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 4:30 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, JULY 22, 2026 HELD AT THE BONNIE NOBLE ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, 1125 WEST LAKE AVENUE, PEORIA IL

TRUSTEES PRESENT: Trustees Joyce Harant, Reagan Leslie Hill (in at 4:42 PM), Alexander Sierra, Ron Silver, Mark Slover, Vice President Steve Montez, and President Robert Johnson

TRUSTEES ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Executive Director Emily Cahill, Nick Conrad, Becky Fredrickson, Karrie Ross, Willie Howe, Jacob Kuban, Attorneys Kevin Day and Justin Gunn, Alicia Woodworth, and Megan Mally

1. CALL TO ORDER

President Johnson presided and called the meeting to order at 4:37 PM.

2. ROLL CALL

Roll call was taken.

3. MOTION TO PERMIT TRUSTEE TO ATTEND MEETING ELECTRONICALLY

No request was received to attend meeting electronically.

4. MINUTES

4.A. Approval of Minutes of June 24, 2026 Strategy Ad Hoc Committee Meeting

Trustee Harant requested one amendment to the minutes, stating that during the discussion of Item 6.A. at the June 24 meeting, she had expressed concern regarding the proposed $1 ticket fee to the Hengst Foundation and requested that her concern be specifically reflected in the minutes.

Secretary Woodworth asked whether Trustee Hill preferred to resubmit the correction or if the amendment could simply be incorporated into the minutes. Trustee Harant indicated that the requested language could be added directly.

Trustee Slover then MOVED TO APPROVE, as amended, the minutes of the June 24, 2026 Strategy Ad Hoc Committee meeting. The motion was seconded by Trustee Silver and carried unanimously by roll call vote.

5. POLICY/PROCESS UPDATES

Hill addressed the Board regarding four written board-level requests she had previously submitted through the District's required communication process. She stated that while Executive Director Cahill had confirmed the requests had been forwarded to legal counsel, three governance-related questions remained unanswered and no timeline had been provided for receiving complete responses. Trustee Hill explained that although Attorney Day had responded to portions of her requests, she believed several substantive questions regarding transmission procedures, completeness, neutrality, and trustee access had not been fully addressed. She further noted that one outstanding request involved the authority and procedure for excluding an elected trustee from a closed session, which she believed could be directly relevant to the evening's agenda. Trustee Hill requested that legal counsel address those questions prior to any motion concerning exclusion of a trustee from closed session and asked that a definitive timetable be provided for the remaining responses.

President Johnson asked Attorney Day whether he had heard Trustee Hill's request. Attorney Day confirmed that he had and indicated that he could respond to the questions.

President Johnson questioned whether the issues being raised pertained to matters previously discussed in closed session. Trustee Hill clarified that although some of her earlier requests involved follow-up to closed session discussions, the questions she wished to have answered during the meeting concerned board policy and procedure, specifically the authority to exclude an elected trustee from a closed session. She explained that those questions had been submitted on July 5 and requested that they be answered publicly because she did not believe they required discussion in executive session.

Attorney Day explained that a written response addressing Trustee Hill's questions had been transmitted at approximately 4:06 p.m. that afternoon. Trustee Hill indicated she had not yet had an opportunity to review the email. She requested that the principal conclusions also be summarized on the record.

Attorney Day summarized the legal guidance contained in his written response. He stated that the Illinois Open Meetings Act does not specifically identify who may attend a closed session and is silent regarding attendance beyond the governing body itself. He explained that both opinions issued by the Illinois Attorney General and decisions of the Illinois Appellate Court interpret the Act as granting the governing body authority to determine, by majority vote, who may attend or be excluded from a closed session. He further stated that this authority applies equally to elected officials serving on the governing body and that the Board retains discretion to determine attendance for executive sessions.

Trustee Hill requested clarification regarding the legal authority supporting that conclusion and asked where the applicable statute or legal interpretation could be found. Attorney Day responded that the authority was derived not from a specific statutory provision but from Attorney General opinions and appellate court decisions interpreting the Open Meetings Act. He advised that his written memorandum contained citations to those opinions and cases for Trustee Hill's review.

Trustee Sierra stated that he believed Trustee Hill was requesting an oral summary of the written memorandum because members had only received the email shortly before the meeting. Trustee Hill agreed, explaining that she wished to ensure the questions she had submitted were answered publicly and that she would review the written memorandum after the meeting, if necessary.

