

# Parks & Recreation Committee

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Minutes of the Meeting on  
July 19, 2021

**Village of Homer Glen  
14240 W 151<sup>st</sup> Street, Homer Glen, IL 60491  
Village Board Room**

1. Call to Order.

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m. by Co-Chair Rose Reynders.

2. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

3. Roll Call.

Present at 6:03 p.m. were Co-Chair Rose Reynders, Co-Chair Nicole La Ha, members Regina Robinson, Dan Kenney, Russ Knaack.

Also Present: Village Manager Matt Walsh, Communications and Recreation Services Coordinator Amy Blank, Superintendent of Parks and Facilities John Robinson,

Arrived late 6:05 p.m. – Member Dale Janssen

Arrived late 6:10 p.m. – Member Bob Kman

Members Absent: Ed Cryer and Marty Pavlik

4. Approval of Minutes.

a) April 19, 2021

Member Kenney made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 17, 2021 Committee meeting; seconded by Co-Chair La Ha. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Approval of Amendments to the Agenda.

a) Co-Chair La Ha made a motion to move “11” to “7”. Member Knaack seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Public Comment.

There was no public comment.

7. Committee Member Updates

a) Member introductions

The Committee went around the table and introduced themselves to each other and shared what ideas they have for the committee or what they would like to see done at the committee level.

Things shared included:

Superintendent Robinson: Maintenance is a priority and staff would like to be part of the discussion for what is planned, long-term vision, equipment needs, etc. so that staff can be prepared and we are using our resources efficiently and effectively.

Member Robinson: Community building is a focus. That includes inclusivity (for all abilities), building new and exciting features, and honoring the past. The original intent of the park (Heritage) and the Village (Community and Nature in Harmony) should be an important part of the planning of this park.

Member Knaack: Two main areas of interest are neighborhood parks (making sure all areas of Homer Glen have easy access to a park – park prioritization) and developing the trail system so that it connects all of our residents to parks, recreation, and businesses.

Member Kenney: Recognizes that the Village is young and is interested in the opportunity to grow and shape the character of this community. Since we don't have a park district or downtown – he sees the committee filling in as the role of park district and Heritage Park acting as the place that is the main family gathering space of our town.

Member Janssen – An area of focus is neighborhood parks. Also, park districts can do a lot of programming because they are a taxing body. We need to make sure that we can fund whatever the committee would like to do and use our resources wisely.

Member Kman – This committee is fun because it is a great opportunity to put ideas into reality. Am interested in Heritage Park and what more it can be. Would like to see the trail system connected. There is a lot of potential in Homer Glen.

b) Review of SOP

The committee reviewed the current SOP #1. Co-Chairs Reynders and La Ha were interested to hear any input from the committee regarding changes/edits/additions to the SOP.

Member Knaack would like to see “development of neighborhood parks” added to the SOP.

There was some discussion about grant writing and potential opportunities to grow the parks through grant funding. It was suggested that the Village could benefit from a grant writer on staff or a contract with a service that provides grant writing for municipalities.

Co-Chair Reynders added that safety needs to be a concern of the committee – making sure our parks are safe and vandal-free.

Superintendent Robinson agreed and explained that the camera system is the start of taking some safety measures in the park. We started at Heritage Park. We

need to expand to the neighborhood parks, but that is something that will need to be addressed and budgeted.

Co-Chair Reynders also would like to see “partnerships” (fundraising/sponsorship/volunteers) a part of the committee’s focus. How do we develop relationships with outside organizations that are interested in helping us? Co-Chair Reynders would like the SOP to allow us to develop those relationships.

## 8. Reports from Co-Chairs.

### a) LWSRA Grand Opening

Co-Chair La Ha met with Keith Wallace, Director of the LWSRA. We have been invited to their grand opening this Thursday, noon-2 p.m. Director Wallace shared with Co-Chair La Ha that they their facility is funded 60% in part with grant funding. They’ve done a lot of cool things with inclusivity and Co-Chair La Ha would like the committee to begin thinking about how we can include some inclusivity in our existing parks.

Superintendent Robinson suggested one way to think about adding some new features into existing parks is to identify the parks that can be seen more as a “regional” park, than just a “neighborhood” park, and to grow those parks with new features/inclusivity during the scheduled renovation/maintenance of each park. (Growing little by little).

### b) Unlimited Play

Co-Chair La Ha has a meeting scheduled with the “Unlimited Play” director, whose focus is to make plans to add inclusivity features into a town’s existing spaces. If the committee is interested, we can bring this person into a Parks meeting so we can all hear what she has to say.

### c) Park Vandalism Update

Co-Chair Reynders spoke with Lt. Holuj about vandalism in Heritage Park and in the Goodings Grove School Park. She is interested in improving safety in the park and deterring vandalism. One idea was to advertise (on FB/Website/etc.) that we have a camera system and that we are working to identify vandals and that we are actively aware.

Superintendent Robinson recommended that to help stave off vandalism, we need to be very conscious about how equipment or property can be destroyed during the planning process. Some equipment looks really cool – but if it is going to be a nightmare to maintain or easily vandalized, then we should not choose to put it in our parks.

