

## **MINUTES OF SHORT/LONG-RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** January 27, 2026

**TIME:** 5:00 p.m.

**LOCATION:** Sunset Community Center

**PRESENT:** Vice President Cullen, Commissioner Kaven, Executive Director Nicole Vickers, Supt. of Parks & Properties Carl Gorra, Supt. of Recreation Elliott Bortner, Supt. of Finance & Personnel Christy Powell, and Administrative Assistant Hannah MacArthur.

**PRESS:** None

**GUESTS:** None

### **SUBJECT MATTER DISCUSSED:**

Executive Director Nicole Vickers went over the purpose of the committee meeting, which is to discuss the Short/Long-Range Plan of the Park District. Each year, the Geneva Park District updates and revises the Short/Long-Range Plan Annual Goals and Objectives of the District. Executive Director Vickers shared that we will be reviewing the report in the order of each goal, first discussing the short/long-range aspect of each goal and then discussing the ongoing aspect of the goal. As we move through the reports, each department head will highlight a few items within each goal, and if there are any additional points that Commissioners wish to be covered to let the staff know. These goals are reviewed by the Short/Long-Range Planning Committee and presented to the full Board for approval. Once approved by the Board, the plan is posted to the District's website. Input and direction for this process come from program surveys, comment forms, Park District staff, the Board of Commissioners, the Master Plan, and the most recent Community Survey results.

Staff reviewed goal number one, which is as follows: the Geneva Park District will provide a safe environment at all programs, properties, and facilities. Supt. Powell shared that staff strive to achieve a higher than average rating on the PDRMA's Risk Management Review. This new review process began in 2019, and staff will begin this year's review process on April 1<sup>st</sup>. Add an e-bike policy that covers electric scooters and bikes. Lastly, add a First Amendment policy, which clearly defines locations/process. Staff are currently working with legal to create this policy. Supt. Gorra added that all vehicles not currently equipped with backup cameras will be equipped with them. Staff will continue to plan for the replacement of the Island Park south bridge. Staff will continue to set inspection schedules for all facilities and parks with appropriate documentation. Supt. Bortner highlighted the goal to review facility readiness and signage for unannounced First Amendment audits. This past year, municipalities saw an increase in social media creators conducting unannounced audits while filming. Staff will annually review the First Amendment Policy with full and part-time staff. This past year, staff created a new Emergency Response Plan for large unannounced gatherings at aquatic facilities. This plan will be included in staff training. The recreation department will implement this plan and training at all Park District facilities. The recreation department will continue to communicate with the parks department on concerns raised by the public and implement reactive measures, and provide the Board with bi-annual safety committee reports. Commissioner Kaven asked if individuals of unannounced gatherings are entering through the front entrance or using other means, and what sort of disorder is being caused. Executive Director Vickers stated that other districts have seen large gatherings of hundreds of children at aquatic facilities or parks, causing a disturbance. There has been more than

one instance where these participants engage in illegal activity, and it has been seen where these individuals enter legally through entrances and/or illegally. Also, instances of no disturbance, which are welcome. When the Geneva Park District was targeted by one of these unannounced gatherings last summer, staff worked very closely with the Geneva Police Department.

Staff reviewed goal number two, which is as follows: The Geneva Park District will attempt to construct new facilities and acquire additional open space for new park sites and facilities to meet the needs of the District residents. Supt. Gorra highlighted the development of Winding Creek Park and noted that the district will identify locations within the district for additional ballfields, if warranted. Executive Director Vickers added that staff have looked at Wheeler Park to add ball fields and have met with the Geneva Baseball Association, and communicated with them that staff are actively working on alternatives pending the City of Geneva's new police station referendum. No decisions will be made until we know what will happen in the future, as it would be a financial burden to the district. Supt. Gorra noted that staff are always looking for dog-friendly elements within our parks. Dog-friendly amenities are the fastest-growing segment within parks. Supt. Bortner highlighted the reimagining of our current ballfields to accommodate different levels of play and softball. Staff started using a different ball field mix and will continue to renovate fields with this ball mix. Based on the findings of the district's forthcoming comprehensive master plan, staff will determine future plans for the Peterson property.

