

**Bensenville Park District  
Board of Park Commissioners  
Special Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, May 25, 2022**

1. Call to Order

President Johnson called the Meeting to order at 6:18 p.m.

Roll call was taken:

	<u>Present</u>	<u>Absent</u>
Gibbs	X	
Johnson	X	
Linder	X	
Karg	X	
Snyder	X	

Staff in attendance: Joe Vallez, Executive Director and Mary Dickson, Park District Attorney.

2. Approval of Agenda

It was moved by Commissioner Linder, seconded by Commissioner Snyder to approve the Agenda, as presented.

On a roll call vote:

<u>ROLL CALL</u>	<u>Ayes</u>	<u>Nays</u>	<u>Absent</u>
Johnson	X		
Karg	X		
Gibbs	X		
Linder	X		
Snyder	X		

Motion carried.

3. Bensenville Park District 2.0

President Johnson opened the information meeting regarding Bensenville Park District 2.0, followed by Commissioner Linder who provided an overview of the meaning of 2.0. It is intended to involve a facilities assessment which will inform the next iteration of the Park District as it moves forward. Once the assessment is complete the District will look at funding improvements required. Conceptual drawings made available at the meeting are just that; there has been no study done relative to cost of any plan, nor any discussion as to whether the residents may want any plan implemented.

As the assessment is completed, the District will consider funding sources, as the goal is to keep the parks vibrant. Due to costs, certain projects have been pushed down the road. One way to fund needed improvements is to sell a portion of White Pines, which while the District may not want to, does provide a funding mechanism.

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President Johnson commented that the goal of the District is to be transparent. Any decision made will be the Board's and does not rest with the Executive Director. The District is looking at a road map to the future, which will have the District managing problems rather than problems managing the District. At this point, he stressed the District has not made any decisions, and he personally supports the idea of a referendum prior to any sale of White Pines property, but it is too soon to make a decision relative to a referendum.

Director Vallez provided the overview and project status of 2.0 as follows:

Discussions commenced in 2017, after the completion of a District wide master plan. The Board opened discussions with the Village about reannexation of White Pines, and adopted Resolution 287 in June 2018 to reannex. This Resolution addressed possible redevelopment of White Pines that included potential sale of a part of the property. (A copy of the Resolution will be posted on the 2.0 Microsite).

In 2019-2020, the golf course posted a \$780,000 loss, which represented a loss for six years in a row. The loss was absorbed by the recreation end of the District. White Pines has an outstanding bond obligation through 2035 of approximately \$400,000. It is an alternative revenue bond that is paid out of operation dollars. In 2019, the Board approved an operational structure that places White Pines under the supervisor of the Executive Director. The District adopts Bensenville Park District 2.0 to identify the needs of the community in the near future.

The District will continue to share information and real time updates. There will be two public forums scheduled as the process proceeds. While these forums had been planned for earlier, as the legislation to allow the sale of White Pines property was extended, the timeline has also been extended. The District is also planning to conduct a community-wide survey in the future.

Public Comments/Questions [Note: Names may not be spelled accurately]

- Henry Wessler encouraged residents to contact Commissioners relative to their concerns and questions.

President Johnson responded that the Board desired that Mr. Vallez be the point of contact so that the message being addressed was unified.

- Gary Gardner asked (1) how the District arrived at statistics of resident vs non-resident use of White Pines, (2) why there is no answer at the banquet facility when this is to be a big year for weddings, (3) why baseball is not being played at Veteran's Park, (4) what has happened at Hyatt Hubbard Park, (5) why the same thought process is not going into the closure of the pool, as other pools are

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closing, (6) whether Mr. Vallez, who personally owns property backing onto green space would like to back up to industrial property and (7) whether the District has a nepotism policy.

In response, the statistics derive from a computer golf registration program which tracks when an individual pays resident vs. non-resident fees; the District is booking a considerable number of weddings; the District's new insurance company told the District not to allow play at Veteran's Park due to a large storm drain which could cause injury, although football is being played in the outfield; the District is inspecting Hyatt Hubbard to determine future uses; the District is spread thin as it is becoming harder and harder to hire staff.

- Mike Jaffee stated he spoke with Kathleen Willis' staff who informed him that the understanding in passing the legislation was that the District planned that an 18-hole course remain at White Pines.

Director Vallez commented that of the four potential redevelopment plans on view, three show an 18-hole course.

- Claudia DeQuincy asked whether the District had conducted an environmental impact study; had studied the effect of the sale of the White Pines property on neighboring properties, and if it studied the effect of the sale on existing storm water concerns. She also questioned whether the District had considered other financing options for projects other than the sale of White Pines property.

Director Vallez responded that the District is securing proposals for an environmental impact study; it has not secured any proposal for effect on neighboring properties; if the redevelopment moved forward it will require stormwater approval from the Army Corps of Engineers and County Stormwater, therefore those concerns will be addressed.

President Johnson stated the District is considering all financing options, including looking at other District holdings for example, the Redmond Lots and land the District owns in Wood Dale.

Commissioner Linder stated that the District also has bonding authority, and Director Vallez stated the District looks for grant opportunities as well.

- Laura Shermano commented on the fact that her property consistently floods and she is concerned about the sale of White Pines property and how it could affect her current issues, which the County has reviewed and was considering until the sale of property was announced.

