



# Wheaton Park District

**Wheaton Park District Board of Commissioners  
SUBCOMITTEE MEETING  
Wednesday February 4, 2026,  
DuPage County Historical  
Museum  
102 E. Wesley Street, Wheaton, IL 60187  
5:00 pm**

## **CALL TO ORDER –**

President Vires called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m., Commissioner Barrett, Commissioners Frey, Commissioner Kelly, Commissioner Mee Commission Pecharich, Commissioner Welker were present.

Staff Present included: Executive Director Benard, Executive Assistant Siciliano, Director of Parks and Planning Kimbrough, Assistant Director of Parks & Planning Pickett, Superintendent of Planning Hinchee, Director of Finance Simpson, Director of Athletics Lewandowski, Director of Recreation Beyer, Superintendent of Recreation Martinson

## **COMMUNITY INPUT**

None

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

### **Buildings and Grounds**

#### **1. Lightning Detection Technology – Review of Proposal from Park District Safety Committee**

Executive Director Benard distributed supplemental information related to the lightning detection technology proposal. He provided background on the manually operated system installed at Arrowhead Golf Course over 10 years ago. A manual system was installed at that time as opposed to an automated system due to reports of possible false positives generated by the technology which triggered an alert when conditions were right for lightning rather than actual lightning strike tracking. At that time, staff chose not to recommend installing the technology at locations districtwide.

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Persons with disabilities requiring reasonable accommodation to participate in this meeting should contact the park district's ADA Compliance Officer, Michael Benard, at the park district's Administrative Office, 102 E. Wesley Street, Wheaton, IL Monday through Friday from 8:30 am until 4:30 pm at least 48 hours prior to the meeting. Requests for a qualified ASL interpreter require five (5) working days advance notice. Telephone number 630.945-7726; fax number 630.665.5880; email [dsiciliano@wheatonparks.org](mailto:dsiciliano@wheatonparks.org)

Benard explained that newer technology is now available, and staff have investigated and are proposing installation at eight park district locations with a north and south side weather stations.

Staff evaluated Perry Weather and Thor Guard systems. Martinson explained that the primary difference is that Perry is based on actual lightning strike data, whereas Thor Guard relies on atmospheric “vibration” or conditions, which has historically resulted in false positives. Perry’s system also offers a more advanced app, customizable alerts, notifications directly to people in the parks, and access to a meteorologist.

Commissioner Frey stated he has long been a proponent of lightning detection technology and asked whether the system can detect lightning within a specific radius. Staff confirmed the radius is adjustable at any time.

Commissioner Vires expressed concern about false positives and asked whether references could attest to the system’s accuracy. Benard stated that Pickett and Kimbrough both used the Perry technology at their prior Park Districts as recently as 2025 and neither experienced false alarms.

Commissioner Mee asked whether the proposal was driven by increased liability or simply by improvements in technology. Benard responded that there is no legal requirement to install a lightning detection system, but it is considered best practice. Mee also asked whether references were checked, and Martinson confirmed they were.

Commissioner Welker asked whether implementing the system could increase liability because of having detection in some parks but not all parks. Benard stated that staff consulted our risk managers at the Park District Risk Management Agency, who reported that it would not increase liability exposure if clear related public communication protocols were put in place and followed. Commissioner Pecharich agreed, noting that the Tort Immunity Act should provide protection.

Discussion followed regarding communication protocols. Pecharich emphasized the need for a solid communication plan. Benard noted that the district currently has no automated system, and effective communication is required regardless.

Cost details were reviewed:

- Lease option: approximately \$36,000 annually, excluding installation and shipping
- Purchase option: approximately \$120,000, with \$5,000 credit, bringing the purchase cost to about \$30,000 per unit
- Benard noted that after 4–5 years, leasing and purchasing costs would be roughly equivalent
- Leasing includes a continuous warranty, whereas purchased systems would require replacement once warranties expire

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Commissioner Vires stated it was fortunate the district has not yet experienced a lightning-related incident and noted that golfers increasingly expect an automated system. He expressed support for the proposal.

Commissioner Frey voiced support. Commissioners Mee and Barrett, also indicated they were in favor of moving forward.

Welker requested additional information regarding the communication plan. Benard stated staff would provide that information prior to the regular meeting.

2. Fieldhouse Concept Study - Review of proposal for professional services from Williams Architects

Benard noted that this item was also discussed at the January 17 Capital Projects Committee meeting. He requested authorization for staff to execute the contract immediately, with formal ratification by the Board at the regular meeting. The Board indicated it was agreeable to this approach.

3. Year-Round Park Restroom Concept Study- Review of proposal for professional services with Nevin Hedlund Architects

President Vires stated that he does not support adding permanent bathrooms to locations that didn't already have them and expressed concern about the cost.

Benard noted that if the Board chooses not to proceed with new facilities, the existing bathrooms will still require upgrades. Commissioners Mee, Frey, and Barrett each expressed support for moving forward with the study. Commissioner Welker stated that she believes additional bathrooms are needed and supported the study.

Benard concluded by stating that staff would proceed with the comprehensive study, which would be designed to remain adjustable based on-Board direction.

4. Briar Patch Park Batting Cage Project – Review of bid results

Staff had rebid this project after some design tweaks to bring costs down. It was confirmed with Briarcliffe Baseball that they will cover any amount more than \$75,000. The existing reimbursement agreement with them verifies that this arrangement is acceptable.

