

APPROVED

THE MONTHLY MEETING OF THE RIDGEVILLE PARK DISTRICT BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS WAS HELD ON APRIL 11, 2019 IN THE RIDGEVILLE PARK DISTRICT COMMUNITY HOUSE, LOCATED AT 908 SEWARD STREET, EVANSTON, ILLINOIS.

Commissioners Present: Rob Bady (Vice President), Debby Braun, Ann Covode (President), Dan Coyne, Pat McCourt

Commissioners Absent: None

Also Present: Gerald Gibbs (Treasurer), Julie Larson (Minute Taker), Brian Rosinski (Director of Parks and Recreation), Natalie Sallee (Program Director), Charles Valente (Attorney)

Citizens: Sarah Utley, Pat Schumacher, Jean Zuiker, Beth Stare, Catherine Moulton, Michael Miro, Martha Gaines, William Eason, Meleika Gardner, Jacy Herman, Matthew Mitchell, David Braun

President Ann Covode called the meeting to order at 7:30pm.

Citizen Comment Part 1:

Michael Miro introduced himself and invited everyone, on behalf of the Ridgeville Foundation, to the Foundation's annual fundraiser on Thursday, May 2nd (6-9:00pm) at the Firehouse Grill in Evanston. The *Tavern Tales* event will include local, amateur storytellers and raffle items. This is the first time the Foundation is hosting this event in May, and they are hoping for a great turnout. Money raised will fund *Concerts on the Ridge* and *Shakespeare on the Ridge* which is celebrating its 10th year. They are hoping to institute a "third pillar" of *on the Ridge* cultural happenings in the future.

Beth Stare introduced herself as the mother of the children who were involved in Ridgeville's spring break camp incident where a Mafia game was played. (The imaginative game was led by a group counselor and scared some of the children.) Beth noted that it happened again after she brought it up to a supervisor and noted an apparent breakdown in communication within the camp organization. She shared that the incident highlights an insidious problem that she is hoping will be resolved. Ridgeville needs to overhaul the program and bring their standards up to current best practices. She expressed that she appreciated the thoughtful response she received from Ridgeville and feels it's a good sign that the event was taken seriously and is being seen as a learning opportunity. Beth shared four ideas/concerns for Ridgeville in light of this incident:

1. She would like to see documentation about how staff and camp counselor training is going to be changed in light of the Mafia game incident. Ridgeville should have guidelines and expectations for people working with children.

2. She would like to receive confirmation that the particular spring break counselor and their supervisor will not be working at the Ridgeville summer camp this year and will go through some third party training.
3. She would like to see the current Ridgeville personnel policy updated and changed to reflect best practices.
4. Natalie Sallee has already attended the IAPD conference this year (Illinois Association of Park Districts). The IAPD has an opportunity for park districts to go through a process to become accredited. Beth would like to see Ridgeville go through the accreditation process. She would also like to see everyone on Board and in staff leadership positions participate in one of the IAPD Boot Camps, which are offered throughout the state in various locations.

Ann Covode apologized to Beth and her family on behalf of the entire Ridgeville Board for what happened at the spring break camp.

Sarah Utley introduced herself as a parent of a child who has attended various camps, classes, and happenings at Ridgeville throughout the years. Her daughter is currently signed up for Ridgeville's summer camp and she expressed worry about her daughter's safety after hearing about the Mafia game. She wondered about counselors and their training. She expressed concern, from a holistic standpoint, that high schoolers are left to their own planning as counselors and wonders if there is more of a plan that Ridgeville staff offer.

