

EFFICIENCY REPORT FOR THE FOX VALLEY PARK DISTRICT

**APPROVED BY THE FOX VALLEY PARK DISTRICT'S
COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY
ON OCTOBER 23, 2023**

I. Purpose

The Fox Valley Park District ("Park District") formed its Committee on Local Government Efficiency on May 8, 2023, to study efficiencies and report recommendations regarding those efficiencies and increased accountability pursuant to 50 ILCS 70/1, *et seq.* (the "Committee").

II. Committee Membership

The Committee consisted of the following individuals:

Chuck Anderson	Board President
Allan Broholm	Board Commissioner (attended 7/10/2023)
Jerry Butler	Board Commissioner
Maria Clement	Board Commissioner
Mary Anne Cummings	Board Commissioner
Joe Grisson III	Board Commissioner
Matt Hicks Jr.	Board Commissioner
Aimee Cisneros	Resident
Rocio Arvayo	Resident
Jim Pilmer	Executive Director

III. Committee Meetings

The Committee met as follows:

Meeting Date	Meeting Time and Place
July 10, 2023	4:15 pm Cole Administration Center
September 18, 2023	4:15 pm Cole Administration Center
October 23, 2023	4:15 pm Cole Administration Center

Minutes of these meetings are available on the Park District's website or upon request at the Park District's administrative office.

IV. General Overview of Governing Statutes, Ordinances, Rules, Procedures, Powers, Jurisdiction

The Park District was established by a referendum initiated and approved by the voters of the Park District in 1947]. All Illinois park districts, including the Park District, are governed by the Park District Code, 70 ILCS 1205/1 *et seq.*

Having a separate and distinct taxing body for parks, recreation, and conservation within the local community, which operates apart from general purpose governments, is extremely beneficial to the community for many reasons, as detailed further in this report.

- **Elected, non-partisan, non-compensated board.** The Park District is governed by a board of seven commissioners. Commissioners must reside within the boundaries of the park district and are elected at the Consolidated Election in odd-numbered years. Pursuant to state law, commissioners are non-partisan and serve without compensation.
- **Accessible and focused representation.** Having a dedicated board to oversee these essential facilities, programs, and services provides the community with increased access to their elected representatives and allows those elected representatives to remain focused solely on those facilities, programs, and services. This is contrasted with general purpose governments where elected representatives are responsible for broad oversight on a wide range of issues. This special purpose benefit is particularly advantageous when it comes to budget and finance oversight.
- **Increased transparency.** Having a dedicated unit of local government to provide park and recreation services also improves the relationship between the park district and its residents because of the transparency and openness related to the board and park district operations. Having detailed agenda and action items allows taxpayers to be better informed about the inner workings of their local government. When individual units of government are responsible for providing specified services like park districts, transparency is increased because action items and budget procedures are more detailed. Additionally, these items and budgetary decisions are subject to more scrutiny by locally elected officials than is the case with larger, multi-purpose governments with a multitude of departments.
- **Protection of revenues.** Because the Park District is a separate unit of local government, the revenues it generates can only be used for park district purposes. This assurance is contrasted with general purpose governments like cities, villages, and counties that provide a multitude of services such as fire, police, public works, economic development, etc., where revenues that are generated specifically for parks and recreation can be expended on these other services with limited, if any, input from voters.

- **Protection of assets.** Public parks and other real property owned by the park district is held in trust for the residents of the park district, and, subject to very limited exceptions, can only be sold or transferred if residents approve of the sale or transfer by a referendum. This is contrasted with general purpose units of government, which have authority to sell or dispose of property by a vote of the governing board.
- **Providing the Community More with Less.** The Park District does more with much fewer funding options. Unlike other units of local government that receive direct state funding, and income, sales, use, hotel/motel, motor fuel and other numerous taxes, the Park District's only tax revenues come from a modest portion of a resident's overall property tax bill. In fact, despite its limited funding options, the Park District share is only 4.19 % of the local tax bill.

