

**CHAMPAIGN PARK DISTRICT
MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
October 25, 2023**

The Champaign Park District Board of Commissioners held a Special Meeting on Wednesday, October 25, 2023 at 5:30 p.m. at the Bresnan Meeting Center, 706 Kenwood Road, Champaign, Illinois, pursuant to published notice duly given. President Craig W. Hays presided over the meeting.

Present: President Craig W. Hays, Vice President Timothy P. McMahon, Commissioners Barbara J. Kuhl, Jane L. Solon and Michael R. Somers, Sarah Sandquist, Executive Director, Jarrod Scheunemann, Director of Administrative Services/Board Secretary, Attorney Guy Hall, and Treasurer Donna Lawson.

Staff Present: Andrea Wallace, Director of Finance, Andrew Weiss, Director of Planning, Jeannie Robinson, Director of Recreation, Jimmy Gleason, Director of Revenue Facilities, Steven Bentz, Director of the Virginia Theatre, Rachel Voss, Marketing Manager, and Shannon Walter, Program Manager.

Sean Williams, Sven Pihl, Shoshanna, Gwyneth, Mary Jane Oviatt, Adani Sanchez, Sarah Christensen, Stacey Cornell, Sam Walter, Marianne Montez, Carolyn Vance, and several other residents and members of the local wild food club and CURbanism.

Call to Order

President Hays called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Presentation

Mr. Williams presented a proposal for Board to consider a food forest development within the Park District. He defined the food forest concept and practice, highlighting the various layers of plants within the agricultural system that is designed to efficiently and sustainably produce food, protect biodiversity, and connect the public with food and nature. He shared examples of food forests in the United States, including the Refugee Food Forest in Normal, Illinois and recommended Morrissey Park as a preferred food forest option within the Park District. He estimated that initial expenses for installation could range from \$15,000 to \$60,000. Mr. Williams believes the people he surveyed utilize other providers natural areas more frequently and encouraged the Board to consider a food forest as a unique natural area to fulfill multiple needs.

Commissioner McMahon and Commissioner Kuhl asked what type of commitment is requested of the Park District and what support could be provided by the interested parties. Mr. Williams responded that residents would donate plants and their time for installation. He requested the Park District support the initiative with land and financial assistance.

President Hays requested clarification whether the goals focused on education, harvesting food, or both. Mr. Williams noted several items of local historical significance that connect with the educational mission of a food forest.

Commissioner Somers requested more information about the food forest model, particularly the harvesting rights. Mr. Williams responded that foraging would be limited. The food forest should be viewed as a living laboratory rather than a garden.

Commissioner Solon asked whether parks such as Porter Park and Sunset Ridge Parks are fulfilling local natural area needs. Mr. Williams agreed that these parks are wonderful representative examples of restored prairie natural areas, but believes Champaign is lacking in a forested natural area.

Commissioner McMahon requested more information about the potential timeline for this project. Mr. Williams responded that development would take one (1) to two (2) years to install plants and he anticipated low maintenance after this initial investment.

President Hays thanked Mr. Williams for his presentation.

Comments from the Public

Mr. Sven Pihl, a resident of Urbana and employee of the Savannah Institute shared his educational and professional background to strengthen his argument and show his support for a food forest project in Champaign. He felt it is an important educational investment in local youth.

Shoshanna, a resident of Champaign shared her appreciation for Heritage Park, its biodiversity and opportunities for bird watching. She supports the idea of a food forest to increase biodiversity, community involvement, and education.

Ms. Mary Jane Oviatt, a resident of Urbana, employee of Savannah Institute, and member of local wild food club noted that some residents live in apartment complexes with limited access to nature. She believes a food forest is a method to educate the public about the sources of their food. Ms. Oviatt concluded with a quote by J.O. Cunningham, former Supreme Court Judge (1880) and Urbana resident about the importance of wild fruit.

Ms. Adani Sanchez from CUrbanism shared her support for adding diversity to public spaces, connecting residents with the environment, educating the public about how food is grown, the efficient use of natural resources, and diversifying the uses of public spaces. Ms. Sanchez also highlighted the food forest example in Normal, Illinois.

Ms. Sarah Christensen, a resident of Champaign shared her desire to see the development of a food forest that will be within walking distance of residents, accessible, pesticide-free, and focused on native plants. She believes this form of horticulture is not labor-intensive and if it is done correctly will be a gift to the community.

Mr. Sean Williams addressed the Board again to express his interest partnering with the Park District to cultivate an endangered variety of pear tree that he found in Champaign within a local park.

President Hays thanked those who gave public comment for sharing.

Old Business

1. Approval of Easement with i3 Broadband at Thompson Park

Mr. Weiss reported that the easement is ready for the Board's consideration. Attorney Hall stated that concerns about the intersection with Ameren's easement at Thompson Park and other technical issues with the easement have been sorted out.

