



Wheaton Park District

**Wheaton Park District Board of Commissioners
SUBCOMITTEE MEETING
Wednesday May 6, 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, Commissioner Frey, Commissioner Kelly, Commissioner Mee Commission Pecharich, and 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 Director of Marketing Wilhelmi, Superintendent of Planning Hinchee, Director of Arrowhead Operations Novak, Director of Athletics Lewandowski; Director of Recreation Beyer, Superintendent of Recreation Martinson, Director of Finance Simpson, Assistant Director of Finance Meger

Guests:

COMMUNITY INPUT

None

DISCUSSION ITEMS

PRESENTATION

See Item #2

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DISCUSSION ITEMS

Buildings and Grounds

1. **Rice Pool and Waterpark** – Review of Exploratory Survey Draft
- aQity Research and Insights Inc.

President Vires stated that this item will be discussed at a Special Workshop Meeting he has scheduled for Thursday May 14 at 5:30 at the Museum.

2. **Cosley Zoo** – Review of 25 Year Vision for Exhibit Renovation Draft

Greg Bockheim Director of Cosley Zoo gave the following presentation.

The phased renovation plan is based on the facility assessment report, which evaluates zoo facilities and rates their condition as poor, fair, or good. Renovation priorities for each phase were determined according to these condition ratings.

Phase 1: Burrow to Branches remains within the existing footprint of the existing animal habitats and retains the current character of the Zoo.

1. The existing rabbit habitat will be renovated to support a small prairie dog colony. Prairie dogs construct complex underground 'villages' composed of specialized chambers, including latrines, burial areas, food storage rooms, and birthing dens. To ensure containment, the habitat will incorporate an underground mesh barrier that prevents burrowing escape.
2. The small mammal habitats, currently home to porcupines, hawks, and owls, are supported by a substantial steel structure. This existing framework will be incorporated into the future exhibit, with the welded wire mesh replaced by a more modern woven mesh and lighter-weight roofing materials. Floor-to-ceiling glass window viewing will also be added to provide improved, close-up views of the animals.
3. The songbird aviary is designed to evoke a backyard, or back-of-house garden landscape, incorporating features that attract native songbirds. This habitat will highlight practical strategies that zoo guests can adopt in their own yards to attract and sustain healthy native bird populations.
4. The large owl aviary will be designed as a walkthrough experience for zoo guests. This expansive, tall flight space will allow large owls to move freely across the exhibit. Guests may choose to walk through the aviary alongside the birds or follow a path along its perimeter. The design creates an immersive experience, with many owls expected to perch within close viewing distance, offering guests a unique and engaging encounter. A small

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owl aviary will be incorporated into this large aviary design offering us the opportunity to display smaller owl species.

5. The swift fox is a small North American species that lives in social groups. As the smallest fox species on the continent, it offers a unique addition to the Zoo's collection. This habitat would be included as an enhancement to Phase 1 if fundraising goals are exceeded. Incorporating it during the initial design and construction phase would allow for greater efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

Commissioner Mee asked Benard to explain the funding for the project. Executive Director Benard stated that the estimated cost is \$4.7 million in today's dollars, not including the swift fox exhibit which would cost an additional \$900,000. The project will be funded through multiple sources including a Cosley Foundation Capital Campaign, Park District Capital Reserves. Grant opportunities will be pursued as well.

Commissioner Kelly asked whether any of the existing structures would be reused. Bockheim confirmed that some structures would be reused. Discussion followed regarding whether Phase 1 could be constructed first, with Phase 1A completed later and bid as an alternate.

Commissioner Pecharich asked about the long-term vision and whether the board would need to approve the overall vision. Executive Director Benard responded that he was seeking board agreement only for Phase 1 and Phase 1A at this time, with additional phases to be presented in the future.

Commissioner Pecharich stated that she thought the proposal was fantastic and noted that those areas, especially the aviary area, need renovation. However, she expressed concern about the use of the term "Phase 1," suggesting that projects should be identified by project names instead of phases because the term "phases" could imply that all future phases are already approved.

Executive Director Benard explained that the phased approach was used because the board's direction included the development a prioritization for the renovation of the entire zoo. He emphasized that there is no implied consent that all phases will ultimately be completed. Staff was directed to develop these phases after the prior master plan was rescinded. Pecharich reiterated that she did not want the public to misunderstand and jump to conclusions. Mee stated that this clarification could be reiterated at the regular board meeting.

Commissioner Pecharich also noted that maintenance costs continue to rise each year and asked how maintenance costs for the new structures would compare to current costs. She also asked whether fundraising efforts could include both construction costs and an endowment for future maintenance.

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Executive Director Benard stated that the recently approved foundation endowment was established to support ongoing increases in staffing costs. He added that he does not anticipate an increase in maintenance costs because the structures will be new.

Commissioner Kelly asked about staffing differences associated with the new structures. Executive Director Benard responded that regardless of renovation plans, there is a current need to identify funding for moving part-time zookeeper positions to full-time status in a planned fashion.

Commissioner Kelly further commented that maintenance costs for new buildings will generally decrease because modern building materials will not deteriorate as quickly. He also noted that the board has repeatedly communicated at meetings that zoo projects will be funded primarily through fundraising efforts, and priorities may shift over time as projects progress.

