

**West Suburban Special Recreation Association
September 8, 2026, Board of Directors Meeting
Held at**

Attachment A

**George Leoni Complex at 800 N. 17th Ave., Melrose Park IL
MINUTES**

I. Chairperson Ted Gruber called the meeting to order at 4:01pm 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 remote
Greg Stanczyk, Veterans Park District

Nestor Zavala, North Berwyn Park District remote
Nate Brown, Norridge Park District
Katie Muellner, Village of River Grove
Jeanmarie Hajer-O'Connor, Village of North Riverside remote
Ted Gruber, Village of Elmwood Park
Cathy Fallon, Berwyn Park District

Others in Attendance WSSRA staff: Annie Hart, April Michalski, Marianne Birko WSSRF. Carmella LoCascio

Excused Absence River Forest Park District

- I. Approval of Remote Attendees meeting Qualifying Event** Iovinelli/Fallon motioned to approve remote attendance, Zavala, North Berwyn Park District, Hajer-O'Connor, Village of North Riverside, Wegrecki, Village of Harwood Heights, the vote was unanimously approved
- II. Approval of Agenda** Arnold/Fallon motioned to approve the agenda. The motion was unanimously approved.
- III. Approval of the Consent Agenda** Iovinelli/Brown motioned to approve the Consent Agenda including the July 14, 2026 Minutes, July & August Financial Report, and Disbursements for July & August 2026. Roll call vote showed 12 yes votes, and the motion was approved
- IV. Public Comment:** No Public Comment
- V. Under the Foundation** Birko/Carmella LoCascio reported for the WSSRF, The Foundation is currently working on the following events: **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 is busy 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. Attached find the Star Sponsorship information. Your support is critical to the success to this event. Mark your calendars and plan to be there for a fun evening of Casino gaming, food, LIVE entertainment, and Amazing raffle prizes! Event tickets are on sale now. Go to the www.wssra.net for more information. **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 under the direction of the Chairperson Sletten, the Finance Committee met on August 12 to review the 2026 end of year projections and planning forward for the 2027 shares and budget planning. The next meeting will take place on September 23, 2026.
- VII. Unfinished Business**
 - A. Park District of Forest Park Building Updates** Iovinelli reported she met with the two Interim School Superintendents of Forest Park Schools to get them up to speed on the building discussions. She shared the meeting went very well and they appear to be on board with all of the discussions. They are currently busy preparing to find the replacement Superintendent whom they hope to have in place by May of 2027.
 - B. No Other**
- VIII. Under New Business**
 - A. Presenting the WSSRA 2027 Proposed Partner Shares**

Birko shared the WSSRA Finance committee reviewed Attachment E-H and recommends the 2027 Partner Shares with a 3.0% rate increase over the 2026 shares to meet the demand for increased costs in providing WSSRA services. She noted the 2025 DRAFT Shares are **Preliminary**, as partners highlighted in blue show the 2024 EAV's. Everyone's shares

will change when the updated with the 2025 EAV's once it is available. Birko also reminded the board of the following information: 2024 the shares increased by 4%. For the first time since 2019, 2025 the shares increased by 4% and brought the shares to 2019 levels, 2026 the shares increased by 2.9% the CPI. Birko shared the 2026 summary of projected year end expenses, a summary of the major items changing in the 2027 budget and the Preliminary shares using the DRAFT 2025 EAV's and finally the Preliminary Maximum Allowable Contribution charts based on the current EAV information available. Birko reminded the board that the chart will change when all of the partner 2025 EAV's have been inputted.

Birko, shared the Finance Committee, has reviewed this information and is recommending a 3.0% increase based on the increased costs noted. There were no questions. The WSSRA Board of Directors is asked to come prepared to accept the 3.0% increase to partner shares at the October 13, 2026, Board meeting. No questions were asked by the board.

