

West Suburban Special Recreation Association

July 14, 2026, Board of Directors Meeting

Held at

WSSRA Offices located at 2915 Maple St. Franklin Park

MINUTES

I. Chairperson Ted Gruber called the meeting to order at 4:05pm those present included:

Jan Arnold, Park District of Oak Park

Jackie Iovinelli, Park District of Forest Park

Dan LoCascio, Park District of Franklin Park

Ron Malchiodi, Village of Riverside

Anna Wegrecki, Village of Harwood Heights *arrived at 4:28*

Mike Sletten, River Forest Park District

Greg Stanczyk, Veterans Park District

Nestor Zavala, North Berwyn Park District *remote*

Nate Brown, Norridge Park District

Andrea Bustamante, Village of River Grove

Jeanmarie Hajer-O'Connor, Village of North Riverside

Ted Gruber, Village of Elmwood Park

Cathy Fallon, Berwyn Park District *arrived at 4:05***Others in Attendance:** WSSRA staff: Annie Hart, April Michalski, Marianne Birko WSSRF. Maria Losselyoung

- I. **Approval of Remote Attendees meeting Qualifying Event:** *Arnold/ Iovinelli motioned to approve remote attendance, Zavala, North Berwyn Park District, the vote was unanimously approved*
- II. **Approval of Agenda** *Arnold/Iovinelli motioned to approve the agenda. The motion was unanimously approved.*
- III. **Approval of the Consent Agenda** *Iovinelli/Arnold motioned to approve the Consent Agenda including the May 12, 2026 Minutes, April, May & June Financial Report, and Disbursements for May & June 2026. Roll call vote showed 11 yes votes, and the motion was approved*
- IV. **Public Comment:** *No Public Comment*
- V. **Under the Foundation** *Losselyoung reported for the WSSRF, The Foundation is currently working on the following events: **Wacky Quacky Duck Splash and Splish Splash Summer Bash 50th Anniversary Celebration** is coming up this Saturday, July 18 from 6:00 – 8:30pm at the Park District of Forest Park Pool. All WSSRA Board members and their family members, WSSRA participants and families and WSSRA friends are welcome to join us. Please call Marianne if you would like to join in the fun! Can't join us than support the event by fostering a duck for \$2 each and take your chance at winning the GRAND PRIZE of \$250! Register at www.wssra.net **2026 Family Bowl-a-thon** is taking place on Saturday, October 3, 2026. It will be held at the Circle Lanes in Forest Park from 1:45 – 3:30 coinciding with the WSSRA Saturday Bowling programs. Foundation Chairperson Christine Natkasuka is busy securing raffle prizes for this fun event. **2026 Fallin For Our Stars Casino Night** The Foundation has begun the planning for the Fallin For Our Stars Casino night event that is scheduled for Friday, November 6, 2026 taking place at the Cheney Mansion in Oak Park. We are soliciting donations for the raffle prizes and \$25 and up gift cards for the Star Pull. Anyone wanting to donate items reach out to Marianne Birko at WSSRA, marianneb@wssra.net. Mark your calendars and plan to be there for a fun evening of Casino gaming, food, LIVE entertainment, and Amazing raffle prizes! Event tickets will go on sale shortly... **WSSRA hiring assistance** The Foundation is committed to support WSSRA in their search for staff for programs. Staff have been invited to present to various parent groups to help get the word out about WSSRA programs and staff support. **WSSRF once again thanks you for your continued support throughout the year!***

VI. Under Committee Reports

- A. **The Finance Committee** *Birko reported the WSSRA Finance Committee will meet again on Wednesday, August 12 at WSSRA at 10:00am. The focus will be on the proposed 2027 shares and 2027 budget planning.*

VII. Unfinished Business

- A. **Park District of Forest Park Building Updates** *Iovinelli reported the Park District of Forest Park Board shared that the Interim School Superintendent of Forest Park Schools is leaving has left and she will begin building discussions with the two interim Superintendents. She expressed that she is hopeful as there are new players on the board as well.*
- B. **Approval of 2025 Audit by Lauterbach & Amen** *Separate Attachment G* *action*
*The annual 2025 audit was presented at the May 12 WSSRA Board of Directors meeting by our audit firm, Lauterbach & Amen, LLP. Arnold/LoCascio motioned to approve the 2025 Audit as presented by Lauterbach & Amen. Fallon, Gruber, Iovinelli, LoCascio, Brown, Zavala, Arnold, Sletten, Hajer-O'Connor, Malchiodi, Stanczyk, Bustamante. **Roll call vote showed 12 yes votes, and the motion was approved***