The board agreed that proceeding with Phase I and Phase 1A "Burrows to Branches" was acceptable.

3. Atten Park – Review Proposal for Streambank Stabilization Engineering, IEPA 319 Grant Application, and Cost Sharing Agreement

This item requests approval for three actions: approval of the grant application, approval of a cost-sharing agreement with Cantigny to split the engineering costs associated with preparing the grant application, and approval of a contract with Hey and Associates.

It was noted that the grant had been applied for previously but was unsuccessful. After follow-up discussions, the grant administrators indicated that preference is given to "shovel-ready" projects, which is the purpose of completing the engineering work at this stage.

Without the grant, the project is estimated to cost approximately \$1 million. If the grant is awarded, the cost will be reduced to approximately \$200,000 for each party. It was also noted that the county will eventually require completion of this project.

4. Northside Park – Review of Bid Results for Lagoon Sediment Settling Basin Dredging Project

Executive Director Benard stated that the project came in slightly over the budgeted amount and requested board approval for the additional \$35,000 for the project.

Kelly asked whether the dredging would be completed to the original specified levels. Hinchee confirmed that it would.

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5. **Northside Park** – Review of Engineering Additional Services Proposal for Lagoon Sediment Settling Basin Dredging Project
Executive Director Benard said that we have not yet engaged Burke Engineering for this phase. The cost is \$12,000.

6. **Ray Morrill Community Center** – Review of Change Order No. 1 for Interior Renovation Project Phase 3

Benard stated that the amount is correct, but the project description will need to be corrected before the regular meeting.

Commissioner Kelly noted that there will be additional change orders related to overtime work. He explained that tiles removed outside the locker rooms will need to be reinstalled, and staff are trying to avoid closing the locker rooms again.

Commissioner Kelly also noted that another significant change order resulting from issues with the concrete slab floor.

7. **Alcohol Sales and Service on Park District Property** – Review of Proposed Alcohol Sales and Service for 2026 Events at Cosley Zoo and DuPage County Historical Museum

Benard stated that the Park Use Ordinance requires board approval for this item.

President Vires asked if the Boots & Bandanas event is replacing the Uncorked Wine Event. Benard confirmed that it is.

8. **Rice and Northside Pools** – Review of Bid Results for Chemical Purchases
Benard, said

Commissioner Kelly asked whether a system using 3-inch tablets had previously been installed. Superintendent Hinchee responded that the tablets were discontinued because the system could not keep up with the demand, and the tablets caused the water to become cloudy.

9. **Vehicle Purchase** – Review of a quotes received for a 2026 Ford F250 Regular Cab
Executive Director Benard stated that we are replacing aging equipment by putting it out to auction, the goal is to replace them when they become more maintenance on them.

Director of Parks & Planning Kimbrough stated that the items were quoted individually because it was less expensive than purchasing them through the cooperative purchasing program.

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Commissioner Pecharich asked about the truck, noting that it was 21 years old and had first been used at the zoo before being transferred to the parks department. Discussion followed regarding the vehicle's mileage. It was noted that many of the district's vehicles have significantly higher mileage, while this truck only has approximately 87,000 miles, which would normally suggest additional usable life. Kimbrough explained that vehicle replacement decisions are based more on wear and tear than mileage alone, and that vehicles are typically ready for retirement after approximately 10 to 12 years of service. Kimbrough added that these are the two hardest working trucks, since they pull trailers all the time. Superintendent of Fleet & Parks Themel was identified as being able to provide more detail on the matter.

- 10. Vehicle Purchase** – Review of a quotes received for a 2026 Ford F150 4x4 Pickup Truck
See discussion in item #9
- 11. Vehicle Purchase** – Review of a quotes received for a 2026 Ford F450 Dump Truck
See discussion in item #9
- 12. Vehicle Purchase** – Review of a quotes received for a 2026 Ford F250 Crew Cab
See discussion in item #9
- 13. Vehicle Purchase** – Review of quotes received for a 2026 Ford Transit Van
See discussion in item #9

Finance and Administration

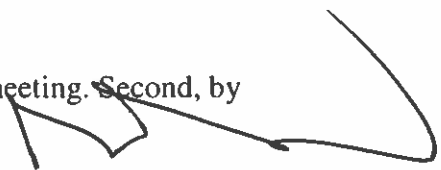
- 1. Wheaton Park District Finance Policies** – Review of Proposed Amendments
Executive Director Benard stated we do not have any edits to the existing policies, but we are recommending the addition of two new policies. Commissioner Kelly asked whether these policies are required by the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA). Director of Finance Simpson explained that they are considered part of GFOA best practices and are also recommended from an audit perspective.
- 2. Ordinance 2026-04** – Review of an Ordinance Approving the Disposal and Sale of Personal Property Owned by the Wheaton Park District.
No discussion.

Board Member Comments:

President Vires stated that the May Meeting of the Park Board is when the Board elects officers and appoints liaisons. He asked the board if they were satisfied with the officers and Liaisons of the board as they are. Everyone agreed they were satisfied with it.

ADJOURNMENT

At 5:45 p.m. Commissioner Mee moved to adjourn the meeting. Second, by Commissioner Barrett Motion carried by voice vote.



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