



## ST. CHARLES PARK DISTRICT BOARD MEETING

Pottawatomie Community Center

November 25, 2025 – 6:30 P.M.

MINUTES

### Call to Order

The St. Charles Park District Board met for a Regular Meeting at Pottawatomie Community Center on November 25, 2025. At 6:31p.m., President Bob Thomson called the meeting to order.

### Roll Call

Administrative Assistant Jenny Santos called the roll.

**Commissioners present:** Bob Carne, Jim Cooke, Karrsten Goettel, Peggy McCarthy, Craig Newman, Bob Thomson and Steve Ward

**Commissioners absent:** Karrsten Goettel

**Administrative staff present:** Director of Parks & Recreation Holly Cabel, Superintendent of Parks & Planning Laura Rudow, Superintendent of Finance & Administration Ashlee Wallace, Superintendent of Recreation Mike Kies, Information Technology Manager Jeff Essig, Pottawatomie Golf Course Manager & PGA Golf Pro Ron Skubisz and Administrative Assistant Jenny Santos

**Other staff present:** Ecological Restoration Supervisor Patrick Bochenek, Assistant Superintendent of Outdoor Education Chris Gingrich, Manager of Farm Programs & Interpretive Services Alison Jones, Nature Programs Supervisor Emily Shanahan

**Guests present:**

### Consent Agenda

Mr. Cooke moved and Mr. Ward seconded that the St. Charles Park District Board of Commissioners approve the Consent Agenda items, including the following:

- Approval of Minutes of Regular Meeting on November 11, 2025
- Approval of Bills as of October 31, 2025

Account	Amount
CORPORATE FUND	\$ 319,064.08
RECREATION FUND	\$ 62,393.17
LIABILITY INSURANCE	\$ 1,266.74
DEBT SERVICE FUND	\$ 4.00
REVENUE FACILITIES	\$ 46,123.94
NORRIS REC CENTER	\$ 14,156.42
SPORTSPLEX	\$ 7,667.55
CAPITAL	\$ 1,358,352.62
Total	\$ 1,809,028.52

- Approval of Cash and Investment Report as of October 31, 2025
- Approval of Revenue Expense Reports as of October 31, 2025

A roll call vote was taken. Aye: Carne, Cooke, McCarthy, Newman, Ward and Thomson. Nay: none. The motion carried.

**Public Appearances**

Superintendent of Parks & Planning Laura Rudow introduced Patrick Bochenek as the District's new Ecological Restoration Supervisor. Patrick was promoted to the position after five years as a part of the restoration team and Ms. Rudow is proud to have him as the new team leader.

*Patrick Bochenek left the meeting at 6:34 p.m.*

**Administration and Finance****Hickory Knolls Discovery Center Annual Report**

Nature Programs Supervisor Emily Shanahan presented an overview of operations and programs at HKDC in 2025. She began by recognizing the staff and their contributions to the success of the programs this year. Summer camps were maxed out because there is limited space in case of inclement weather. School programs and field trips continue to be popular, serving 2,549 students in 71 separate visits. Mr. Carne asked if D303 participated this year and Ms. Shanahan responded that a couple of schools came now that the transportation is available again. Acorns to Oaks, the nature-based preschool, served 38 students with a waitlist of 35. Mr. Ward asked about how many of the students are residents and Ms. Shanahan answered that 20 are residents and 18 are non-residents. Scout programs and birthday parties offer more opportunities for children and families to visit HKDC. Mr. Carne suggested that the birthday party packages include coupons that cross-promote other District facilities. The Outreach Program has kept its commitment to bringing nature to assisting living and memory care centers, averaging 15 visits a month, five more than in 2024. Programs such as Nature Playschool, No School Nature Days, Twinleaf Tales, Turtle Sundaes, How to Train Your (Bearded) Dragon and Enchanted Pumpkin Homes engaged 594 participants in 2025. Adult education includes the Kane County Certified Naturalist Program and Entice Workshops. Mr. Carne suggested that we create our own certification programs, such as junior naturalist or master composter. He encouraged the staff to make the facility available to other organizations. Special events such as January Jamboree and Rusty Rodeo served over 1,000 patrons. HKDC continued its partnerships with D303 (Science Nights), the St. Charles Public Library, Riverlands Brewery and Chicago Steel Hockey for turtle racing, The Conservation Foundation and Campton Township Open Space. Ms. McCarthy asked if we could expand camps if we had more space. Ms. Shanahan said she would like to increase participation in the teen nature camps. She would also like to not have to use Delnor Woods as a camp base. Mr. Ward asked if financial aid was used for No School Nature Days and Ms. Shanahan said that's not something the Supervisors would ever know. Ms. Rudow complimented the pictures used in the presentation. The Commissioners thanked Ms. Shanahan for the presentation.

