

**STATE OF ILLINOIS
COUNTY OF DUPAGE
DARIEN PARK DISTRICT REGULAR MEETING**

September 8, 2025

CALL TO ORDER

President Ray Jablonski called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. at the Darien Park District Community Center, 7301 Fairview, Darien, Illinois.

ROLL CALL OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Upon roll call the following Commissioners were present:

PRESENT: Ray Jablonski, Luanne Spiros, Frank Noverini, Cathy Marchese, Steve Shanks

ABSENT: None

Staff: Stephanie Gurgone; Executive Director, Matt Henderson: Director of Parks and Facilities, Jordan Rossi; Sportsplex General Manager, Gina Madden; Attorney

PUBLIC COMMENTS & GUESTS

Mr. Vito Abate was joined by Ms. Terri Higginberg and Mr. Matthew Bell. They discussed the positive transformation of the park following the installation of pickleball courts.

Mr. Abate described how the pickleball courts attract a wide range of users, including retirees in the morning, working adults in the evening, and families, fostering a strong sense of community and social interaction among participants.

Ms Higginberg and Mr. Bell noted that prior to the courts, the park was underutilized and sometimes perceived as unsafe, but now families feel comfortable visiting, and the presence of adults and lighting has improved the atmosphere and reduced concerns.

There was some discussion regarding the trial extension of the pickleball court hours, community usage patterns, and noise complaints from a nearby resident and mitigation strategies and future adjustments such as planting arborvitae and native plants to create a visual and sound barrier.

Executive Director Gurgone reported that the opening of the new courts at Westwood is expected to shift some early and competitive play away from the current location, potentially alleviating noise concerns for nearby residents.

The board formally recognized Executive Director Stephanie Gurgone for 25 years of service, highlighting her leadership, community impact, and the collaborative culture fostered within the park district.

Board members praised Stephanie's leadership style, her role in building a strong staff team, and her commitment to community engagement and program innovation.

Executive Director Gurgone was presented with tokens of appreciation and her contributions to various programs and partnerships.

COMMUNICATIONS

There were no communications to report

OFFICER REPORTS

a. President

- b. Treasurer** – Commissioner Cathy Marchese presented the Treasurer’s report ending August 31, 2025.

Commissioner Noverini made a motion, duly seconded by Commissioner Shanks to approve the Treasurer’s report ending August 31, 2025.

Upon roll call the following Commissioners voted:

AYES: Noverini, Shanks, Spiros, Marchese, Jablonski

NAYS: None

President Jablonski declared the motion carried.

c. Commissioner Reports

Commissioner Steve Shanks reported that he attended the Darien Action Committee meeting. He reported that Darien Fest is looking at the high school for 2026 and that the Garden Club suggested some trees near the planters at Garden View for some shade near the garden.

Commissioner Luanne Spiros provided an update on the liaison roles between the City Council and the Park District, outlining communication protocols, expectations, and ongoing efforts to enhance collaboration and event planning. She reported that the liaison role will be filled by Alderman Ralph Stompanato who is focused on communication, escalation of concerns, and alignment between the city and park district, without involvement in daily operations.

Commissioner Spiros reported that plans were discussed for semi-annual meetings to review collaboration, address concerns, and ensure alignment of shared goals and event planning. She further reported that the board and city are working together to improve event logistics, such as parking and communication, and to conduct post-event reviews for continuous improvement.

ATTORNEY’S REPORT

Attorney Gina Madden had no report.

STAFF REPORTS

a. Executive Director/SEASPAR

Executive Director Stephanie Gurgone reported that Matt Corso will be at the October 13th meeting reporting on SEASPAR. She reported on financial planning and the upcoming bond authorizations, and the long-term capital projects plan, including playground rankings, debt management, and strategic investment in park facilities. She further reported that the board discussed the schedule for the annual bond

rollovers, the use of proceeds for current debt and the Westwood project, and the importance of cautious financial planning to avoid overextending capital resources.

Executive Director Gurgone discussed the review and ranking of playgrounds and facilities for upgrades, adjusting priorities based on condition and community needs, with flexibility to move projects up or down as circumstances change. She reported on the design for six new pickleball courts at Westwood Park with plans to include lighting and shade structures and that the project is supported by a grant.

Executive Director Gurgone also discussed future capital planning for projects, balancing available funds, grant opportunities, and staff capacity.

b. Finance Report

Executive Director Gurgone stated that she would answer any questions regarding financials.

c. Sportsplex General Manager

General Manager Jordan Rossi reported on the status of the youth sports leagues and tournaments, including evaluations for hockey and soccer, and adjustments to accommodate participation levels and facility usage. He reported that the Big Bear hockey tournament exceeded participation projections, requiring additional ice time and coordination with other local rinks to accommodate all teams.

d. Director of Parks & Facilities

Director Matt Henderson reported on updates on ongoing programs, facility maintenance, and operational challenges, including the status of the Holly playground, tree removal efforts, and technical issues with the splash pad. He reported that the Holly playground renovation is nearing completion, pending final components and a safety audit before reopening to the public.

Director Henderson reported that staff is managing increased tree removal due to aging and storm damage, updating the tree inventory, and considering the financial impact of ongoing maintenance. He reported on the splash pad and that it closed early due to an electrical issue with the activation button and that staff are working with the installer and vendor to resolve the problem and considering preventive measures for the future.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business report.

PUBLIC COMMENT (FOR CONSENT AGENDA)

There was no one wishing to present public comment.

CONSENT AGENDA

- a. August 11, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes**
- b. Warrants**

Commissioner Marchese moved, duly seconded by Commissioner Noverini to approve the August 11, Regular Meeting Minutes and the Warrants.

Upon roll call the following Commissioners voted:

AYES: Marchese, Noverini, Spiros, Shanks, Jablonski

NAYS: None

President Jablonski declared the motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business to report.

ADJOURN

There being no further discussion, Commissioner Shanks moved, duly seconded by Commissioner Marchese that the meeting be adjourned.

Upon roll call vote the Motion was thereby carried and the meeting adjourned at 8:22 p.m.



**Ray Jablonski, President
Darien Park District**



**Frank Noverini, Secretary
Darien Park District**