## 9. New Business

### a) Discussion on the Village acquiring the Homer Township parks and sports fields

Co-Chair Reynders shared that there is not a lot of information about this topic at this time, but she wants the committee to know that this is being discussed and wants the committee to be a part of this conversation. The Village Facilities staff

is going out to each of the Township parks and will be assessing the condition of the park, playgrounds, parking lots, etc. All of this information will be a factor in the decision-making process, in regards to what we can/will agree to take.

The committee agreed that whatever is decided going forward a priority is to confirm that the Village is able to afford the maintenance and up-keep of whatever we own.

Member Knaack shared that with the loss of Morris Park there are no more soccer fields available anywhere in the Village. He would like the committee to consider finding space in the Village for soccer fields.

It was asked to add the topic of soccer fields to a future Agenda for further discussion.

- b) Discussion on the implementation of partnership opportunities for fundraising, program development, and community service for maintenance of our parks.

One thing that the Co-Chairs have been discussing is volunteer programs - a way to implement these programs or incorporate volunteer groups into the Village so that we can have help with the maintenance of the parks.

Superintendent Robinson said that we have tried something like this in the past, but it is often not a cost- or time-saving mechanism for us, because volunteers need management. That means that staff is using time (on nights or weekends when volunteers are available) to direct volunteers to the work we need done. We've also tried different volunteer groups to "adopt" a garden in a park and we haven't had success up until now with people actually putting in the work to maintain the garden.

Co-Chair Reynders suggested we continue thinking about this. There are people/groups/seniors out there that are looking for ways to gather, socialize, and garden.

Superintendent Robinson shared that the Village is currently in the process of hiring a horticulturist whose job will be to manage the weeds/gardens of the Village and will train our current staff on how to maintain the gardens. That will help with the weed issue.

- c) Discussion on the direction of Capital Projects/Donor Funding: Splash Pad and All-Inclusive Playground

Co-Chair Reynders shared that she has been talking to community members to see if there was interest in sponsoring programs/equipment in the park and there is interest. Coordinator Blank has been asked to put together a brochure about capital projects and the opportunities that are available for sponsorship/donor funding.

The one thing that both Co-Chairs felt is a high priority for residents is a splash pad.

Manager Walsh reminded the committee that a splash pad was included in the original concept plan for the park, but that phase along with the other play area and parking lot for the splash pad was put on the back burner.

Member Knaack asked can we do these components of a “phase” a la carte? What if we just raised the money for the splash pad by fundraising within the community?

Member Kman reminder the committee that the Village is not a 501-C3, so we aren't able to collect fundraising money on behalf of the Village, but we could partner with a non-profit like the Homer Glen Junior Women's Club in order to collect the funds.

Superintendent Robinson shared that it is not possible to put a splash pad in the Active Core because there is no sewer line there. The water and sewer line are designed in back of Village Hall to accommodate for a splash pad. However, to do a splash pad “a la carte” creates some problems because there isn't parking right now to accommodate the splash pad. In the plan, the splash pad area contains plans for a parking lot, playground, and a pavilion. Also, this phase only serves a certain demographic and is limited by the weather in Illinois.

## 10. Old Business

### a) Update on weeds maintenance in the parks

The facilities staff does what maintenance it can and are waiting for the Horticulturist to be hired.

Co-Chair La Ha asked for an update on Erin Hills Park. Superintendent Robinson said the weeds in the planting beds will be addressed with the horticulturist hire.

Member Knaack asked for facilities to check on the lights at the tennis courts in Stonebridge. He understood that the lights were not working.

Superintendent Robinson said they would check on that. The courts will be closed soon, because we are re-surfacing the courts.

### b) Update on current Village park conditions

This was covered in previous discussion.

### c) Update on new security camera system

Manager Walsh shared that additional parts for the system is being installed this week or next and then we will be fully trained on the system. We will also come up with a strategy on how to communicate we have this system (in hopes to crack down on vandalism). The system does have a voice-activated alert system to tell people to exit the park as it is closed after 11pm.

## 11. Reports and Communications from Staff

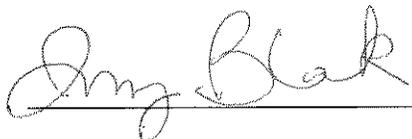
- a) Manager Walsh shared that we are currently doing phase 1 engineering to extend the Heroes trail near Culver Park to Coachman Lane.
- b) Superintendent Robinson – nothing more to report
- c) Communications and Recreation Coordinator Blank shared that the Recreation programs have been going well. We've completed Spring and Summer Pickleball and Tennis and have an upcoming Tennis Camp this August. Lots of positive reviews. We've also started yoga in the park and have had a good turnout the past two weeks. We are looking to add a Fall Pickleball Lessons program – it would be three weeks (2x per week). In regards to Special Events, we have a calendar that was approved. If we are looking to do different events than what is already on the calendar, Coordinator Blank recommends replacing an event that is already planned, rather than just adding to an already full schedule.

Superintendent Robinson agreed about the events and encouraged the committee and the Village Board to really look at staff management and make sure we aren't over extending our staff or resources. Events generate a lot of work/time for our staff and volunteers.

## 12. Adjournment.

Member Kman made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Co-Chair La Ha. The motion carried. The meeting was adjourned 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:



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Amy Blank  
Communications & Recreation Services Coordinator