C. No Other

VIII. Under New Business

- A. Acceptance of new Park District of Oak Park Appt Sletten/Brown motioned to accept the new Regular Representative for the Park District of Oak Park as Kassie Porreca, Park Board Commissioner and Alternate Representative Jan Arnold, Executive Director. **Roll call vote showed unanimous approval with 12 YES votes.**
- B. WSSRA Disposal of Surplus Asset **Arnold/Iovinelli motioned The WSSRA Board of Directors authorizes the release of items 1.Flaghouse Bubble Tube, 2. GestureTek Cube, 3. Showstyle Portable Display, and 4. Flex-a-chart Magnetic dry erase calendar as there is no salvage value as required by the WSSRA Policy and park district code, 1205/8-22 and they are no longer necessary for WSSRA to own this property. Roll call vote showed unanimous approval with 12 YES votes.**

C. No Other

IX. Under Correspondence Birko shared the correspondence

- X. **Under Board Reports** **Iovinelli reported the Park District of Forest Park's** "Where Everyday Is A Walk In The Park" They are excited to host WSSRA's Splish Splash Summer Bash & Wacky Quacky Duck Splash this coming Saturday. They will also be recognizing a WSSRA Inclusion Aide for employee of the month, They will be doing a presentation at this Thursdays Park District of Forest Park's Board meeting. Iovinelli will be meeting with School officials to start talks again about their school buildings. They are currently in the design phase of main park project, in addition they believe they have fixed pool leak that has plagued the district for the last few years. Speaking of pools, it has been a very busy pool season. They are getting great feedback from consumers and camp staff who are giving positive feedback and are having good success with inclusion aides as well. They had to postpone the 4th of July fireworks and have rescheduled the band, and fireworks show for the end of fall fest 9/12. They will have 40 vendors at event! Forest Park is looking for volunteers for Annual No Glove Softball Tournament July 23-26. It is a great weekend of softball! All are encouraged to join in the FUN! **Malchiodi reported for the Village of Riverside**, and stated they got through their July 3rd and 4th events without a hitch! They just ended their concert a little early though. They recently hosted their "Unplug Illinois" event and had a great turnout! Coming up, they are hosting a Parent Night for a new pilot Nature-Based Playschool program that will run 3 days per week starting this Fall. Riverside will also be hosting their Annual Cruise Night tomorrow night and expect a good crowd! They have one more concert in their Summer series and one more movie. **LoCascio reported the Park District of Franklin Park** "Where Every Day is a Holiday!" Summer is going well with camp, and pool registration is up! They hosted their Annual Street Dance last week and it was a beautiful night. They are currently low on capital projects, so their focus is on the Master Plan for the Maintenance Garage. **Brown reported the Norridge Park District** that there are 360 days until the next Festival. "Island in the City Festival" went well, great weather, so attendance was up. Norridge is starting Fall Ball for 7U September 14 – October 20. They are waiting on the final numbers for egress gym project, and the pool has been very busy! Coming up they are hosting movie in the park on Thursday. **Fallon reported the Berwyn Park District** camp is going well and is full with waitlists. They too have a couple more concerts and a movie in the park. They are currently working on Proska Park, including playground renovations. They are also applying for another OSLAD grant. **Sletten reported the River Forest Park District** is starting a community survey for residents to gather information on Community Center use. Coming up they will be hosting two Ribbon Cuttings, one at Constitution Park and the other at Keystone Park. River Forest is also excited to be hosting a Little League State Tournament and to close the summer their next BIG event is the Food Truck Rally co-hosted with Rotary on 8/21. **Stanczyk reported for the Veterans Park District** that their numbers this summer are really good in programs! Veterans is pleased to announce they received a "Step into Swim" grant – which offers free swim lessons to 60 campers! Next coming up they are hosting their Annual Softball and Bocce tournament July 30-August 2. They too are hosting two more "Music In The Park" events in August. And Fall is just around the corner, and they are gearing up for their Fall "Building Blocks Preschool" programs! **Arnold reported the Park District of Oak Park** pools are busy, the music in the park events are well attended, camps are busy and they are adding an Afterschool program at Stevenson. Longfellow's new playground is completed and features a 3-story and 2-story slides. The ribbon cutting will take place the first weekend in October, they officially opened Anderson Park and are re-doing the tennis courts at Maple Park. Add to this long list PDOP is in the process of finishing the geothermal project at Cheney and the Field Center project and is a little behind schedule with an expected finish October 31st. Arnold shared Oak Park had a great 4th of July parade, and she is especially proud of her staff's creativity as they made a float into a dragon that blew bubbles! A "Big Hit" from the crowd's response throughout the parade! Arnold reminded everyone to check your Junk email regularly as there may be a FOIA request buried in it. It can be problematic if you get caught...**Wegrecki reported the Village of Harwood Heights** is hosting Summer Carnival on July 31-August 2 in the St. Rosalie's Parish parking lot. The Village of Norridge and Harwood Heights are partnering to host a 250 Years of America Celebration on August 20-23. The event will feature a parade, carnival, food, bingo live music, and Fireworks. They will also be hosting a National Night Out event on August 20. **Hajer-O'Connor reported the Village of North Riverside** extends a special thank you to the Park District of Forest Park for allowing campers to swim on Mondays! It is the highlight of the camper's week! They will begin hosting their concert series as the first two were rained out and are being rescheduled. Coming up they have their car show on