5. Prairie Path Park Playground Surfacing Project – Review of bid results

Benard stated that playground structures typically have a useful life of at least 20 years, while playground surfacing generally lasts about 10 years, resulting in one surfacing replacement per playground over the life of the equipment.

6. Seven Gables Park Outdoor Fitness Equipment Surfacing Project – Review of bid results  
No discussion.

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7. Herbicide Services- Review of quotes

Staff provided quotes instead of a formal bid due to the expected cost per year for this service. Benard stated that if the Board approves the quote, staff will return to the Board in years two and three for subsequent approval of pricing established in year one..

Commissioner Mee noted that the district previously used a different vendor. Benard responded that staff were not satisfied with their services and did not invite them to quote.

Benard added that buckthorn removal can sometimes raise concerns from neighboring residents, as it provides habitat for birds. Staff emphasized the importance of maintaining good neighbor relations and management practices when performing removals.

8. Cosley Zoo Hale Family Education Pavilion Project – Review of change order 11

Benard noted that this item represents a small change order, and that the work has already been completed. The item is coming to the Board later than usual because the contractor overlooked bringing it forward in a timely manner.

Commissioner Pecharich asked where the error occurred. Benard responded that it was an oversight between the changing of zoo directors.

9. Danada South Park Invasives Removal Project – Review of contractor selection process and pricing

Frey asked whether the district has a significant amount of buckthorn. Benard confirmed that it does and noted that the district has an contractual lease obligation with the Forest Preserve District to manage the buckthorn at Danada. The Board reviewed the legal opinion related to the vendor selection process and agreed with moving forward as recommended.

10. Ray Morrill Community Center Furniture Purchases – Review of bid results

Benard explained that this purchase represents only a portion of the furniture being acquired as part of the overall project. Williams obtained two bids, and the total furniture cost is estimated at up to \$180,000. The current recommendation is for \$30,000.

11. Park Maintenance Equipment Purchase – Review of state purchasing program pricing

Benard stated that the existing unit is 10 years old, and the proposed replacement would support current operational needs. Pecharich asked whether the cost of this single item was \$127,000, and Benard confirmed that it was. Pecharich then asked about the resale value of the existing unit. Benard stated that prior auction results would be shared.

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## Finance and Administration

1. 2026 Program Apparel Purchase – Review of bid results  
Benard reported that staff across departments cooperated to combine apparel purchases in to one bid to create volume savings. Commissioner Welker commended staff on this procedure. No questions.
2. 2026 Rams Football Uniform and Equipment Purchase – Review of bid results  
Benard explained that this is an annual bid and that, based on questions received about the baseball and softball equipment bids, staff provided related safety information in the specifications for this bid. Pecharich asked whether some items purchased through the bid become inventory carried over to the following year. Benard responded that it is not a full replacement of all items each year; rather, the district replaces a percentage of the total inventory an annual basis.
3. Information Technology Managed Services – Review of proposal for professional services from Advanced Intelligence Engineering

Benard reported that the district has worked with this firm for 10 years, and for the last two contract renewals, competitive proposals were sought. For the current cycle, rather than seeking competitive proposals, he hired another Information Technology firm to audit their work. This audit resulted in a favorable report as well as some recommendations for improvement which served to inform renewal negotiations.

While the incumbent firm held pricing levels for last four years, the contract renewal reflects a related increase due to cost escalations in the industry as well as services previously paid for outside of the managed services contract being bundled into our per user cost. This contract calls for a 4% increase per year in the per user cost over the five year agreement.

Commissioner Pecharich asked whether the district negotiates when proposals are received. Benard confirmed that counteroffers are made when appropriate. As an example, the annual price increase proposal from AIE was 5% with the proposal before the board today at 4%. Welker asked whether any of the district's systems are custom or standard. Benard said he would follow up.

4. Multifunction Devices (Copiers) – Review of state purchasing program pricing for leasing and services from Xerox

Benard reported that the district signed its first agreement for these devices in 2011, followed by a new agreement in 2015. At the conclusion of that lease in June 2022, the district purchased 9 of 11 of these devices at fair market value and continued to use the paid for devices for 4 more years. While the district could continue to use these devices without making lease payments, remaining older machines reached end-of-life at the end of 2024, and parts are no longer be available requiring an upgrade to supportable technology.

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In 2015, the district paid an annual lease total of \$34,800 for 8 machines, which is scheduled to decrease to approximately \$13,000 annually. Two additional machines were leased later for Arrowhead and marketing department, and the district is currently in the middle of these leases. Benard noted that the district is using fewer copies than in the past, with the current contract copy and maintenance cost at \$23,700 per year, now decreasing slightly to approximately \$22,000 per year.

Benard noted that the pricing for the new lease and use agreements were secured through a state purchasing program.

5. Wheaton Park District Leadership Academy Professional Development and Support Program – Review of 2025 program feedback report

Benard noted that he felt it was important for the board to review staff feedback on the Leadership Academy. Benard stated that he plans to continue the program in 2026 and will return to the board in March or April for approval. There were no comments from the board.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

At 5:51 p.m. Commissioner Mee moved to adjourn the meeting. Second, Commissioner Frey Motion carried by voice vote.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. Mee', written in a cursive style.

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