**Primrose Farm Annual Report**

Manager of Farm Programs & Interpretive Services Alison Jones presented an overview of programs that were held in 2025 at Primrose Farm. She also began by recognizing her staff and volunteers who have served as great ambassadors of the farm. Animal Adventures continues to be the most popular program. Farmyard Friends is the most popular of school programs offered. School programs served 953 students in 2025 and Girl Scout programs served 75. Farm camps were in even more demand than last year, serving 233 junior farmers. Primrose Farm participated in four livestock outreach programs this year. The farm offered 36 new programs in 2025, with the most successful being Barnyard Biotechnology Series. Birthday parties were new this year and large-scale rentals are growing. The farmstand is operated by Elder Oaks Farm and continues to

be a draw to the farm. The Commissioners appreciated the presentation and the fun pictures of the farm animals.

Adoption of 2025 Tax Levy Ordinance 2025-11-01

Ordinance 2025-11-01 is the Annual Tax Levy Ordinance for the Fiscal Year Commencing January 1, 2026 and ending December 31, 2026 for the St. Charles Park District, Kane and DuPage Counties, in the amount of \$14,119,175.

Mr. Carne moved and Mr. Newman seconded that the St. Charles Park District Board of Commissioners adopt the 2025 Tax Levy Ordinance 2025-11-01. A roll call vote was taken. Aye: Carne, Cooke, McCarthy, Newman, Ward and Thomson. Nay: none. The motion carried.

Abatement of Tax Levy Ordinance 2025-11-02

Annual Abatement Ordinance 2025-11-02 abates the 2025 tax levy for debt service on GO Bonds Park Bonds (Alternate Revenue Source), Series 2018.

Mr. Newman moved and Mr. Cooke seconded that the St. Charles Park District Board of Commissioners adopt the 2025 Abatement of Tax Levy Ordinance 2025-11-02. A roll call vote was taken. Aye: Carne, Cooke, McCarthy, Newman, Ward and Thomson. Nay: none. The motion carried.

Debt Service Fund Budget Revisions

Superintendent of Finance & Administration Ashlee Wallace presented the revisions to the Debt Service Fund budget that was originally presented on October 28, 2025. She explained that as of 12/31/24 the Debt Service Fund Balance was \$604,153 due to interest earnings and the counties adding a 1% loss factor to the debt service levy. The fund balance is restricted for debt service. Therefore, we propose increasing the annual rollover bond issuance by approximately \$600,000 and paying for the additional principal and interest using the fund balance. The revised proposed 2026 Debt Service Fund budget reflects a deficit of \$601,000. Mr. Carne asked if we could use the fund balance to pay down existing debt. We have 2 bonds currently outstanding, the 2015 General Obligation Park Bonds and the 2018 General Obligation Alternate Revenue Source Bonds. The 2015 Bonds will be paid in full in 2027 and the 2018 ARS Bonds are paid from an alternate revenue source (Sportsplex). Due to the upcoming maturity of the 2015 Bonds and desire to keep debt service levy rate flat, bond council recommended increasing the size of the issuance of the annual rollover bonds.

Recreation

Associate Group Agreements

Mr. Carne moved and Mr. Cooke seconded that the St. Charles Park District Board of Commissioners approve the following organizations as Associate Groups for FY 2026, pending receipt of the required documentation as set forth within each agreement: Bachelors 'n' Bachelorettes, Campton United Soccer Club, Chicago Soccer Academy, Fox Valley Maoris Rugby Club, Fox Valley Mixers, Lightning- STC Fastpitch Softball, St. Charles Baseball Association, St. Charles Canoe Club, St. Charles Chess Club, St. Charles Girls Softball Association, St. Charles Storm Basketball, Strikers Fox Valley Soccer Club, Tri Cities Soccer Association and Tri City Chargers Youth Football Association. A voice vote was taken. Unanimous aye votes were cast and the motion carried.

**Parks, Planning, and Facilities**

**Primrose Farm Agricultural Land Lease**

Mr. Cooke moved and Mr. Carne seconded that the St. Charles Park District Board of Commissioners approve the 2026 Primrose Farm land lease with JW Farms in the amount of \$19,100, due in two equal installments on March 10 and August 10 of 2026. A roll call vote was taken. Aye: Carne, Cooke, McCarthy, Newman, Ward and Thomson. Nay: none. The motion carried. A voice vote was taken. Unanimous aye votes were cast and the motion carried.