As part of good governance and implementing best practices in the management of day-to-day operations, the Park District has also adopted the following ordinances, rules, policies, and procedures:

- Operations Manual
- Safety Manual and Policies
- Comprehensive Board Policy Manual
- Rules and Regulations General Use Ordinance
- Ethics Ordinance
- Behavior Management Policy
- Personnel/Employee Policy Manual
- Strategic and Comprehensive Master Plan
- Community Needs Assessment
- Aquatic Policies
- Dog and Skate Park Guidelines
- Registration Policies
- Purchasing Policy
- ADA Transition Plan
- Administrative Policies and Procedures Manual
- Financial Annual Reporting
- Board Policies and Procedures Manual

V. List of Shared Services and Partnerships

The Park District works diligently to provide the best possible programs, services, and facilities to our community at the least possible cost. One of the many ways the Park District achieves this goal is by partnering with neighboring park districts, school districts, other units of local government within or near the community, the State, non-profit organizations, and for-profit corporations. Below is a comprehensive list of the current partnerships, agreements, and other relationships that assist the Park District's mission of delivering the best possible services at the least possible cost to our community.

1. Membership in Special Recreation Association (SRA)

The Park District is part of the Fox Valley Special Recreation Association. Special recreation associations are a form of intergovernmental cooperation among units of local government that are authorized under the Illinois Constitution, the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act, the Park District Code, and the Municipal Code. Their formation is rooted in a fundamental belief and recognition that "Recreation is for Everyone." They are shining examples of local government efficiency.

By partnering together, local communities are able to effectively and efficiently deliver more successful program opportunities to community members who have special needs. Furthermore, by participating in the SRA, the Park District networks with six other local governments to provide many more program opportunities for our community members who have special needs and offers a choice between participating in the SRA's programs or in programs that are provided by the Park District.

The Park District and the SRA also achieve efficiency by utilizing existing facilities that are owned and operated by the SRA's members, including the Park District. Utilizing these existing facilities allows the SRA to deliver services to its member communities at a lower cost. Currently the Park District provides the SRA access to the following facilities for their program offerings:

- Blackberry Farm
- Park Shelter Rentals
- Prisco Community Center
- Splash Country Water Park
- Vaughan Athletic Center (Aquatics, Fieldhouse, Tennis)
- Washington Tennis Courts
- Eola Community Center
- Phillips Park Family Aquatics
- Red Oak Nature Center
- Stuart Sports Complex

The SRA also provides the support needed for participants with special needs who choose to register for the Park District programs or inclusive programming. The SRA collects information on the registered participant and determines what supports are needed for that participant to be successful in this inclusive setting or the Park District program. This could include additional training of the supervisory staff, additional support staff, the use of adaptive equipment, behavior management, and/or other

measures that will assist in the successful participation of this individual in the Park District program. Although success may not look the same for everyone, the SRA works with the Park District's staff to ensure the best possible results for all the participants in the program. The Park District's cost of providing these services would be much greater without its participation and partnership in the SRA.

In 2022, the SRA successfully served 417 residents in 9 core program categories (Athletics, Day Break, Fitness, General Recreation, Private Lessons, Special Events, STARS, Summer Camps, Trips and Overnights). The SRA also supported 85 participants in inclusive programs that were provided by the Park District.

The Park District is very proud of the ongoing collaboration with the SRA. By working cooperatively with other local governments, not only are we better able to collectively serve all citizens within our communities, including persons with disabilities, but we are able to do so in the most efficient and effective manner possible.

2. Other intergovernmental agreements with other park districts, forest preserve districts, conservation districts, or municipal recreation agencies

- Kane County Forest Preserve - Barnes Road Maintenance Property Intergovernmental Agreement
- Kane County Forest Preserve - Aurora West Facilities Intergovernmental Agreement
- Kane County Forest Preserve - Barnes Road Garden Plots Intergovernmental Agreement
- Kane County Forest Preserve - Oakhurst Garden Plots Intergovernmental Agreement
- Kane County Intergovernmental Agreement - Orchard Road between Prairie and Jericho