Staff reviewed goal number three, which is as follows: the Geneva Park District will provide and maintain a quality system of existing parks and facilities by updating and improving each site per the most recent Community Survey and Master Plan. Supt. Gorra highlighted the implementation of the design phase of the exterior of the Sunset Community Center. Staff will focus on turf improvement at Wheeler Park to get the park "greener", as it is a highly utilized park. Staff are working towards a complete tree inventory to ensure the trees are taken care of and are on a maintenance schedule. An ongoing goal is to develop a procedure to increase the survivability of newly planted trees. Supt. Bortner shared that the recreation department will budget and plan to replace the floor in the fitness center and carpet in the locker rooms at the Sunset Community Center, as well as consider new uses of the sand volleyball courts at the Sunset Pool. Long-term, staff will develop a multi-year capital improvement plan for the Sunset Community Center and Stephen D. Persinger Recreation Center. Executive Director Vickers highlighted that this long-term goal could see some fluctuations based on the completion of the comprehensive master plan and how the community ranks priorities.

Staff reviewed goal number four, which is as follows: The Geneva Park District will provide creative programs and facilities to meet the needs of its residents per the surveys, Master Plan, and other research tools. Supt. Powell stated that the district will be applying for reaccreditation of Distinguished Agency. This occurs once every five years, and the district will be applying by April 1<sup>st</sup> of this year. This accreditation requires providing all documents in a paperless manner. Executive Director Vickers reviewed the timeline process and stated that the district would look into purchasing the suggested software to meet the paperless requirements. Staff will also be working on completing the comprehensive and strategic plan. Supt. Gorra highlighted that the parks department is developing a plan for ongoing horticultural volunteer opportunities along the riverfront parks by the way of a greenhouse volunteer program. Supt. Bortner highlighted the implementation of Prairie Play School afternoon sessions. The new Prairie Play School program has been a great success with students of 3 to 5 years of age. Staff will continue to evaluate and

offer programming on nights and weekends to accommodate working families. A long-term goal is the redesign of the park district's website to align with modern design trends and technology. The last website update was completed in 2016. Supt. Bortner noted that the recreation department has a growth mindset and will continue to increase and expand programs and special events for all ages.

Goal number five is as follows: The Geneva Park District will continue cooperative efforts with other governmental agencies and local service organizations to build strategic alliances. Supt. Powell stated that the district completed the efficiency report requirements required by the State of Illinois law in 2024. Supt. Gorra promoted cooperative training with the forest preserves, neighboring park districts, and the Midwest Institute of Park Executives (MIPE). The parks department will also continue to work with the Geneva Garden Club, both at our greenhouse and Garden Club Park. Supt. Bortner will continue to hold the cooperative summer camp program with the Geneva Police and Fire Departments. The recreation department will drive new corporate memberships at BestLife Fitness through local municipalities and businesses. Those individuals who work in Geneva can receive resident fitness membership rates. Staff will continue to work with the School District, Library District, and City of Geneva to develop intergovernmental agreements (IGAs) as a way to enhance value for the taxpayers by sharing resources, as well as review and enhance existing IGAs. Staff will continue to develop and maintain positive relationships with all affiliate organizations for the purpose of advancing opportunities for youth. And lastly, continue the great work with the Geneva Chamber of Commerce on events and marketing.

Goal number six is as follows: The Geneva Park District will continue to meet population growth demands by hiring additional personnel as needed, by retaining competent present personnel, and by training new personnel accordingly. The District is an equal opportunity employer and provides equal employment opportunities to all qualified persons. We will assure that the workplace culture for our employees fosters professional growth and assures an overall positive working atmosphere. We will dedicate ourselves toward enhanced use of technology by making improvements to the communications network when necessary. Supt. Powell highlighted that staff will review the tuition reimbursement policy to better define benefits/limits and goals of benefit offering. We will track non-taxable tips and OT legal changes in 2025 from the One Big Beautiful Bill Act to include in 2026 W2's. Staff will evaluate new occupational therapy providers to provide pre-employment tests and employee accidents. Lastly, staff will continue to learn the uses and efficiencies of the Paycom system. Supt. Gorra highlighted the investigation of flexible work options based on mutual benefit to the district and the employee, as well as ensuring compliance with PDRMA recommended trainings as to ensure safe work practices. Commissioner Kaven asked what the typical number of training hours is for a full-time employee. Supt. Gorra stated that 10-20 hours are typical, with 20 hours as the goal. The parks department will continue to research new ideas for park maintenance and equipment to improve efficiencies. Supt. Bortner highlighted the continued support of the Culture Club. This committee is composed of park, rec, and admin employees who develop different events and gatherings for the staff to enhance work culture. Staff will continue the butterfly house volunteer program at Peck Farm Park. Lastly, continue offering staff educational opportunities. Many staff are certified parks and recreation professionals, which is not a requirement of the district. Executive Director Vickers stated that it is great to see staff actively seeking and asking for continued education opportunities.

