



ST. CHARLES PARK DISTRICT
SPECIAL MEETING of the DECENNIAL COMMITTEE
ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY
Pottawatomie Community Center
8 North Avenue, St. Charles
September 12, 2023– 5:30 P.M.
Minutes

Call to Order & Roll Call

On September 12, 2023, the St. Charles Park District Decennial Committee on Local Government Efficiency met at Pottawatomie Community Center. At 5:38 p.m., Vice Chairperson Bob Thomson called the meeting to order.

Administrative Assistant Jenny Santos called the roll.

Committee members present: Holly Cabel, Brian Charles, Jim Cooke, John Collins, Karrsten Goettel (arr. 6:11 p.m.), Mike Kies, Peggy McCarthy, Heather Rooney (arr. 5:50 p.m.), Laura Rudow, Jenny Santos, Bob Thomson and Steve Ward

Committee members absent: Bob Carne

Guests: Ashlee Wallace

Purpose of Committee

Holly Cabel reviewed the purpose of the Decennial Committee on Local Government Efficiency, which is to demonstrate the ways in which the St. Charles Park District efficiently and effectively delivers park, recreation and nature/conservation programs, facilities and services to its residents.

The Committee will do this by studying the District's governing statutes, ordinances, rules, procedures, powers, jurisdiction, shared services, intergovernmental agreements and interrelationships with other governmental units and the State of Illinois. The Committee will collect data, research and analysis as necessary to prepare a written report that includes recommendations with respect to increased accountability and efficiency to submit to the counties of Kane and DuPage as mandated by The Decennial Committees on Local Government Efficiency Act, 50 ILCS 70/1, *et seq.*

Review of the Efficiencies of the St. Charles Park District

Ms. Cabel provided a copy of the materials prepared for the meeting to each committee member.

She began with a general overview of the District's adopted ordinances, rules, policies and procedures that are examples of good governance that include its Board Policies & Administrative Regulations, Use Regulation Ordinances, Personnel Policies, Safety Manual, and Department Operation Manuals. Other examples of good governance and transparency to the public is the Comprehensive Master Plan and the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report.

Ms. Cabel provided a list of shared services and partnerships that the District engages in to increase its efficiency in delivering desired and needed services to the community. One example of these partnerships is the District's membership in the Fox Valley Special Recreation Association, which provides services to those in our community that require assistance when recreating. Intergovernmental Agreements (IGAs) with other park districts, forest preserves and other units of government are another means to the District delivering efficient services. For example, IGAs

with CUSD303 allow the District to provide its expertise in playground inspections and maintenance for school district playgrounds and operating Norris Recreation Center, Haines Gymnasium and Thompson Turf. After review the list of IGAs, Steve Ward suggested that the IGA with the City of St. Charles that allows the District to participate in the IPBC Health Care cooperative is another example of government efficiency that saves taxpayers money.

Ms. Cabel shared a list of the 15 associate agreements the District has with groups that operate sports leagues and other types of recreation programs. These agreements provide efficient delivery of a variety of recreation opportunities to the community for people of all ages and interests, including a chess club, dance mixers group, softball league, rugby league and other sports leagues.

Ms. Cabel shared a list of the partnerships the District has with non-profits that provide services to the community and have cost saving benefits to the District. For example, a thirty-year agreement with the non-profit Henry Rockwell Baker Memorial Community Center, Inc. allows the District to use the historic Baker Community Center for its administrative offices, teen center, recreational and educational programming, in addition to renting the meeting and event spaces to the general public. Another example shared that provides desirable programming to the community is the partnership with the River Corridor Foundation to expand the recreation use of the Fox River as well as health and wellness activities in and around the riverfront.

Partnerships with for profit organizations in 2022 helped offset the cost of community wide-events and totaled \$81,917 in cash contributions and in-kind donations valued at \$28,675.

Ms. Cabel offered other examples of efficient operations that included the District's use of volunteers, which offset expenses by \$40,000 in 2022. Employing youth, ages 15-18, provides job opportunities to the community's youth while keeping the District's salary/wage costs at a manageable level. The St. Charles Park Foundation fundraising efforts provided financial aid to 109 residents in 2022. Mr. Charles added that the District's Knowledge Share Program and internal promotions are examples of efficiencies that avoid prolonged job vacancies.