3. Intergovernmental agreements with other units of local government

- School District 131 for Resilience Education Center - access for interconnect
- School District 131 Park/School Intergovernmental Agreement
- School District 129 Park/School Intergovernmental Agreement
- School District 129 Emergency Facility Usage Intergovernmental Agreement
- City of Aurora Community Center and Branch Library Joint Use Intergovernmental Agreement
- City of Aurora Cooperative Use of Storm Water Detention Intergovernmental Agreement
- City of Aurora Intergovernmental Maintenance Agreement Indian Creek Reservoir
- City of Aurora - Orchard Road between Prairie and Jericho Intergovernmental Agreement
- City of Aurora and School District 131 - Phillips Park Tennis Courts Intergovernmental Agreement
- City of Aurora - Spring Lake Shoreline Improvement Intergovernmental Agreement
- City of Aurora - Fireworks and Programmed Activities Intergovernmental Agreement
- City of Aurora - Golfview Drainage Improvement Intergovernmental Maintenance Agreement
- City of Aurora Police Services Intergovernmental Agreement
- Fox Metro Water Reclamation District Transfer of Land Intergovernmental Agreement
- Village of Montgomery Police Services Intergovernmental Agreement
- Village of Montgomery - Montgomery Park Intergovernmental Agreement
- Village of North Aurora Police Services Intergovernmental Agreement
- Village of North Aurora for Fireworks - Staging of Equipment Intergovernmental Agreement

4. Partnerships or agreements with athletic or similar affiliate organizations that operate sports or other leagues

-Aurora University - Stuart Sports Complex Facility Usage Agreement

5. Partnerships or other interrelationships with non-profits

-Aurora Housing Authority - After-school programming

-Aurora Housing Authority - Donation of fitness equipment

-SPARK Preschool playgroups at Blackhawk Park and Aurora Housing Authority sites

VI. Other Examples of Efficient Operations

Use of volunteers. One way in which the Park District reduces the burden on taxpayers is through the use of volunteers. These individuals volunteer for many services such as shoreline clean up and sports coaching for the Park District.

Youth employment. The Park District is a major employer of youth in the community. Last year, the Park District employed 256 youth. Not only is this an efficient way to deliver services, but youth employment serves as a valuable training tool for the future workforce.

Joint purchasing (if not listed above). The Park District participates in joint purchasing cooperatives pursuant to the Governmental Joint Purchasing Act (30 ILCS 525/0.01 *et seq.*) thereby saving taxpayer dollars through economies of scale. These include:

OMNIA Partners is the biggest Co-op that we purchase from currently. This encompasses products from vendors such as staples all the way to playground equipment.

Fox Valley Park Foundation (Foundation). Last year, the Foundation raised \$77,713 in private donations, which help alleviate the burden on taxpayers. The Foundation also supported the Park District by:

The annual Golf for Kids Benefit Outing which allows the Fox Valley Park Foundation to pursue its mission of providing Access for All in support of Social Equity. Thanks to the generous donors, the Foundation continues to be able to impact the lives of our recreationally underserved residents to build a healthy community and since 2017, the Foundation has awarded \$329,000.

In 2022 the Foundation Awarded \$75,000 in Golf for Kids Fundraiser Program Grants to the Recreation Department toward underserved recreation and educational programs.

- Veterans Luncheon – \$1,000
 - Preschool Playgroups – \$1,500
 - Early Childhood -On the road - \$2,500
 - Copley Boxing Club Program – \$10,000
 - Sports Saturday Program – \$10,000
 - Parker's Foundation Grant Program – \$50,000
- 2022 Total Grant Requests Awarded – \$75,000

Prior years where the Foundation awarded funds in Golf for Kids Fundraiser Grants to Recreation include:

- 2021 - awarded \$65,000
- 2020 - awarded \$52,000
- 2019 – awarded \$52,000
- 2018 – awarded \$43,000
- 2017 – awarded \$42,000

Collaboration with other park districts on best practices. Because park districts are not in competition with one another, they are more willing than the private sector to share best practices. These best practices help to avoid unnecessary costs and deliver services more effectively and efficiently.

Reliance on Non-Tax Revenue. Unlike most local governments that rely on a wide range of sales, use, and income taxes, the Park District is not permitted to assess these types of taxes. Additionally, although the Park District is an economic engine for the community and generates much revenue for the state and our community in the form of hotel/motel, sales, and motor fuel taxes, our Park District does not receive any of these revenues. Also, unlike Illinois cities, villages, counties, and school districts that received billions of dollars in direct financial assistance from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), our Park District did not receive any such direct federal aid. Our Park District also does not receive state funding under the Local Government Distributive Fund (LGDF) or General State Aid (GSA) that these same cities, villages, counties, and school districts receive through the State budget.