William Eason introduced himself as a long-time Evanston resident. He noted that, leading up to the recent election, there were heightened concerns about equity at Ridgeville amongst members of the Black community. He noted that throughout several decades, there have been recurring events of Ridgeville leadership utilizing the police and removing equipment when there have been increased numbers of Black citizens in the parks. His daughter didn't want to attend Ridgeville programs because, at the time, she felt that there were no people that "looked like me." Therefore, William made a decision to send his kids elsewhere. He noted the current diversity statistics of the district schools (Oakton and Dawes), a student population that includes 60%+ students of color. A similar diversity should be represented on the Ridgeville Board and it is not. This is an example of low-key racism that has infested an otherwise diverse community on the south side of Evanston. William noted that he works with Mudlark, Piven and other organizations to help diversify their programs, and he would be happy to be utilized at Ridgeville in a similar way to support with outreach. He noted that things happened on social media around the election and feels there needs to be more social outreach from Ridgeville than what has been occurring up to this point with posting/distributing fliers. Being proactive at this point would be better than waiting for citizens to speak out in the wake of the election.

Approval of Minutes:

Dan Coyne requested that Julie Larson edit the March 14, 2019 minutes to include all of Alderwoman Ann Rainey's citizen comments, verbatim, rather than a summary.

Motion #1: Dan Coyne moved to approve the minutes with the aforementioned edits from the March 14, 2019 Board meeting. Pat McCourt seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Bills:

Brian Rosinski distributed and discussed the documents entitled "Ridgeville Park District- Corporate Monthly Bills Report- Summary April 11, 2019" and "Ridgeville Park District- General Account Monthly Bills DETAILS Report April 11, 2019," both submitted by Jesseca Parr. Brian noted, among other items: some large *AT&T* charges will be credited in May, *Little Tykes* for the Leider Park equipment, *National Awards* for banners, and *Sunrise Tree Care* for the hauling/mulching of damaged tree limbs after storms.

Motion #2: Dan Coyne moved to approve payment of April 2019 bills in the amount of \$83,619.10. Rob Bady seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Petty Cash Expenditures:

Brian Rosinski distributed and discussed the documents entitled "Ridgeville Park District Monthly Report PETTY CASH #6417 April 10, 2019" and "Ridgeville Park District Monthly Report PETTY CASH April 10, 2019," both submitted by Jesseca Parr. Brian noted, among other items: *Harry & David* for sympathy gift basket, *Red's Garden Center* for compost for our garden class, *Target* for plastic Easter eggs, and *YWCA* for the Equity Summit participation fee.

Motion #3: Debby Braun moved to approve payment of April 2019 petty cash expenditures in the amount of \$676.82. Pat McCourt seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Monthly Update offered by Brian Rosinski, Director of Parks and Recreation:

- We are gearing up for summer programs and completing two major projects:
 - Leider Park equipment has been delivered and installation begins this week; it should be finished within three weeks.
 - The 908 Seward roof replacement will begin next week and will take 5-10 working days to complete.
- Maintenance crew is repairing turf areas in our parks in preparation for heavy use this spring:
 - AYSO will use Kamen East, Kamen West, and Leider parks on Sundays (12-6:00pm)
 - EBSA will use baseball diamonds at Kamen East and Kamen West parks on Saturdays beginning May 4th
- Full time staff will be CPR/AED certified on April 17th; summer staff who need this training will be trained at our orientation in late May.
- Tentative budget will be available for Board review at the May 9th meeting to begin the 2019/2020 budget process. Tentative budget will be passed in July; appropriation ordinance will be passed in September.

