of District maintenance resources;
- opportunities for quiet reflection;
- public visibility; and
- compatibility with future programming.

Chair Sierra recommended that staff and Mothers Against Violence jointly identify potential alternative locations as a future planning exercise so that options would already be available should relocation ever become necessary. Committee members expressed support for that recommendation.

Chair Sierra expressed concern regarding language stating that the District would provide notice of modifications "when practical," observing that such wording could unintentionally allow future administrations to relocate or substantially alter the Memorial Garden without meaningful consultation. Executive Director Cahill agreed with the concern and proposed revised language requiring advance notice of proposed modifications, relocations, or removal except when immediate action is necessary to preserve memorial assets due to emergencies or catastrophic circumstances.

The Committee supported revising the MOU to provide:

- advance notice whenever reasonably possible;
- immediate action authority only during emergencies;
- subsequent consultation regarding preservation of memorial elements; and
- collaborative discussion regarding alternate locations if relocation became necessary.

Committee members agreed the revised language more appropriately balanced operational flexibility with the District's commitment to its community partner. Chair Sierra also recommended adding a notice period before either party could terminate the agreement.

Following discussion, Executive Director Cahill agreed to revise the MOU to require thirty (30) days written notice prior to termination to provide sufficient time for planning and transition.

Following completion of the section-by-section review, Ms. Wallace stated that the discussion had addressed her questions and concerns and expressed appreciation for the collaborative review process. She thanked District staff and Board members for their years of partnership and stated that formally documenting the relationship would provide valuable continuity for future leadership.

Committee members also discussed exploring potential future locations for the Memorial Garden as a long-term planning exercise while emphasizing that no relocation is currently contemplated.

Chair Sierra thanked Ms. Wallace for her continued partnership and thanked District staff for their willingness to revise the agreement based on Committee discussion. The Committee reached consensus supporting the revised Memorandum of Understanding, incorporating the discussed modifications, and forwarding the document to the Board of Trustees for consideration at its next regular meeting.

**6. PENDING BUSINESS**

None

**7. OTHER BUSINESS**

None

**8. ACTION STEPS REVIEW**

Staff was directed to incorporate the revisions discussed during the Committee's review, including:

- Revising the notification language to require advance notice of proposed modifications, relocation, or removal whenever practicable, while preserving the District's ability to act immediately during emergencies or catastrophic events requiring protection of the memorial assets.
- Adding a thirty (30) day written notice provision for termination of the Memorandum of Understanding by either party.
- Clarifying language concerning preservation of memorial elements and collaborative discussion regarding alternate locations should relocation ever become necessary.
- District staff and representatives of Mothers Against Violence begin identifying potential future relocation sites solely as a contingency planning exercise should extraordinary circumstances ever require relocation of the Memorial Garden. Committee members emphasized that no relocation is presently contemplated.

- Staff will continue developing an inventory of existing outreach methods, partnership activities, communication tools, and public engagement practices. Following completion of that inventory, staff will return with recommendations identifying opportunities to strengthen neighborhood engagement, improve communication with surrounding communities, and increase participation in future public input opportunities.

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

At 12:46 pm, Trustee Harant MOVED TO ADJOURN. Motion seconded by Executive Director Cahill and carried on a unanimous aye of members present.

________________________________________

Submitted by Alicia Woodworth
Executive Assistant and Board Secretary