Instead, the Park District provides all of the programs, facilities, and services to the community with a very modest amount of property taxes and from **non-tax sources** such as memberships, program registrations, and other user fees as well as private donations and grants.

VII. Transparency to the Community

The following information about the Park District may be obtained by citizens in the location listed.

Document	Location(s) Available
• Annual tax levy	Website or Cole Center
• Annual budget and appropriation ordinance	Website or Cole Center
• Agenda and minutes	Website or Cole Center
• Annual finance report (AFR)	Website or Cole Center
• Annual audit	Website or Cole Center
• Statement of Receipts and Disbursements	Website or Cole Center
• Conduct Ordinances	Website or Cole Center
• Comprehensive Master Plan	Website or Cole Center
• Strategic plan	Website or Cole Center
• Capital improvement plan	Website or Cole Center
• ADA transition plan	Website or Cole Center

The Park District offers residents many opportunities to provide feedback. These include:

- The board of commissioners meets each month. Residents may provide public comment at every meeting.
- The Park District's annual Budget and Appropriation Ordinance is available in tentative form at least 30 days prior to its adoption at an open meeting of the Park District board. Additionally, at least one public hearing is held prior to final action, and notice of the hearing is published in the newspaper at least one week prior to the hearing.

- The Park District's annual property tax levy is approved at an open meeting of the Park District board in accordance with the Open Meetings Act. The Park District follows all public notice and hearing requirements under the Truth in Taxation Law prior to the adoption of this annual tax levy. The Park District's annual levy is also subject to the limitations of the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law.
- Residents may contact or request information from the Park District by phone at 630-897-0516 or email at fvpd@fvpd.net.

VIII. District Awards and Recognition

The District's achievements have been recognized in numerous ways.

1981 - Gold Medal - NRPA
 1986 - Award for Developing an "Excellent and Unique Park System" - NRPA
 1991 - Outstanding Facility Award - Phillips Park Family Aquatic Center - IPRA
 1993 - Outstanding Facility Award - Eola Community Center - IPRA
 2001 - Park District of the Year - FVSRA
 2008 - Open Space Preservation Award - The Conservation Foundation
 2008 – 2014, 2018-2021 Distinguished Budget Presentation Award - GFOA
 2009 - National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management - NRPA
 2009 - Distinguished Agency Accreditation - IAPD and IPRA
 2011 - Best of the Best Award - Green Practices - IAPD
 2011 - Best of the Best Award (1st runner up-Intergovernmental Cooperation Award - IAPD
 2011 - Sustainable Development Award - The Conservation Foundation
 2015 - Gold Medal Award Finalist - NRPA
 2015 - Distinguished Agency Accreditation - IAPD and IPRA
 2016 - Member Agency Award - FVSRA
 2017-219 - Award for Outstanding Achievement in Popular Annual Financial Reporting - GFOA
 2018 - Park District of the Year Award - USSSA
 2019 - Best of the Best Award - Arts in the Park - IAPD
 2019 - Delia Nila Basile Award - Aurora Hispanic Heritage Advisory Board
 2019 - Partnership Award - Comaneros en Salud (Partners in Health)
 2019 - Destinations and Venues to Watch 2020 - Illinois Women's Lacrosse Coaches Association
 2020 - June Foulser Habitat Award - DuPage Monarch Project
 2020 - Best of the Best Award - Green Practices - IAPD
 2020 - Readers Choice Award - Sports Events Magazine
 2020 - Nation's Best Soccer Facilities Award - Connect Sports
 2021 – 2026 Distinguished Agency Accreditation - IAPD and IPRA
 2021 - Outstanding Program and Special Events Award (eCARE) - IPRA
 2022 - Pat Miller Community Engagement Award - DuPage Monarch Project
 2022 - Outstanding Facility (Vaughan Tennis Center) - United States Tennis Association

Commissioner Training

- Chuck Anderson – IAPD/IPRA Conference 2019
- Maryanne Cummings – IAPD/IPRA Conference 2019, 2023
- Alan Broholm – IAPD/IPRA Conference 2020, 2023
- Marea Clement – IAPD/IPRA Conference 2023

IX. Benefits and Services

The Park District serves the entire community from the youngest child to the oldest adult and all ages in between. It does so in a variety of ways.