7/23 with a concession stand. They too participated in "Unplug Illinois" for the first time. On July 11 they had a movie in the park and performance by Dave's Music. The Fall Fun Guide is going to print next week, and they are gearing up for the Autumn Fest which will include fireworks! **Bustamante reported the Village of River Grove** has not been able to start their concerts yet due to weather and will be hosting their first concert on 7/22. Softball, baseball, and flag football registration is open and the Ribbon cutting for library has been postponed due to construction. Watch the Village of River Grove website for more up-to-date details! **Gruber reported the Village of Elmwood Park's** July 4th parade and fireworks were a great success! Coming up they are hosting Taste of Elmwood Park on August 6-10. Summer day camp is going well, and the NEW pickleball courts have been busy, and the pool has also been busy as well! **Zavala reported the North Berwyn Park District** has **Sold Out** the Corrida del Mariachi 5K which is being held on 8/15! They are hosting their Senior Summer Bash on the 7/17, and currently the 16th Street Children's Theatre Camp is putting on a production of Once Upon a Villain, an amazing camp opportunity for teens to learn the behind the scenes work of the makings of a theatre production. NBPB will also host a Movie in the Park on 7/16.

XI. Executive Director's Report Birko Reported:

A. WSSRA receives Grant confirmations WSSRA recently received confirmation of the following grants for 2026– 2027:

1. **River Forest Tennis Club Swim-a-thon** WSSRA was selected to be the charity of choice for money raised by the River Forest Tennis Club's Swim Team's once a year Swim-a-thon event. All dollars raised will go to WSSRA
2. **Thumbuddy Special Scholarship Grant** WSSRA received \$10,000 in scholarship funds for summer day camp and seasonal programs.
3. **Circle Lanes of Forest Park celebrates 85 years** As a small Family owned bowling alley Circle Lanes has its own community of supporters including WSSRA. We have been a part of the Circle Bowl community for over 35 years. Every Saturday afternoon WSSRA brings in over 70 bowlers to enjoy some bowling fun! So as part of the 85th celebration the Stutz family hosted a raffle where \$600 was donated to WSSRA for scholarships. A special thanks to the Stutz family and the Circle Lanes Bowling community and to "Matt in the Morning" of NBC for their feature story of Circle Lanes 85th Anniversary...
4. **Berwyn Township Mental Health Board** has awarded WSSRA with \$10,000 for scholarships for Berwyn residents.
5. **Riverside Township** has approved a scholarship of 75% of all seasonal program fees for all Riverside Township residents. This excludes day camps, overnight trips and any programs that include gambling.
6. **Oak Park Township Mental Health Board** has approved a \$15,000 for the Happy Camper grant to support the Occupational Therapist and Behavior Therapist working with WSSRA staff throughout the summer to support our most challenging behaviors. An additional \$1,700 was awarded to support a group of transitioning young adults as they leave the High School setting.
7. **River Forest Township** has approved up to \$3,000 in program scholarships for River Forest residents.

B. All Things Summer While it is a crazy time of year for all of us do take a moment to remind the many wonderful summer staff you hire of the many career opportunities in Parks & Recreation. WSSRA has always promoted the profession especially during Day Camp orientation. Birko added a flier of all of the in-state and Midwest University programs to consider and shared at orientation and had a few staff ask about it afterwards.

C. WSSRA Fallin For Our Stars Planning Mark your calendars for the WSSRF's next event **Fallin For Our Stars Casino night** taking place on Friday, November 6th at Cheney Mansion. This well attended event will feature more gaming tables and "Live musical entertainment by Rich Shep". Can't join in then consider a sponsorship and support WSSRA/WSSRF.