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Director Vallez reported he has reached out to the County but received no response call.

- Joe Santori stated concerns relative to flooding, traffic if the property is sold for industrial development and a decrease in his property value if it borders industrial property.

Director Vallez responded that there have been discussions relative to traffic should industrial development occur, and it will not be allowed on Church or York Roads.

- Bill Hibner spoke in favor of the increased use and realized funding from golf at White Pines. Funding could increase if the course and its amenities are fully opened. He questions how a proposed soccer field of hotel will benefit the residents of Bensenville. He further stated the residents want to help the District, and to be of value. If capital projects require only \$7 million, there is no need to sell property to secure \$125 million. If funds are needed, the District should consider the sale for residential development, even if it nets only \$25 million.

Director Vallez responded that the idea of a sports facility arose from a visit to a Waukegan facility which took out an 18-hole golf course, and is making money through parking revenues and field fees. No decision has yet been made to sell, or to sell for industrial or residential development. He is speaking with Pulte Homes about a residential development, but the thought appears to be the District would rather keep its property if the sale of land would not realize enough money to make a difference to capital improvement needs.

He also stated that the District remains committed to the golf course, having invested \$1.8 million in it in recent years installing tar and chip cart paths and lighting.

- Trisha Sutton handed out a list of questions to be answered, and asked that the questions and answers be placed on the 2.0 microsite.
- Chuck Rizzo asked where the District was 7-8 months ago when a surveyor was on his property and he was not told in advance about the reasons for the survey. He stated his neighbor reported to him that he had spoken to Director Vallez who told him that the District was selling the golf course and that it would affect his property. He stated residents are upset because they should have been told two years ago about a potential sale. He does not want property sold to put in industrial development.

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Director Vallez admitted talking to the neighbor, but denied making the comments to the neighbor attributed to him. The District's consideration of the sale of a part of White Pines has been openly discussed as far back as 2018 in the annexation agreement with the Village, and there were two articles in the newspaper about it.

Commissioner Karg stated she also spoke with Mr. Rizzo, telling him the golf course was not for sale. She stated the Board meets every two weeks and invited residents to attend meetings, as the District continues its work to make hard decisions.

Commissioner Snyder commented that the Board has no agenda it is looking into everything.

- Janell Taraska stated she does not believe that putting industrial on White Pines property is in the best interests of the District. She asked whether the District will survey residents, and whether the District will still give Fenton a soccer dome if the sale does not occur.

President Johnson responded that the District has not solicited offers, and if the residents don't want the sale for industrial it will be taken off the table. But the Board needs the facility study to make its decision. If the District has field needs, Fenton having a soccer dome is a benefit.

- Valerie Special questioned which of the District's three facilities are making the most money, what happens with the outstanding bond if property is sold, and what the total bond amount is. General discussion occurred relative to suggested ways that the District could make additional money from its venues.

Director Vallez responded the top three revenue generators are Deer Grove Leisure Center, White Pines and the pool. If a portion of the property is sold, the bond would have to be paid off. The District forgave an interfund loan, which makes the financial picture of White Pines better. He will provide bond information to Ms. Special as the amount is not immediately available.

- Julie Ambre ska stated the only one big issue is putting industrial uses on White Pines property. Once it starts industrial will take over and the Village will be changed and there will be no need for a park district.
- Margaret Karich spoke of her love for the Village, and opposed the sale of White Pines property, as it should not be solely about dollars and cents, but the Board must look to the future.

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- Anthony Arman commented on the fact that property taxes continue to rise, and questioned why there was a grant received for property in Wood Dale. He is also concerned about stormwater issues and increased traffic on Church Road if White Pines property is sold. He is opposed to a sale of land for industrial development.

Director Vallez responded that any redevelopment will be done with approval of a stormwater plan, which recognizes flooding issues in the area.

- Robert Special questioned the plans for the dog park, referencing management issues at other parks. He also enquired as to how many maintenance employees the District has.

Director Vallez responded that there are challenges to a dog park which can be resolved through membership fees, which are then used for clean up and property maintenance. The District is short staffed in the maintenance department and is, as are other employers, having difficulty hiring staff. The District is working with IGAs with the school districts which would have them share staff. This is similar to an agreement the District has with the Village regarding the sharing of staff to aid in snow plowing.

- Bob Benson questioned how the District measured use by resident/non-resident status. He also questioned times where play, and use of the Deer Grove, was free.

Director Vallez reported there have been no opportunities for free use of facilities.

- Shannon Vaccaro state she has recently purchased a home here, and would not have done so if she knew of a proposal to put industrial uses in the White Pines property.
- Mitch Janisek thanked the Board for offering the question/answer session.
- Ted Rockowitz suggested for the safety of those using the walking track that a screen be installed as he was once almost hit by a ball, and since then he has not been back.

Director Vallez stated he will discuss this with staff.

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4. Adjournment

It was moved by Commissioner Snyder, seconded by Commissioner Karg, to adjourn.

On a roll call vote:

<u>ROLL CALL</u>	<u>Ayes</u>	<u>Nays</u>	<u>Absent</u>
Johnson	X		
Karg	X		
Gibbs	X		
Linder	X		
Snyder	X		

Motion carried.

The meeting stands adjourned.

Approved:

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President Rich Johnson

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Secretary