**Change of Order for Otter Creek Boardwalk**

Ms. Rudow explained the need for an additional twenty-eight additional feet of boardwalk at Otter Creek wetland at the same per linear foot price to avoid an impassable wetland.

Mr. Cooke moved and Ms. McCarthy seconded that the St. Charles Park District Board of Commissioners approve the change order to the contract with E. Hoffman for \$10,360. A roll call vote was taken. Aye: Carne, Cooke, , McCarthy, Newman, Ward and Thomson. Nay: none. The motion carried.

**Special Reports**

**Fox Valley Recreation Association**

Mr. Thomson said the FVSRA Board approved the audit, safety policy and purchase of a van at today's meeting. The Strategic Plan should be done by April and FVSRA is planning its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. Mr. Thomson added there was a discussion about the cost of repairing synthetic turf and poured in place surfaces.

**St. Charles History Museum**

Ms. McCarthy reiterated that the Museum is selling tickets to its holiday fundraiser which is December 13.

**St. Charles Park Foundation**

Mr. Ward shared that the Foundation has enough money for the water wall sculpture in Mount St. Mary Park. Ms. Cabel added there will be a pickleball fundraiser again in February at NRC.

**St. Charles Arts Council**

Ms. Cabel shared that the Arts Council earned \$14,406 at its annual Art of the Dessert fundraiser last evening.

**St. Charles Business Alliance**

Ms. Cabel said the Business Alliance is planning the Holiday Homecoming weekend of events. The Park District will participate in the parade this Saturday, November 29.

**St. Charles River Corridor Foundation**

Ms. McCarthy shared that the lecture series begins again in January for four months, on the third Wednesday of each month at Baker Community Center. The River Corridor Foundation has chosen Gorham launch as the site for the proposed EcoPark.

**Baker Community Center**

No report.

**Director's Report**

Ms. Cabel invited the Board to the holiday luncheon December 12 at Pottawatomie Community Center. She encouraged the Commissioners to attend D303's State of the Schools presentation on December 2 at Lincoln Learning Center. Ms. Cabel also congratulated Steve Ward for his five years serving as a Commissioner!

**Commissioner Comments**

**Bob Carne:** Mr. Carne encouraged the District to use Grock for AI services and mentioned an article in which other Districts use it. He said that our patrons expect innovative technology from us. Mr. Carne believes that Hickory Knolls Discovery Center seems to have turned itself around and thinks the farm needs to follow. He mentioned how impressed he was with Cayla Greenfields' presentations at the last meeting, specifically that she seems to really understand marketing. He also asked that the staff avoid buying online and purchase items needed locally. He suggested that the District set up a season pass to the parks like National Parks have.

**Jim Cooke:** Mr. Cooke asked Ms. Rudow if the farm is really failing. Ms. Rudow responded that there have been some "misses" with programs and events this year. She does not believe it is an issue of marketing as events, such as the Farm Frolic, were widely advertised across social media platforms. She added that the staff have good ideas and they just need to figure out the sweet spot in terms of meeting the interests of the patrons.

Mr. Cooke also disagreed with the suggestion during the Hickory Knolls presentation that we need more facilities. He said that the District can't be everything to everyone and he doesn't believe HKDC has turned a corner because it still doesn't support itself. Ms. Rudow added that HKDC has done a good job of creating demand and a lot its patrons are non-residents. Mr. Cooke wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

**Peggy McCarthy:** A friend suggested that a bridge be built from Ferson Creek Fen to Ferson Creek Park. Mr. Cooke said that project would be a big undertaking and Ms. Rudow added the engineering would be a constraint. She said that docking a riverboat in front of the historic pavilion is good advertising.

**Craig Newman** wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

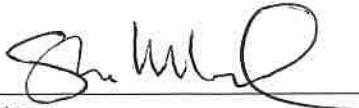
**Bob Thomson** wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

**Steve Ward:** Mr. Ward said there has been a lot of press about data security, specifically with the sharing of Flock data between units of government. Mr. Essig explained the District's policy and the only agency it shares its data with is the St. Charles police department. However, the police cannot share the District's data with any other agency. Mr. Ward wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

**Adjournment of Meeting**

Mr. Cooke moved and Mr. Newman seconded that the meeting adjourn. A voice vote was taken. Unanimous aye votes were cast and the motion carried.

President Thomson adjourned the meeting at 7:55 p.m.

  
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Secretary

Date Approved: December 9, 2025