D. Records Disposal Update WSSRA has submitted and received approval to dispose of most records to 2018 and 2022. Next steps include securing the disposal agency and completing the process.

E. NRPA Planning The 2026 National Parks and Recreation Conference will take place in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, September 29 – October 1. Birko may be attending.

F. Partner Annual Presentations Call or email Birko with dates and times that work for you in 2026

G. Staff Report: April Michalski, Superintendent of Recreation reported

1. **Programs** Summer programs are going well and will continue through July 25. Earlier this year, WSSRA launched a new youth Taekwondo program. What began with just five participants has grown to 15. Participants are building confidence, learning new skills, and making great progress. KH Kim Taekwondo has been a great community partner and a pleasure to work with.

2. Special Olympics

- **Tennis** Nine athletes will compete in the Special Olympics Tennis Skills Competition on July 8 at Andrew High School in Tiney Park. Gold medal winners will advance to the state competition in August.

- **Golf** We have 13 golf athletes competing in the Special Olympics Golf Skills Competition on July 29 at Springbrook Golf course in Naperville. Gold medal winners will advance to the state games in September.
- **Softball** Our two softball teams are competing in the Special Olympics Regional Tournament on Sunday, August 2 at Inwood Sports Complex in Joliet. Gold medal winners will advance to the state competition in September.

3. **Day Camp** We currently have 123 participants registered for day camp, with 23 on the waitlist. Community Cruisers has 21 participants registered with two on the waitlist. We anticipate adding additional participants off the waitlist this week, we are in the process of conducting assessments with families. Staff are busy preparing for camp. Supervisor training is scheduled between May 20–28, and All-staff training will take place June 3–5. We are excited to welcome Michael Brandwein back to our all-staff training. Topics will include Why Don't You Behave? - The Brandwein Key System Solution to Handling Negative Behavior in Young People and Dump the Dissing - How to Stop Put-Downs, Bullying, Teasing, and Other Disrespectful Behavior While Creating a Safe and Respectful Environment for Learning and Growth.

4. **Grants** WSSRA received funding from the Community Mental Health Board of Oak Park Township to continue our Happy Campers program. The funding will allow us to hire an Occupational Therapist and Behavior Specialist to support camps throughout the summer.

5. **Inclusion** WSSRA is currently supporting 55 participants in 76 inclusive programs. Our inclusion team is gearing up for summer and is scheduled to conduct 10 trainings across our partner districts between May 15-June 5.

6. **Upcoming Events** WSSRA is participating in several partner and community events throughout the month of May

- **The Eisenhower Wellness Fair** at the Eisenhower Public Library in Harwood Heights on Saturday, May 9 from 11:00am-2:00pm.
- **North Berwyn Park District's Best of Berwyn** on May 13 at Crystal Sky Banquets, recognizing outstanding 8th grade students in Berwyn.
- **Berwyn Park District's Touch-A-Truck** on May 20 at Liberty Cultural Center from 4:30-6:00pm, where families can explore vehicles and meet local community helpers.
- **The River Forest Memorial Day Parade** on May 25, the parade kicks off at 9:00am.
- **River Grove's River Front Fest** on May 30, where WSSRA will host a booth from 1:00-5:00pm. The event will also feature carnival rides, entertainment, food and more!

H. Staff Report: Annie Hart, Superintendent of Business reported

1. **Staff Update** As of July 1, Jacob Kell was accepted into the Elevator Union after a 2 yr wait and as a result has resigned from WSSRA. We are pleased to announce that Kim Kassam has internally filled the Transportation Specialist position. Kim will transition from her current role as a Recreation Specialist into the Transportation Specialist position in August. We are confident that Kim's experience, knowledge, and skill set make her an excellent fit for this role, and we are excited to support her in this next step. With Kim's transition, we have posted the Recreation Specialist position with applications closing on July 27. We are hopeful to fill the position by mid- to late August to ensure a smooth transition and continued support for our programs.

2. **WSSRA Vehicle Update** The new bus purchased by WSSRA was picked up in June and is now in use. With the addition of this vehicle to our fleet, WSSRA will turn in the Green Bus it replaced in August when the lease comes to an end.

XII. Closed Session None

XIII. Adjournment Sletten/Iovinelli motioned to adjourn the meeting at 4:56pm. Motion was unanimously approved

Respectfully submitted,



Marianne Birko,
Executive Director, mb/ July 26 DRAFT minutes