Attorney Day reiterated for the record that, under current legal interpretations of the Open Meetings Act, the Board has authority by majority vote to determine who attends and who does not attend a closed session, including members of the elected Board.

President Johnson asked whether the Board was agreeable to proceeding with the remainder of the agenda to allow Trustee Hill additional time to review the written memorandum. Members expressed agreement.

6. NEW BUSINESS

6.A. Process Update: E-Z Go Golf Cart Bid

Executive Director Emily Cahill informed the Committee that, following additional review of the E-Z-Go golf cart procurement and consultation with legal counsel, staff had determined that the recommended award would not be presented for approval at the Regular Board Meeting later that evening. Although the agenda item remained because the agenda had already been published, no action would be requested from the Board.

Attorney Kevin Day explained that the District had received three bid responses for the purchase of replacement golf carts. During the legal review process, it was determined that each bidder had failed to fully complete required bid documentation, specifically certain required certifications and initials within the bid package. Because the bid specifications expressly required those documents and reserved the District's right to reject non-responsive bids, legal counsel concluded that accepting any of the submissions could expose the District to unnecessary legal risk.

Attorney Day stated that, after reviewing the bid documents with administrative staff, he recommended rejecting all three bids and pursuing an alternative procurement process rather than attempting to determine whether one incomplete proposal should be accepted over another. Staff concurred with that recommendation.

Trustee Sierra asked what specifically distinguished this procurement from previous purchases where minor deficiencies had been identified in bid documents but awards had nevertheless proceeded. Attorney Day explained that he had been specifically asked to review this procurement because of the significant dollar value involved. Upon review, he determined that the missing Equal Employment Opportunity certifications were mandatory bid requirements and that the District's own bid specifications provided authority to reject proposals that failed to include the required documentation. Given the magnitude of the purchase and the legal implications, he believed rejecting all bids represented the most prudent course of action.

Trustee Sierra further inquired how the deficiencies had been discovered. Attorney Day responded that District staff identified the issue during their review of the submitted proposals and immediately sought legal guidance. Following additional review and discussion with staff, legal counsel concluded that rejecting all bids was the appropriate recommendation.

President Johnson thanked legal counsel for the explanation and asked whether any additional questions remained regarding the procurement.

Trustee Harant questioned the status of the District's existing golf carts, noting that the agenda also included an ordinance declaring surplus equipment for disposal. She observed that the carts had originally been identified as trade-in equipment and asked why they now appeared separately on the disposal ordinance.

Attorney Day explained that Illinois law requires governmental units to formally declare personal property surplus before it may be sold, traded, or otherwise disposed of. Consequently, regardless of whether the existing golf carts were ultimately traded to a vendor or disposed of through another method, the Board was required to adopt a disposal ordinance authorizing that action.

Staff further explained that, because the proposed golf cart purchase was no longer moving forward, revisions had been made to the language of the disposal ordinance. Rather than specifically referencing a trade-in associated with the rejected bid, the ordinance had been broadened to authorize disposal of the existing golf carts through the most advantageous method after replacement carts are secured. Staff indicated that the revised language would provide the District with greater flexibility while a new procurement strategy was developed.

Following discussion, Committee members expressed appreciation for staff's diligence in identifying the issue before award of the contract.

6.B. Mid-Year Strategic Plan Update

Executive Director Emily Cahill presented the District's Mid-Year Strategic Plan Update, providing the Committee with a comprehensive review of progress toward implementation of the 2025-2027 Strategic Plan during the first six months of 2026. Using a presentation, she reviewed accomplishments, ongoing initiatives, emerging priorities, and anticipated work remaining for the balance of the year.

She explained that the strategic plan is organized around three primary priorities: major capital and revenue initiatives, performance and accountability, and promotion of the District's value to the community. She noted that the update was intended not only to summarize completed work but also to identify strategic adjustments made throughout the year as circumstances evolved.

Executive Director Cahill reported substantial progress related to the Peoria Zoo and Glen Oak Park initiatives. She advised the Committee that the fundraising agreement supporting the Roar for More capital campaign had been approved, naming opportunities had been authorized by both governing boards, and a capital campaign committee had been established and begun soliciting donations. Initial fundraising commitments had already exceeded one million dollars.

She reviewed improvements currently underway at the Peoria PlayHouse Children's Museum, including enclosure of additional porch space, expansion of exhibit areas, relocation of popular interactive features, improvements to visitor circulation, and enhancements designed to improve both the visitor experience and long-term membership growth. Staff intentionally scheduled construction during September and October to minimize disruption during the peak visitation season.