- Thank you to the Board and individuals who expressed sympathy and sent a gift basket for Brian's mother-in-law's passing; it was much appreciated.
- Brian thanked William Eason for his comments and agreed that being proactive is important. He expressed that he and Natalie Sallee will be processing the comments from tonight's meeting and will plan on taking next steps and finding needed support.
- Brian also thanked Beth Stare for her comments and assured her that an updated personnel policy is in the works. The new Board can put it on the agenda in the coming months to work on completing it immediately. He also noted that Ridgeville leadership can plan on attending the IAPD conferences every year. When it comes to kids going to camp who cannot afford it, Brian explained that we don't turn anyone away due to financial needs. We are here to help and have a lot of scholarship funds to share. Dan Coyne requested more data concerning the demographics of our campers and counselors to fill in this conversation. Brian responded that 17 of 35 summer camp counselors are minorities; most are Evanstonians, but not necessarily Ridgeville residents. Ann Covode asked about current trainings for summer staff. Natalie Sallee said they have a staff orientation day that starts at 8:00am; they review guidelines, expectations, and policies. Ridgeville offers CPR/AED/EpiPen training for those who are not yet certified. She shared that Commissioner Braun comes to the orientation and offers a training workshop around working with kids with special needs. Later in the orientation, camp counselors meet within their teams; at that point, camp directors are mostly responsible for the programming. Once camp starts, there are pre-shift meetings for counselors for each day. On Fridays, Ridgeville leadership meets with camp directors to hear about any special needs or concerns. Natalie offered that a copy of the camp guidelines and training materials can be provided to whoever is interested. Rob Bady asked about Natalie taking the YWCA equity training and if Brian would also be willing to go through the same training. Brian responded that he is willing to go to the training, but it was not possible for both Natalie and Brian to attend at the same time. Natalie shared that a follow-up meeting from the YWCA is being prepared to share with the rest of our Board and staff. Brian added that staff who support our Youth in the Parks program are all CPR/AED certified, and since they often come to us through ETHS, they have also gone through mandatory diversity training.

Financial Update offered by Gerry Gibbs, Treasurer:

Gerry Gibbs distributed and discussed the following documents:

1. "Ridgeville Park District Board Meeting Treasurer's Report (prepared by Gerry Gibbs) April 11, 2019,"
2. "RPD: APPROPRIATIONS LEDGER SUMMARY: Annual Report Format FY18/19 03/31/2019,"
3. "RPD: APPROPRIATIONS LEDGER FY18/19 03/31/2019,"
4. "RIDGEVILLE PARK DISTRICT Fiscal Year 2018-2019 Statement of Revenue and Appropriations as of 03/31/2019," and

5. "Ridgeville Park District Balance Sheet- Fiscal Year 2018-2019 as of 03/31/2019."

Brian Rosinski added that \$3,500 is needed to build out the border fall zone around the new Leider Park equipment. The new equipment is taking up 6-8 inches of additional space on the north side of the play circuit, and some additional rubber border filler is needed. Brian and Gerry have discussed this expense and Ann Covode noted that anything under \$5,000 does not need a Board motion.

Program Update offered by Natalie Sallee, Program Director:

- Ridgeville Readers: We are celebrating Jewish American Heritage Month with a book discussion of *My Real Name is Hannah* by Tara Lynn Masih. Book discussions occur on the last Sunday of the month at 3:00pm in the Community House.
- Spring Break Camp: We had a great turnout this year with 20+ children in attendance. There was an incident at the beginning of the week around a Mafia game, which scared two campers. The incident was addressed with the camp director, Brian Rosinski, Natalie Sallee, and the parent of the children. Camp fees were refunded to the family and notices of the incident went out to parents of all other involved children. A statement was issued via Facebook, apologizing for what happened and asserting that violence—even in game form— is not tolerated at Ridgeville. Rather, we are committed to providing fun, creative, and above all, SAFE spaces for children.
- Spring Class Session and Monthly Happenings: 25 classes are currently underway this session. Family *Art at the Park* is new this session although we've had to cancel the first few workshops due to instructor conflicts. *Garden2Table* is off to a great start with Sandra Madison. *Party at the Park* has not gotten off the ground thus far, however *Ridgeville Readers* is growing in popularity. The *Special Needs Social Dances* have been a huge success and we will expand our workshops into June.
- YWCA Equity Summit: Natalie attended the Equity Summit on April 11th, and Ridgeville is now named an "Equity Partner." Brian and Natalie met with Tiffany McDowell, head of the Equity Institute, to discuss seminars and partnership opportunities with the YWCA.
- A Note on RPD Programming: During recent weeks prior to the election, there were many conversations on social media having to do with Ridgeville's programming. Natalie stated that as Program Director she would like to be included in these discussions, but she is not comfortable engaging online regarding work matters with her personal account. She offered that she is always available to meet with Commissioners and constituents in person at the Ridgeville office.