1. Facilities

The Park District offered the following facilities to the community last year:

- Blackberry Farm
- Copley Boxing and Training Center
- Orchard Valley Golf Course
- Phillips Park Aquatics Center
- Red Oak Nature Center
- Stuarts Sports Complex
- Vaughan Athletic Center
- Cole Center Administration Center
- Eola Community Center
- Orchards Restaurant
- Prisco Community Center
- Splash Country Water Park
- The Wilds at Red Oak

Parks

- ALLEN PARK
- AMBERWOOD PARK
- ARROW WOOD PARK
- ASHTON POINTE PARK
- AUSTIN MEMORIAL PARK
- BARNES ROAD GARDEN PLOTS (L)
- BARRINGTON PARK
- BLACKBERRY CROSSING
- BLACKBERRY TRAILS
- BLUFF STREET PARK
- BRIARWOOD PARK
- BUTTERFIELD PARK
- CANTERBURY PARK
- CHERRY HILL PARK
- CHUCK E HOSCHEIT PARK
- CLEARWOOD PARK
- COOL ACRES PARK
- AMBER FIELDS PARK
- ANDOVER PARK
- ASBURY PARK
- AURORA PRAIRE
- BALMOREA PARK
- BARRINGTON LAKE
- BIRMINGHAM PARK
- BLACKBERRY CROSSING WEST
- BLACKHAWK PARK
- BRECKENRIDGE PARK
- BROOKLYN PARK
- CAMBRIDGE CHASE PARK
- CENTER STREET PARK
- CHESHIRE LAKE PARK
- CHURCH ROAD PARK
- CONCORD PARK
- COPLEY 1 PARK

-COPLEY 2 PARK
 -CRESCENT PARK
 -DEERPATH
 -EDINBURGH PARK
 -ERICKSON MINI PARK
 -FALKO'S PARK
 -FIELDSTONE PARK
 -FOX HILL
 -FOX RIVER TRAIL WEST
 -FRONTENAC PARK
 -GAS PIPELINE SOUTH
 -GINGER WOODS PARK
 -GOLFVIEW PARK
 -GRAMMERCY SQUARE
 -GREGORY ISLAND
 -HANKES ROAD PARK
 -HARBOR SPRINGS TRAIL
 -HIGHLANDS PARK
 -HOMETOWN PARK
 -HUPP PARK
 -ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH
 -INDIAN TRAIL MINI PARK
 -JERICO LAKE PARK
 -LAKEWOOD PARK
 -LINCOLN CROSSING
 -LINDENS PARK
 -MCCULLOUGH PARK
 -MIDDLEBERRY EAST
 -MOECHERVILLE PARK
 -MOOSE LAKE PARK
 -NEW HAVEN
 -NORTH AURORA ISLAND
 -OAKHURST GARDEN PLOTS
 -OAKHURST WETLANDS
 -PALACE STREET PARK
 -PIGEON HILL PARK
 -PINE KNOLL PARK
 -RANDALL HIGHLANDS PARK
 -REMINGTON LANDING
 -RIDGE PARK
 -ROB ROY PARK
 -RURAL STREET PARK
 -SCHWICKERT PARK
 -SIMMONS PARK
 -SMITH PARK
 -SOUTH ISLAND PARK
 -COWHERD PARK
 -CUMBERLAND PARK
 -MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. PARK
 -EOLA COMMUNITY PARK
 -FAIRFIELD WAY
 -FEARN PARK
 -FOUR POINTES PARK
 -FOX RIVER TRAIL EAST
 -FOXCROFT LAKE PARK
 -GAS PIPELINE NORTH
 -GEORGETOWN PARK
 -GOLDEN OAKS PARK
 -GOODWIN PARK
 -GREENE FIELD PARK
 -HALL PARK
 -HARBOR SPRINGS PARK
 -HARMONY POINTE
 -HOMESTEAD PARK
 -HUNTINGTON CHASE
 -HURDS ISLAND PARK
 -INDIAN CREEK PARK
 -JAYCEE PARK
 -KRUG PARK
 -LEBANON PARK
 -LINCOLN PARK
 -MCCARTY PARK
 -MEADOW LAKE PARK
 -MIDDLEBURY WEST
 -MONTGOMERY PARK
 -NATURES MEADOWS
 -NORTH AURORA ISLAND
 -NORTH RIVER STREET PARK
 -OAKHURST LINEAR PARK
 -O'DONNELL PARK
 -PALMER PARK
 -PINE CREEK PARK
 -PROPERNICK PARK
 -RANDALL PARK
 -RICHARD STREET PARK
 -RIOS
 -ROLLINS PARK
 -SCHNEIDER PARK
 -SHERWOOD GLEN PARK
 -SLATTERY PARK
 -SOUTH BROADWAY PARK
 -SOUTH RIVER STREET PARK