Goal number seven is as follows: The Geneva Park District offers educational programs, classes, and stewardship opportunities that increase environmental literacy of residents and will adopt environmentally friendly business practices that are fiscally responsible to conserve resources, educate the community, and provide best practices in resource management. Supt. Powell highlighted that the administrative staff has been researching the feasibility of the Elective Pay program, which will allow the district to recover significant amounts of funds for green initiatives, including solar, EV chargers, and all-electric vehicles. Supt. Gorra highlighted the addition of EV vehicles and equipment. Staff will continue to seek and implement ways to conserve energy and be cognizant of the Dark Sky initiatives. Lastly, purchase products for use in the facility and park operations to minimize negative environmental impacts. The district purchases organic fertilizers and minimally toxic weed control products to minimize impact. Supt. Bortner highlighted developing a beekeeping program utilizing the bee hives at the Community Gardens, as well as installing interpretive signage related to energy saved from the solar panels at Peck Farm Park. Staff intend to determine the educational/environmental use of the Peterson property, benefiting its agricultural/natural area surroundings. Identifying the use of the property will be clearer with the completion of the Master Plan.

Goal number eight is as follows: The Geneva Park District will strive to strengthen and maintain fiscal health and stability. Availability of funding and overall good financial health are prerequisites for carrying out some of the goals and objectives of the District. Supt. Powell highlighted the data collection of contractors' bid forms identified as minority-owned, woman-owned, or veteran-administered. Commissioner Kaven asked if the state requires the district to hire an M/W/V company and provide compensation. Executive Director Vickers replied no. Supt. Gorra highlighted the application process for the Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP) grant for the replacement of the Island Park south bridge. The parks department will develop an inventory of the largest aquatic and building mechanical items to create a replacement schedule and work it into the budget. Supt. Bortner highlighted the printing of the district's brochure to remain fiscally sound. Staff will seek quotes to print annually, research possibilities of switching to a three-program guide cycle, and consider alternative options to mailing a brochure to all resident households.

Executive Director Vickers then shared that enclosed within the packet are the completed goals from all departments over the past year. The superintendents highlighted a few 2025 completed goals. Executive Director Vickers stated to the committee commissioners that the superintendents are the reason the district can accomplish these goals. Commissioner Kaven acknowledged the amount of time and work it takes to accomplish the items listed. Vice President Cullen seconded his comment and applauded the staff for being in tune with the community's needs. With no questions or further comments staff moved to the Master Plan.

Supt. Powell shared the five-year capital improvement plan. She reviewed the revenues and expenditures, highlighting capital funding that comes from the annual audit transfer, bond issues, and grant revenue. Supt. Powell highlighted high-budget projects, including the projects for which we hope to acquire grant monies.

Supt. Gorra covered the fleet replacement list for the next fiscal year. The list includes vehicles that are worn out or deemed for replacement due to possible safety concerns. He prefaced that not all the vehicles on the list are guaranteed for replacement.

Executive Director Vickers discussed the future full-time and part-time personnel needs. All items on this list have been conveyed to the Board previously. She identified two positions specifically, the Parks Specialist I position, which will focus on Mill Creek and Winding Creek Parks, and the Recreation Assistant Superintendent of Recreation Facilities. Executive Director Vickers concluded the report, noting that staff will begin the development of the Strategic and Comprehensive Plans.

With no further discussion, the committee meeting ended at 6:18 PM.

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Secretary

Submitted By: Nicole Vickers / Hannah MacArthur