Commissioner Solon made a motion to approve an easement with i3 at Thompson Park pending collection of associated fees. The motion was seconded by Vice President McMahon. The motion passed 5-0.

New Business

1. Approval of a Resolution in Recognition of Shannon Walter, Program Manager

President Hays commended and thanked Ms. Walter for her heroic and lifesaving CPR efforts in response to an alert she received on her PulsePoint app. He then read aloud the following resolution to be recorded in the Board's minutes:

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, Shannon Walter, a dedicated American Heart Association Heartsaver Instructor for the Champaign Park District since January of 2015, has demonstrated exceptional dedication to life-saving skills; and

WHEREAS, Shannon Walter has certified hundreds of part and full-time District employees on First Aid, CPR, and AED skills; and

WHEREAS, Shannon Walter, in a moment of extraordinary heroism, utilized the PulsePoint app to locate and perform life-saving CPR on a Champaign resident in need; and

WHEREAS, Shannon Walter's swift and effective response resulted in the preservation of a precious life, underscoring the vital importance of CPR training and the use of technology in emergency situations; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Commissioners of the Champaign Park District, extend our heartfelt appreciation to Shannon Walter for her selfless and courageous act of using her expertise and the PulsePoint app to save a fellow resident's life; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Commissioners of the Champaign Park District commends Shannon Walter for her dedication to promoting heart health and for setting a remarkable example of community service, preparedness, and compassion.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Board of Commissioners of the Champaign Park District hereby presents this resolution in recognition of Shannon Walter's heroism and commitment to making Champaign a safer and more compassionate place to live, work, and play.

Commissioner Solon made a motion to approve a resolution in recognition of Shannon Walter, Program Manager. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Somers. The motion unanimously passed.

2. Approval of Bid for Heritage Park Improvements Project

Mr. Weiss reported that this project will include the installation of accessible parking spaces and will address additional ADA deficiencies at the park.

Commissioner Kuhl asked whether the low bidder's prevailing wage items have been resolved. Ms. Sandquist and Mr. Weiss confirmed that they have been resolved. Mr. Weiss added that he

spoke with staff at the Urbana Park District about a project at Meadowbrook Park that employed this contractor and they did not experience any issues.

Commissioner Kuhl made a motion to approve awarding the contract to the lowest bidder, Concrete Inc of Thomasboro IL, for \$17,360.00 and authorizing the Executive Director to enter into the contract. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Somers. The motion passed 5-0.

3. Approval of a Resolution Appointing Sarah Dixon to the Board of Directors of the Champaign Parks Foundation

Mr. Scheunemann stated that staff recommend approval of a resolution appointing Sarah Dixon to the Champaign Parks Foundation for a two-year term that expires in 2025.

Commissioner Solon made a motion to approve a resolution appointing Sarah Dixon to the Champaign Parks Foundation. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Somers. The motion passed 5-0.

4. Approval Ordinance No. 672 to Address Scrivener's Errors

Attorney Hall reported that this ordinance for allows the Board to correct scrivener's errors without the Board needing a new ordinance or resolution for approval of such corrections.

Commissioner Solon made a motion to approve Ordinance No. 672 to address scrivener's errors. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Somers. The motion passed 5-0.

Discussion Items

1. FY25 Capital Budget and the 2025-2034 Capital Improvement Plan

Ms. Sandquist recommended tabling this discussion item until the November 8, 2023 Regular Board meeting. The Board reached consensus that was in agreement with tabling this discussion item until a future meeting.

2. Pipeline Trail Expansion/ Projects Update

Mr. Weiss presented the report. The Pipeline Trail is currently a one (1) mile long, multi-use path. The trail follows an easement corridor that Marathon Oil received for a pipeline. A developer is moving forward with a project along this corridor and is required by the City to install a half-mile Pipeline Trail segment at this location. Mr. Weiss requested Board direction regarding the Park District's acceptance of this segment.

Discussion and clarification ensued about the trail segment's length, location, and trail connectivity within the area. The Board came to consensus to move forward with the trail segment and requested staff investigate options for completing other segments of the Pipeline Trail.

Ms. Sandquist reported about Park District projects. She presented the new process staff have implemented to vet and track a number of projects as well as a process for internally reviewing bids. She highlighted several recently completed projects and asked the Board if they had any additional questions regarding current projects.

Discussion and clarification ensued about the United Way's Born Learning Trail partnership, the status of the DCEO grant award at the Martens Center, and the Town Center Park matter.

Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Solon read an email she received related to the pickleball skills and drills program. The patron shared that it was the best class they had ever attended at the Park District.

President Hays and the Commissioners welcomed Jeannie Robinson as the new Director of Recreation.

Adjourn

There being no further business to come before the Board, Commissioner Kuhl made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Vice President McMahon. The motion passed 5-0 and the meeting was adjourned at 6:46 p.m.

Approved:

Craig W. Hays, President

Jarrod Scheunemann, Secretary