Update offered by Jesseca Parr, Office Assistant:

There was no update offered at this time.

Old Business:

- **Strategic Planning and Goals (Covode):** Ann Covode shared that tonight was her last meeting as a Ridgeville Commissioner. She thanked the Board and the community for the opportunity to serve these past 12 years. She expressed that she hopes the park district would continue to thrive and offer programming to our district's many different needs. The camps, farmers markets, classes, and new playset at Leider Park are some of the many successes she has seen during her time on the Board. She hopes that the new Board can work together well with respect and dignity. She shared that it will be important to recognize and work for the diversity of our community. She has been glad to see the development of the after school program for Chute kids. Ann shared that she attended one of the IAPD boot camps a few years ago, and she learned a lot there about being a Commissioner. The boot camp highlighted what the different roles should be for the Executive Director, Commissioners, and etc. in the park district, which was helpful. Pat McCourt thanked Ann for her service all these years and remembered that it was Ann's initiative to start the farmers market and develop the kitchen and art studio spaces. Dan Coyne thanked Ann for making the Board and Ridgeville a better place over the past 12 years. Rob Bady expressed she displayed great leadership.
- **Leider Park Update/ 908 Seward Asphalt Shingle Roof:** Brian Rosinski noted that the aforementioned border will be put in Monday, the wood chips will be added, the space will be inspected, and then the new play circuit will open (weather-permitting) ahead of the May 15th goal. The circuit is designed for 5-12 year olds and there is signage around the park noting this. The far west side of the circuit sits 8 feet high, which is the design. It is state of the art and will be a great addition to the community. The new roof for 908 Seward will go up (weather permitting) in the coming weeks. Both projects should be done before our next Board meeting.

New Business:

- **Local Election Official Report on Election Status (Braun):** Debby Braun invited Natalie Sallee to share the local election results with those present. Natalie shared that she called the Cook County Clerk and learned that the election results will be official April 23rd. Cook County has until April 16th to count ballots. Debby asked about the process of appointing Commissioners when there is a vacancy on the Board. Charles Valente responded that the Board has the authority to appoint commissioners if there is a need to fill a position mid-term. The Board can request that citizens apply for the position, but that is not necessarily required. Dan Coyne shared that he learned from the Clerk's office that the method of breaking a tie is to flip a coin. Natalie shared that she learned that there are no rules about conceding/withdrawing. At this point, Rob Bady and Dan Coyne are separated by a one vote count at this point. There is a chance that other votes will come in prior to April 16th since the office has received 65 mail-in ballots from the 124 that were distributed.

Brian Rosinski excused himself from the meeting due to a personal issue that was discussed with Ann Covode prior to tonight's meeting.