Executive Director Cahill also discussed the continued promotion of Explore More memberships, which combine admission benefits among multiple District facilities, and reported encouraging public response. She further reviewed the District's expanded FriYays programming at the Zoo and PlayHouse, noting that although attendance had initially been affected by weather, participation had steadily increased throughout the summer.

President Johnson asked about future improvements surrounding the PlayHouse facility, specifically referencing the area adjacent to the building. Executive Director Cahill explained that staff hoped to obtain grant funding to develop the space into a fenced outdoor educational classroom focused on pollinator gardens, native plantings, and environmental education. The project would create additional programming opportunities while better connecting visitors between the PlayHouse and Luthy Botanical Garden. Until funding becomes available, staff has modified maintenance practices to improve the appearance and functionality of the area.

Trustees complimented staff on the concept and expressed support for pursuing grant funding to complete the project.

Turning to Glen Oak Park, Executive Director Cahill reviewed ongoing safety initiatives, expanded police strategies, grant applications supporting additional public safety resources, and the formation of the Glen Oak Amphitheater Ad Hoc Committee. She explained that these initiatives, while not originally identified within the Strategic Plan, had become significant strategic priorities during 2026.

Regarding the Owens Center renovation, Executive Director Cahill reported that conceptual planning had been completed and staff was developing implementation timelines following the recent Talk About It public engagement meeting. Staff is reviewing public comments, evaluating project scope, and developing recommendations concerning facility improvements, including requests for additional sheet ice and operational alternatives. She further explained that staff intends to pursue grants, sponsorships, and naming opportunities to support the renovation while carefully coordinating fundraising efforts among several major District capital campaigns to avoid donor confusion and donor fatigue.

Executive Director Cahill reported that the Golf Learning Center has successfully completed its initial launch and has experienced strong public response during its first operating season. Staff is now evaluating utilization data, pricing strategies, programming, and long-term operational performance in preparation for the 2027 budget process.

Executive Director Cahill stated that revised financial projections would be presented during the late summer budget development process after staff completed mid-year budget revisions and operational analysis.

Discussion also focused on efforts to transition Madison Golf Course to well water. Trustees asked questions regarding project costs and whether construction would include development of a water storage lake. Staff confirmed that the project contemplates both well installation and additional water storage capacity. President Johnson also requested an update regarding possible well development at Newman Golf Course. Executive Director Cahill indicated that staff continued evaluating that project but noted that abundant rainfall during 2026 had reduced its immediate urgency.

Priority Two – Performance, Accountability, and Organizational Effectiveness

Executive Director Cahill next reviewed progress toward the District's second strategic priority, which focuses on establishing measurable expectations for organizational performance and improving accountability throughout the District. She explained that staff has continued developing key performance indicators (KPIs) and dashboard reporting that allows both management and the Board to monitor operational performance using measurable data rather than anecdotal observations.

She advised the Committee that the monthly dashboard now includes year-over-year comparisons where historical data is available and uses visual indicators to identify improving, declining, or stable performance trends. The revised reporting format has provided staff with better information for evaluating programs, allocating resources, and identifying areas requiring additional attention.

Vice President Montez asked whether the dashboard compares current performance directly with the same period during the previous year. Executive Director Cahill confirmed that, whenever historical information exists, year-over-year comparisons are included. She noted that several performance measures introduced during 2026 do not yet have comparable historical data but will provide meaningful comparisons as additional information is collected over time.

She also discussed the District's ongoing effort to modernize administrative policies and procedures. She explained that staff has begun reorganizing policies into a standardized digital

format through the District's internal intranet, making policies easier to locate, update, and maintain. Rather than revising policies only when problems arise, staff is implementing scheduled review cycles to ensure policies remain current and compliant with changing laws and operational needs. She cited the recently adopted Implementation Guiding Principles as an example of the new review process, noting that future policies will include established review intervals to ensure periodic evaluation.

Executive Director Cahill further reported that staff continues reviewing police standard operating procedures and evaluating whether the District should utilize the Lexipol policy management system or pursue another alternative.