- SOUTH SPRING LAKE PARK
- SPINNAKER LAKE
- STECK PARK
- STILL PARK
- STONEGATE PARK
- TANNER TRAILS PARK
- TURNSTONE LAKE PARK
- VERONA RIDGE
- VIRGIL GILMAN TRAIL
- WAUBONSIE CREEK TRAIL
- WESTON AVENUE PARK
- WETLANDS PARK
- WILBERT WALTERS PARK
- WINGFOOT PARK

- SPERRY/NORTH AURORA
- SPRING LAKE PARK
- STEVENS PARK
- STONEBRIDGE PARK
- SUTTON LAKE PARK
- TITSWORTH PARK
- UNION-FLAGG PARK
- VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK
- WASHINGTON PARK
- WAUBONSIE LAKE PARK
- WESTWOOD PARK
- WHEATLAND PARK
- WILLOW LAKE PARK
- ZAUSA PARK

2. Programs

The Park District offered the following programs last year. Registration numbers are also provided.

Listed below are the variety of Program Categories Fox Valley Park District Programs are offered in. Programs offered are based on age and are offered in a series of progressive levels to progress through, from beginner up to the competitive level.

- Special Events – for the family & for adults
- Camp Programs – Summer Camps, Spring & Winter Break Camps offered for many program types (sports, gymnastics, nature, steam etc.)
- Nature Programs – Cave Hikes, Scavenger Hunts, Animal Encounters, Camps
- Fox Fitness – Group Exercise, Specialty Fitness and Personal Training
- Boxing – Training, Boot camps, After school programs
- Adult Aquatics Fitness – Pilates, Deep Water Conditioning, Aqua Zumba
- Parker's Swim School – Levels 1 – 5 (Youth, Teen & Adult)
- Riptides Swim Team – Short and Long Course
- MVP Sports – Flag Football, Sports Mania, Floor Hockey, T-Ball, Baseball, Volleyball, Badminton, Basketball, Basketball Development Academy, Soccer and Youth Sports Performance Training
- Youth Athletics & Leagues – Nerf Attack, Dodgeball, Kickball, Seasonal Youth Basketball & Soccer Leagues, Fencing, Ice Skating, Strength & Conditioning Athletic Performance, Fox Valley Flash Jr Track Club.
- Adult Athletics & Leagues – Pickleball Clinics, Pickleball Mixers and Leagues, Adult Co-Ed Volleyball Leagues, Indoor Double Volleyball Workouts
- Fox Valley Golf Academy – Youth and Teens programs and workshops
- Tennis Lessons – Stage 1 & 2, Green Stage, Match Play Prep, Youth Beginner, High School, Tournament Training, High Performance, Adult Beginner-Intermediate-Advanced