- **Discuss Summer Employees for 2019:** Ann Covode reviewed Ridgeville's current policy for hiring employees who are related to one another. In recent years, the Ridgeville Board passed a hiring policy having to do with nepotism in order to reduce potential conflicts of interest that may occur with the hiring of relatives. Ann read through the policy, which notes that the Board has the authority to make final decisions about who is best fit for a given position. Ann requested Natalie Sallee to share with the Board the current status of the Pre-K Camp Director position and work she has done to recruit for this position. (This position has been historically given to Lois Rosinski, Brian Rosinski's wife.) Natalie shared that she sent an email to local organizations in February for contacts to share the job posting within their communities. Organizations included Reba Place Church, St. Nick's Church, YWCA, ETHS, and others. Natalie also attended the Mayor's employment fair to recruit camp counselors and directors. At the employment fair, she received 20 youth applicants for camp counselor positions, but no adult applicants for the camp director position. Likewise, she has not received any adult applicants for the position through other avenues thus far. Rob Bady asked Natalie if Brian offers support for the hiring process. She responded that it is her responsibility to hire personnel for camps and classes, although she consults with Brian as needed. Brian staffs the Youth in the Parks program and the maintenance crew. The Camp Director reports to both Natalie and Brian. Dan Coyne offered that District 65 can be a good resource to get the word out, and Ann advised listing the position on Indeed.com. Ann expressed that what has been done thus far to fill the position has been insufficient. There is an option for increasing our advertising over the next couple weeks, and Natalie agreed to follow up on the aforementioned ideas. Pat McCourt and Debby Braun expressed that the community expects Lois to be the director. Pat noted that there have been no adult applicants, and we have someone who has worked here for 10+ years and is dependable and qualified and well liked. The Board has had the same conversation year after year. Dan offered that we need to look through an equity lens and also noted that our policy is clear about nepotism. He encouraged the Board to consider equity and broaden our scope in order to draw more people.
- **Motion # 4:** Pat McCourt moved to postpone the summer employee discussion until next month. Debby Braun seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Call of the Commissioners:

Coyne: Dan Coyne noted at last month's meeting, Alderwoman Rainey expressed that Black people were stupid to want a porta-potty in their backyard in the parks; she also expressed that Rob Bady needed to put on his big boy pants. He felt that both comments were offensive, racist, and inappropriate. He spoke with the city council about the incident. He felt it was unacceptable and there are no stupid people in the district and he, personally, feels that we should have a porta-potty in every one of our parks so our constituents can have a safe place to

void. He wanted to make an apology that our city right now is not all that it can be but he is on the journey to making a better city.

Braun: Debby Braun expressed that she would like to make an apology for this Board, disapproving that Dan comments to the City Council about such matters. She expressed that Ann Rainey said “anyone” (not solely Black people) were stupid to want a porta-potty and she told both Rob *and* Dan to put on their big boy pants who have been on the Board for six years and have done nothing. She expressed that people can watch Natalie’s videos, and not Dan’s, to see that it is not true what Dan says.

McCourt: Pat McCourt shared that he is looking to a fresh start next month (with the new Board).

Bady: Rob Bady expressed that he doesn’t know what’s going to happen in the next month. He didn’t appreciate hearing (from Ann Rainey) that “you’ve done nothing.” Since his time on the Board, Ridgeville has provided porta-potties and instituted facebook live for transparency purposes. His presence on the Board as a person of color has felt significant; there have been times where his ideas have not been listened to. He expressed that it was a good meeting tonight and encouraged citizens to bring more people to the meetings in the future; coming to meetings is very important. He appreciated Will’s comments tonight and encouraged everyone to please not “let this go.” Rob thanked Ann Covode for her excellent leadership this past term.

Covode: passed

Citizen Comment Part 2:

William Eason shared that it was noteworthy to witness the Board go back and forth about the nepotism policy which is already on file. It is disappointing. He shared that there is a porta-potty in Penny Park and he observed a line of kids waiting to use it on a crowded day, and it was not a problem. In order to get anything done at Ridgeville, Commissioners need to leave their own agendas at home. The Board has become a toxic environment.

Sarah Utlely expressed that it is embarrassing to witness how the meeting went tonight. She pointed out the dynamic between Debby Braun and Dan Coyne, noting moments when Debby cut Dan off mid-sentence. She urged Commissioners to do what is best for the park district.

Beth Stare shared that professionally, she is an economic consultant. She advised the Board to document information. Demographic information should be gathered and tracked in order to get actual metrics that can be compared to the wider community. Tracking data would also help to note progress in the years to come. Guessing demographic information is not helpful.

Motion #5: Debby Braun moved to adjourn the meeting into Closed Executive Session. Pat McCourt seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned into Closed Executive Session at 9:01pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Julie Larson, Minute Taker