President Johnson asked what Lexipol provides to public agencies. Executive Director Cahill explained that Lexipol is an online policy management platform that continuously monitors changes in applicable laws, regulations, and professional standards, automatically recommending policy updates when legal requirements change. Although the system offers significant advantages, she noted that it also requires substantial staff time to review, implement, and manage ongoing updates. Given the District's current workload and staffing priorities, administration has temporarily paused implementation while evaluating whether sufficient internal resources exist to support the system effectively.

She also reported that staff continues developing an Environmental Sustainability Scorecard requested by the Board and expects to present that framework before the end of the calendar year.

Executive Director Cahill then shifted the discussion toward technology modernization efforts, emphasizing that improving operational efficiency has become an increasingly important component of the District's strategic planning.

She reported that staff has developed an internal operations platform designed to automate numerous administrative functions previously completed using paper forms or multiple software systems. The system allows employees to complete incident reports, inspections, work orders, and other operational tasks electronically while automatically routing notifications to the appropriate departments.

To demonstrate the system, Executive Director Cahill displayed the application's home screen and explained how various operational processes now function electronically. She noted that playground inspections, incident reports, maintenance requests, and follow-up notifications are automatically generated within the platform, substantially reducing paperwork while improving accountability and response times.

Information Technology Director Willie Howe discussed the District Technology and Operational Improvements. He credited the success of the initiative to collaboration among employees throughout the District. He explained that rather than purchasing a commercial software package requiring staff to modify their workflows, the District chose to build applications around existing operational knowledge possessed by employees in every department.

Mr. Howe stated that the project has provided an opportunity to work closely with staff across the organization to document existing processes and identify opportunities for automation. He emphasized that the institutional knowledge possessed by long-time employees has been instrumental in designing software that accurately reflects how work is actually performed

within the District. He further noted that the collaborative development process has allowed the Information Technology Department to create applications that improve communication, reduce duplicate work, and streamline operational procedures while remaining flexible enough to evolve as organizational needs change.

Executive Director Cahill added that although the District recognizes that commercial software solutions will still be necessary for certain specialized operations, internally developed applications offer significant advantages in areas where District-specific knowledge and workflows differ substantially from standardized commercial products. She emphasized that staff would continue evaluating the platform and would not hesitate to pursue outside software if internal development no longer proved to be the most effective solution.

Trustee Slover observed that the internally developed software represented an innovative approach and asked whether the District had considered eventually licensing or marketing portions of the system to other governmental agencies. Several trustees expressed interest in the concept.

Executive Director Cahill acknowledged that staff had discussed the possibility, explaining that certain modules—such as inspection forms and operational workflows—could potentially be adapted for use by other public agencies. However, she stressed that the District's first priority remains improving internal operations before exploring external opportunities.

Mr. Howe added that legal counsel had advised the District that licensing software to other governmental entities could be legally permissible under appropriate circumstances. He explained that while the software is built upon open-source platforms, the District's customized programming and workflow design remain proprietary. He further emphasized that the software's greatest value lies not in the programming itself but in the operational knowledge contributed by District employees throughout the development process.

President Johnson and several trustees commended staff for developing innovative technology solutions internally and expressed appreciation for the collaboration occurring across departments.

Executive Director Cahill concluded the Mid-Year Strategic Plan Update by reviewing progress under the District's third strategic priority, which focuses on increasing public awareness of the Park District's value while strengthening organizational culture and employee engagement. She explained that, after several years of concentrating on internal organizational improvements, the District's emphasis in 2026 has shifted toward demonstrating those improvements publicly through community engagement, operational excellence, and enhanced programming.

Executive Director Cahill reported that one of the District's most significant accomplishments during the first half of 2026 was the successful completion of the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) site review process. She reminded the Committee that staff had spent several years preparing for accreditation and had submitted the District's application earlier in the year before hosting the CAPRA Review Team for its on-site evaluation in May.

She stated that the review team spent two days touring District facilities and evaluating operations, policies, procedures, documentation, and programs. The team visited numerous locations throughout the District, including the Peoria Zoo, Peoria PlayHouse Children's

Museum, RiverPlex Recreation and Wellness Center, Proctor Recreation Center, Moonlight Theater, Forest Park Nature Center, and other facilities in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of District operations.

Executive Director Cahill proudly announced that the District had recently received the review team's written evaluation. Of the 194 possible accreditation points, the Peoria Park District received 189 points, an outcome she described as an exceptional achievement and a testament to the dedication and professionalism of District employees. She explained that agencies receiving scores below the required threshold are required to submit additional documentation or corrective action plans; however, because of the District's high score, no additional responses were required before the final accreditation hearing.