B. No Other

IX. **Under Correspondence** Birko shared the correspondence

X. **Under Board Reports** **LoCascio reported the Park District of Franklin Park** is happy the summer is over and they are busy getting ready for Fall. **Muellner reported the Village of River Grove** has completed all of their summer activities and are preparing for Fall Fest on October 3rd, "Drive in Movie Night" on October 16th and Trunk or Treat on October 24th. All are welcome! **Arnold reported the Park District of Oak Park's** summer season has ended, with pools closing at 5:00 p.m. on Monday, September 7. The Field Center project is slightly behind schedule, with completion expected by October 31. Longfellow's new playground and dedicated pickleball courts are complete, with a ribbon-cutting planned for October. The Park District is applying for an OSLAD grant for Barrie Park upgrades and is hiring for several full-time positions. Inclusion aide staffing has increased from 8 in 2025–2026 to 18 for 2026–2027. Plans are underway to make the Pleasant Home bathrooms ADA accessible, with the project currently out to bid. Repairs will also be made to the new pool at Rehm. Five staff members and two Board members will attend NRPA, where Arnold will present on the Gold Medal application process. She encourages everyone to pursue accreditation at both the state and national levels and offered to assist with the process. **Brown reported the Norridge Park District's** summer programming is over and their pool is closed as well. Soccer and Flag football play starts on Saturday, September 12th and the Egress construction project on the main building has begun. **Fallon reported the Berwyn Park District's** soccer program starts this weekend, their Brewfest is coming up on October 3rd, and their Spooktastic Halloween event is October 10th. They are currently working on the Proksa Park improvements thanks to the \$600,000 OSLAD grant. **Stanczyk reported the Veterans Park District** is rolling out a series of new ECC programs including dance. So far, the response has been great! They are gearing up for the Autumn Fest on September 26, and they are busy working on their Winter Spring program offerings. **Iovinelli reported the Park District of Forest Park's pool is closed.** They are 90% sure they found the elusive pool leak as they went from spending \$177,000 in water to \$70,000 this year. Fall Fest is this Saturday which includes 40 vendors, live music and the BIG Boom fireworks show to close. They are going out to bid for the OSLAD Multi-Use Sports Field project and are also going to bid for the replacement of their 31 year old pool heaters. They will be hosting their annual camp out in the park at the end of September, hiring a new Recreation Supervisor who will be in charge of camps, events, dance, and enrichment programs. Four staff will be headed to NRPA, and they are also busy updating all of their Policy Manuals and beginning the process of developing a Five-Year Operational Plan. **Gruber reported the Village of Elmwood Park's** summer is over and Fall is HERE! The lights are UP on the new Pickleball courts, and they are in non-stop use. They will be hosting 3 leagues this fall. Their Halloween Party is happening on Halloween! They are just accepting bids for the "Kiddie Korral Park." **Hajer-O'Connor reported that the Village of North Riverside's** summer concert series has officially concluded. The Village will be hosting its Fall Flea Market this weekend, featuring 130 vendors, along with plenty of food and drinks for everyone to enjoy. **The Village will also be Zavala reported the North Berwyn Park District** just completed a successful Corrida del Mariachi 5K which was held on 8/15! Despite the weather over 1300 runners completed the race. NBPD will be hosting their Annual Flea Market on September 12 and are collaborating with the Town of Berwyn for the Lantern Fest and Parade where over 400 people participated last year on September 18. They will also be hosting their first "Let Me Tell You!" A curated Story Telling Jam on Monday September 14 at the Joseph C. Vallez Activity Center. **Wegrecki reported the Village of Harwood Heights** will be hosting a Recycling event on September 26 and the Annual Car Show on September 27th. Calling all crafters, their Annual Craft Fair is on October 3 & 4.

XI. **Executive Director's Report** Birko Reported:

A. **Partner Events** WSSRA's visibility is critical to build awareness in your communities. While we have 13 partners and cannot possibly attend them all, let us know about key signature events in your community! Here are some that we have attended most recently:

- The Village of Oak Park's Day in Our Village event

- Hanger Clinic's EmpowerAbility Event
- Oak Park and North Riverside's Fourth of July parades
- Franklin Park's Concert in the Park event on July 7
- The Park District of Franklin's Back to School event, hosted by Representative Norma Hernandez and Congressman Chuy Garcia
- The Village of Norridge's Back to School Health and Resource Fair, hosted by State Representative Bradley Stevens
- Oak Park Township's Back to School event
- River Grove School Open House
- Morton West High School Open House
- West Leyden High School Open House
- Berwyn Park District's Back to School Picnic
- Riverside Township's Health and Wellness Fair
- North Berwyn Park District's Corrida del Mariachi 5K event: Birko assisted with packet pick up & attended the race only as the Vendors booths were cancelled due to weather

B. Support WSSRA through LemonAid 9-11 For 25 years, LemonAid 9-11 has been turning **LemonADE into LemonAID 9-11**, raising awareness and funds for local charities that support children and families. Established in 2002 in memory of the September 11th attacks, LemonAid 9-11 has made a lasting impact throughout River Forest and the surrounding communities. In 2004, LemonAid 9-11 proudly raised \$1,600 for WSSRA. This year marks **LemonAid 9-11's 25th Anniversary—and its final year**. To celebrate this incredible legacy, LemonAid 9-11 has invited WSSRA and all 20 other charities it has supported over the past 24 years, to be part of this special final event. Please share the LemonAid 9-11 event information and donate to WSSRA: <https://square.link/u/6OYlvW4z>

C. Birko Attends the Illinois State Fair Birko volunteered on behalf of IAPD and Illinois Park District Conservation Day at the Illinois State Fair and enjoyed all the classic State Fair traditions. Birko highly recommends this opportunity as a wonderful way to bring the whole family together for this wholesome, grassroots event. Mark your calendars for Saturday, August 21, 2027...