- Marital Arts – Kung Fu for Kids, Karate Club, Seisan Ryu Karate
- Cheer – Mini Cheer, Cheerleading, Junior Cheer, Storm Competitive Cheer
- Gymnastics & Tumbling – Open Gymnastics, Special Events, Holiday Camps, Babies, Preschool, Kindernastics, Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced, Middle School Gymnastics, Pre-Team, Fox Valley Gymnastics Competitive Program
- Fox Valley Dance Academy – All levels Ballet, Jazz, Tap, Hip Hop, Lyrical, Parent Tot, Dance Showcases, Youth Dance Recital, A-Factor Competitive Dance Team, Irish Dance, Adult Ballet, Adult Tap, R & B Soul Line Dance, Technique classes
- Theatre – Play Theatre, Preteen Improve, Act It Out, Kid Stage Musicals, Fox Valley Flair: Show Choir, Adult Dinner Theatre, Winter Stage Performance & Summer Stage Performance
- Visual Arts: Paint & Pallet, Drawing, Wine & Canvas, Parent & Child Class, Pet Portraits
- General Interests: Lego Robotics, Learn to Code, Intro to Electrical Engineering with Mirco:Bit, Chess Scholars, Spanish classes, Magic, Cooking classes, Sing-alongs, Private Guitar, Bass or Ukulele Lessons
- Trips: Ravina, Tours, Garden, Ranch's, Winery Tours, Theatre, Craft Shows, Wine Tasting & Apple Orchards, Galena, Museums, Holiday Lights, Starved Rock, Casino Trips (changes seasonally)
- Creative & Nature Play Preschool – Preschool for 2's, 3's, 4's, Pre-K, Dual Language, Fall into Literacy Lab, Math Labs, Steam programs, Reading & Literacy Programs, Lunch Pals and Playtime
- Early Childhood: Level 1 & Level 2 Series classes
- Active Adults: Bunco Dice, Afternoon Team, Craft Fair, Cards DIY, Cooking, The Legacy Lounge, Friendly Center Luncheons, Veterans Luncheon

Registration for general program categories is listed below:

- Creative & Nature Play Preschool – 63 Programs, 730 Participants, 5 facilities
- Fox Fitness Group Exercise – 46,204 participants, 3 facilities
- Specialty Fitness Classes - 760 Participants
- Boxing Programs – 385 Participants
- Performing Arts Productions – 11 Productions, 345 participants, 6,229 tickets sold
- Summer Dance Concert – 140 dancers / The Nutcracker – 52 cast members
- Steppin' Out Dance Studio – 151 classes, 1,175 Participants, 3 facilities
- Active Adult Programs (Program, Trips, Shows, Friendly Center) – 160 Programs, 2,227 participants.
- MVP Sports Programs (Prisco) – 109 programs, 1,101 participants
- MVP Sports, Leagues & Martial Arts (Eola) – 575 Programs, 7,041 participants
- Nature Programs & Camps – 292 programs, 6,341 participants
- Blackberry Farm Summer Camps & General Programs – 1,245 participants
- Intergenerational Programming – 13 programs / 3,343 participants
- Gymnastics, Cheer & Tumbling – 654 Programs, 4,634 participants
- General Recreation programs & Summer Camp (Eola) – 271 programs, 2,493 participants
- Youth & Adult Tennis programs & Leagues – 458 programs, 3,015 participants
- BACC Pack, Camps & Special Events (Vaughan) – 15 Programs, 1,858 participants

- MVP Sports, Leagues and Programs (Vaughan) 54 Contracted Programs, 944 Participants and 172 In-house programs, 2,063 participants
- Parker's Swim Lessons – 925 programs, 5,881 participants
- Outreach Programs – 25 programs, 3,435 programs

Rental & Event Facilities & Reservable Shelters

- Memberships to our Fox Fitness Centers – 8,048 Members – 389,491 Member Scans, 4 facilities
- Fox Fitness Personal Training - 4,483 PT Sessions
- Memberships to our two Outdoor Aquatic Facilities – Splash Country Water Park and Phillips Park Family Aquatic Center – 2,300 Members, 55,963 in attendance
- Blackberry Farm Memberships – 3,790 Members, 14,534 membership scans
- Blackberry Farm – 72,320 Daily guests
- Pumpkin Weekends at Blackberry Farm – 6,619 Tickets sold
- Holiday Express at Blackberry Farm – 12,117 Tickets sold
- Blackberry Farm giftshop sales - \$79,817 / Vending - \$67,836
- Blackberry Farm Rentals and Events – 411 Rentals with 21,378 guests
- Blackberry Farm Special Events – 21 Events with 8,914 participants
- The Barn at Blackberry Farm – 10 rentals, 28 weddings with 8,002 guests
- Red Oak Nature Center – 12,256 Walk-in Guests

3. Additional Services

The Park District provided the following additional services to the community.