She commended employees throughout the organization for their commitment to excellence, noting that the evaluation recognized not only the District's policies and procedures but also the quality of its programming, customer service, and organizational culture. She further reported that the review team was particularly impressed by the breadth of services provided by the District and the collaborative relationships among departments.

Executive Director Cahill shared that reviewers expressed considerable interest in several innovative District initiatives, including scholarship programs, workforce development efforts, partnerships with educational organizations, and the integration of recreation, education, and community engagement throughout District programming. She noted that reviewers encouraged the District to submit presentations at future National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) conferences highlighting those initiatives as examples of national best practices.

Executive Director Cahill explained that staff would attend the NRPA Conference in Philadelphia later in the year to participate in the formal accreditation hearing before the CAPRA Commission. Assuming successful completion of that final step, the District would receive its official accreditation during the conference's awards ceremony. She remarked that while accreditation had not yet been formally awarded, staff was extremely encouraged by the review team's evaluation and looked forward to representing the District at the national conference.

Committee members congratulated staff on the outstanding evaluation and expressed appreciation for the extensive work completed over the previous several years to prepare for accreditation.

Executive Director Cahill next reviewed technology initiatives supporting organizational effectiveness. She advised the Committee that recent changes in Illinois law now require public agencies to establish formal policies governing the use of artificial intelligence technologies. Although the District had already begun developing internal administrative guidelines for AI use, staff was now working with legal counsel to develop a comprehensive Board policy to ensure compliance with new statutory requirements.

She explained that the District currently utilizes a secure enterprise artificial intelligence platform that allows employees to use AI tools while protecting confidential District information. Unlike publicly available AI applications, the District's platform prevents internal information from being incorporated into publicly accessible databases or external learning

models. Staff has found the system valuable for improving efficiency while maintaining appropriate safeguards for sensitive information.

Executive Director Cahill also reviewed continued implementation of the District's Paycom Learning Management System, noting that staff training, onboarding, and professional development continue to expand through the platform. She reported consistently high completion rates for required employee training and stated that the system has improved both compliance and organizational consistency across departments.

Executive Director Cahill concluded the presentation by reviewing several community engagement initiatives designed to increase public awareness of District services and strengthen relationships with residents.

She reviewed continued improvements to the Programming Committee and the District's Talk About It public engagement process. She explained that staff continues refining opportunities for residents to provide meaningful feedback regarding District facilities, programs, and future planning efforts. Comments received during recent public engagement meetings are being organized by category, assigned to the appropriate departments, and incorporated into future planning discussions as projects continue to advance.

Executive Director Cahill noted that staff remains focused on increasing attendance and membership at both the Peoria Zoo and Peoria PlayHouse Children's Museum through expanded summer operating hours, coordinated programming, joint memberships, and enhanced marketing efforts. While weather had affected attendance during portions of the summer, early indicators suggested that participation continued to improve as the season progressed.

President Johnson thanked Executive Director Cahill and the District's leadership team for the comprehensive presentation and recognized the substantial progress made toward implementation of the Strategic Plan during the first half of 2026. Several trustees commended staff for the breadth of work completed across the District, noting that the presentation demonstrated significant organizational progress in capital planning, technology, operational efficiency, community engagement, and strategic leadership.

7. PENDING BUSINESS

None at this time.

8. CITIZEN REQUEST TO ADDRESS THE BOARD

None at this time.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

9.A. Approval to Convene into Closed Session Pursuant to 2(c)11 Litigation, when an action against, affecting or on behalf of the particular public body has been filed and is pending before a court or administrative tribunal, or when the public body finds that an action is probable or imminent

At 6:00 PM, Trustee Silver MOVED TO CONVENE Closed Session Under Illinois Open Meetings Act Section 2(c)11 Litigation, when an action against, affecting or on behalf of the particular public body has been filed and is pending before a court or administrative tribunal, or when the public body finds that an action is probable or imminent. Motion seconded by Trustee Harant and carried unanimously on roll call vote.

At 6:29 PM President Johnson reconvened the Strategy Ad Hoc Committee Meeting.

10. ACTION STEPS REVIEW

None noted.

11. ADJOURNMENT

At 6:30 PM, Trustee Silver MOVED TO ADJOURN. Motion seconded by Trustee Slover and carried unanimously on voice vote.

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Submitted by Alicia Woodworth
Executive Assistant and Board Secretary