Ms. Cabel then spoke about examples of the District's transparency to the community. She shared the types of information that is available to citizens on the District's website, including board meeting agendas and minutes, annual treasurer's reports, capital improvement plans and other plans and reports. This information is also available at the District's administrative offices at Baker Community Center. The District also encourages transparency through its efforts to seek community input and feedback through committee participation, community surveys, program surveys and public hearings. Mr. Thomson asked why the committee formed to explore the referendum in 2015 was not listed and Ms. Cabel responded because it was more than ten years ago. Mr. Ward asked what qualifies something as a committee and Ms. Cabel explained that District staff will often reach out to members of the community to participate in a committee, for example, the pickleball committee was formed when the District was designing and constructing the new courts at James O. Breen Community Park. Other ad-hoc committees in the past not included in the report are a focus group of skateboarders to give input on the design of the Mt. St. Mary skate park and one for the teen center.

Ms. Cabel shared a list of awards and recognition that the District received from 2018 to 2022. Mr. Charles suggested that the report include Board member anniversary awards as well as the Charlemagne Award that Commissioner Cooke received in May 2023.

Ms. Cabel then provided a list of the facilities and parks owned and/or operated by the Park District that serve the entire community in a variety of ways. This list includes two community centers, 2 aquatic facilities, one golf course, one miniature golf course, one sports facility, one fitness center, one gymnasium, one teen center and one adult activity center. Two unique facilities owned by the District are the paddlewheel riverboats and a farm. She also shared the list of the over 50 parks, natural areas and trails owned and/or operated by the District. These facilities and parks supported the implementation of recreation programs that served 16,512 participants in 2022, broken down into 14 categories. Additionally, the Adult Activity Center for adults 50 years and older served 488 members in 2022. During that same period, Norris Recreation Center served 3,414 members. The District sponsored 8 free community events that were attended by an estimated 31,400 people. Ms. McCarthy asked if the data reported for the number of participants in the aquatic programs included the Norris Recreation Center's pool and Ms. Cabel confirmed it did not. Mr. Thomson asked if Fox Valley Special Recreation Association participation will be reported and Ms. Cabel responded that it is documented earlier in the report. Mr. Ward asked if the Sculpture in the Park program and the summer concert series were included in the special events count or elsewhere, which prompted Ms. McCarthy to suggest that we list in detail the special events provided to the community.

Ms. Cabel asked the committee members if they had any other suggestions for additional services and other benefits the District provides to the community. Mr. Charles suggested the District's park security provides safety and park ambassador services and the use of volunteers saves the taxpayers money. Ms. McCarthy added the two community gardens. Mr. Ward suggested the dog parks and the native plant sale. He also suggested that the Outreach Ambassador is not only a valuable resource to the District's patrons, but the Chicagoland area through her appearances on WGN Morning News. Mr. Cooke added the District's Memorial Tree Program provides carbon offset. Ms. Rudow said the three kayak/canoe racks are a well-used and desired service to community.

Ms. Cabel said that she has recommendations for increased efficiency, including reducing the number of fees paid to other units of local government. Ms. Rudow added that the District does not pay permit fees to the City of St. Charles, there are other permit fees to other units of government that cost the District a lot of money, such as stormwater permits, pool permits and grant award fees. The committee members agreed that a comprehensive list with fees paid to all city, county and state agencies should be included in the report. The committee discussed the financial impact of the inefficiency of other units of local government and Mr. Ward asked if the inability to negotiate a deal with the UPRR for its vacated land is a good example. Mr. Cooke responded that the UPRR is not a unit of government.

Ms. Cabel discussed that unfunded mandates diminish efficiencies. For example, most of the District's FOIA requests are from non-residents; criminal background checks, although necessary, are very expensive; and publishing costly notices in the newspaper is no longer the most effective way of meeting the requirements of posting bids and other legal notices. Mr. Charles added that the defense of lawsuits could be another example and Ms. Wallace said all of the required trainings for employees strain the District's resources.

Survey of Residents

Ms. Cabel asked the residents in attendance (Mr. Collins, Ms. Rooney and Ms. Wallace) if they had any questions or any other input. Mr. Collins said he learned a lot about the District and Ms. Rooney added that she thought the presentation was very thorough.

Setting of Date of Next Meeting

Ms. Cabel asked the committee member when they would prefer to hold the next meeting. She reminded members that there will be two more meetings to complete the work of the committee. It was agreed that the next meeting would take place on January 9, 2024 as part of the Board of Commissioners first meeting in January. The second meeting will take place in May of 2024.

Adjournment of Meeting

Mr. Cooke moved and Ms. McCarthy seconded that the Decennial Committee adjourn its meeting. A voice vote was taken. Unanimous aye votes were cast and the motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 6:18 p.m.

Minutes approved on February 13, 2024


Secretary