D. 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 featur **Attachment I is the Star Sponsorship and FFOS event invite. We certainly hope you will join us!** e more gaming tables and **"Live musical entertainment by Rich Shep."**

E. Partner Annual Presentations Birko continues to present to the WSSRA partner boards and most recently presented to the Park District of Franklin Park in August. Let me know the date that works for you.

F. NRPA Planning Birko will be attending the 2026 National Parks and Recreation Conference virtually.

G. Staff Report: Prepared by April Michalski, Superintendent of Recreation

1. Fall Programs Fall programs begin on September 12 and will run through November 14. Program guides have been delivered to partner district facilities, schools, and local libraries. Please let us know if you need additional copies.

2. Summer Overnight Trips

- a. **Bradford Woods, Overnight** We had 15 participants go to Bradford Wood Outdoor Center in Indiana on August 3-5. Participants enjoyed a variety of outdoor activities, including canoeing, ziplining, archery, hiking, swimming, and more. It was a great opportunity for participants to enjoy the outdoors, and try new activities
- b. **St. Louis Overnight Trip** 13 Participants and 5 staff had a great time in St. Louis! Highlights of the trip included visits to the St. Louis Zoo and City Museum, a boat tour, and attending a Cardinals baseball game.

3. Special Olympics

- a. **Bocce** The Special Olympics Regional Bocce Tournament was held on August 30 at Willowbrook High School. Seven athletes competed, and four won gold medals, Georgia Hunter, Forest Park, Molly Milligan, and Chris Nakatsuka, Elmwood Park, and Jackie O'Brien, Oak Park, will advance to the Special Olympics State Competition, which will be held November 7-8 in Springfield.
- b. **Golf** WSSRA has two athletes won Gold medals, John Vito Kowall, River Grove and Thomas Penton, Veterans Park District, and will be competing in the Special Olympics State Golf Competition in Decatur on Sept. 11–12.
- c. **Volleyball** WSSRA's 12 member volleyball team will compete in the Special Olympics Regional Tournament on October 4 at York High School in Elmhurst. Gold medal winners will advance to the Special Olympics Fall Games, which will be held October 17-18 in Rockford.

4. **Inclusion** Fall inclusion requests continue to come in, and our Inclusion Manager is working to secure staffing as requests are received. Please allow up to two weeks for inclusion requests to be filled. If you have any questions, please contact our Inclusion Manager, Chris Strum, at chriss@wssra.net.

5. **Special Events River Forest GLO Fun Run** The River Forest Park District is hosting their first 2-mile GLO Fun Run around Priory Park on Friday, September 18. All net proceeds benefit WSSRA. For more details and to register, visit rfparks.com.

H. **Staff Report Prepared by Annie Hart, Superintendent of Business**

1. **Staff Update** WSSRA has hired Amanda McCallum to the team as a Recreation Specialist who will be overseeing the School Collaborative programming and the Imaginarium Sensory Room as well as supervising WSSRA programs. Amanda graduated from Aurora University with a degree in Therapeutic Recreation and has experience working part-time at an SRA and brings valuable experience from her work at a Therapeutic Day School.

2. **WSSRA Vehicle Update** WSSRA returned a leased bus to Central States Bus this past week. We currently have 3 buses and 2 minivans in our fleet. Kim Kassam has transitioned into the Transportation Specialist position. Training is currently underway, and Kim is becoming increasingly comfortable with the responsibilities of her new role. We have interviewed several candidates to add an additional part-time driver to our team. We have offered the position to a candidate and are currently in negotiations.

Hart also reported two WSSRA vehicles were in a fender bender while in a caravan of two buses and a minivan on a return trip from one of the overnight trips. All staff & participants were safe. WSSRA just got the PDRMA release to move ahead with the repairs. All staff involved in the accident are being required to attend the PDRMA Defensive Driving Course. WSSRA is also having PDRMA do a Defensive Driver training at WSSRA for all staff.

XII. **Closed Session None**

XIII. **Adjournment LoCascio/lovinelli motioned to adjourn the meeting at 4:47pm. Motion was unanimously approved**

Respectfully submitted,



Marianne Birko,

Executive Director, mb/ Sept 26 minutes