- Illinois Department of Natural Resources Training Site at Red Oak Nature Center
- Batavia Park District Memorandum of Understanding to promote learning opportunities in natural and cultural resources provided by Fox Valley Park District
- Kane County Forest Preserve, St Charles Park District program collaboration for Rusty Rodeo
- National Great Rivers Research and Education Center Riverwatch programming at Red Oak Nature Center
- School District 129 Bus services for BACC PACK at Vaughan Athletic Center
- School District 129 After school programming at Herget, Freeman, Greenman, Hill, McCleery
- School District 129 21st century community learning centers
- School District 204 Peace of mind programming for students
- City of Aurora Sports Saturday programming
- City of Aurora agreement for program services
- Green-e Energy Certified Renewable Wind Energy 100% replacement

4. Other Benefits

While the Park District is a special purpose district, its impact to the community is multi-faceted and far reaching. For example, the Park District's parks, recreational programming, and other opportunities improve the community's overall physical and mental health and wellness, thereby reducing health care costs. Before and after school and summer programs offer safe, convenient, and affordable childcare options for working families during critical times when school is not in session. These opportunities also help reduce juvenile crime. The Park District's open space and trees help improve air and water quality and mitigate flooding.

The Fox Valley Park District offers environmental education programs for grades K-8 that follow NGSS standards. Naturalists at Red Oak Nature Center offer outdoor school programs for Pre-K to 8th-grade classrooms in fall, winter, and spring. The programs encourage students to explore and investigate ecology, animals, habitats, biology, orienteering and more through hands-on experiences. All programs outlined in the school programs booklet align with CORE and Next Generation Science Standards. They also can be customized to fit specific curricula.

Blackberry Farm covers topics such as Pioneer Exploration for Grades 1 to 2 where students will step into the life of a child from the 1800s. Students will receive a lesson in our One-room Schoolhouse, try their hand at daily chores at the Pioneer Cabin, visit with the weaver for a hands-on experience working with wool and learn about animals at the Discovery Barn. They also have Destination 1800s for (Grades 3 to 5) where student get hands-on interactive activities, to step back in time to learn why pioneers chose to move to Illinois and how they survived. Exploring the Pioneer Cabin, Blacksmith Shop, Print Shop and Weaver's Cabin. Activities meet state requirements through the exploration of primary sources and participation in STEM-focused activities. Illinois State Standards.

Teach Kids to Swim - Many children in our community don't have access to learning how to swim. Not only is swimming a healthy and fun recreation that can provide a lifetime of fulfillment, but it's also a vital safety skill. Research shows that if a child doesn't learn to swim by 3rd grade, chances are they never will. For this reason, we developed a 1-week program for Wayside Cross Urban Youth Ministry and other scholarship opportunities for 2nd graders in the District. Thanks to partnerships with the Fox Valley Park Foundation, Wayside Cross and Rotary Club of Aurora, hundreds of underserved children have received five one-hour lessons at no cost. The lessons are taught by the District's certified aquatics instructors at our indoor and outdoor waterparks.

Free Sports Saturdays - provides a supervised environment for children to interact and participate in activities that include sports, crafts, and general fitness. We partnered with six schools throughout Aurora and North Aurora to offer this no-cost, 12-week program for resident families with children in grades 1 through 5. The format is similar to an open gym concept, though FVPD instructors are on hand to teach and assist, as children strengthen their athletic skills. Thanks to our generous donors, Sports Saturdays provide an opportunity to get out of the house and do what they love most – play!

The Copley Boxing Club Program - For a \$5 fee for a 12-week session, we provide access to an after-school boxing club program that promotes fitness and provides a safe environment and positive experience for youth ages 8 and up. Fox Valley Park District's Copley Boxing and Training Center provides an updated Fox Fitness facility where students can train with USA Boxing Certified coaches and have access to the gym year-round. Young boxers learn effective training and conditioning techniques involving jump rope, exercise machines, heavy bags, and speed bags. The trainers have a positive influence on the young boxers teaching them discipline, respect, health, and wellness and helping point them in the direction of success.

Free Summer Camps for Children in Shelters - We opened our popular, 10-week Summer Blast Camp at Prisco Community Center to children who live at Hesed House and Mutual Ground. A 5-week session for residents typically costs \$552, but all fees were waived for kids in shelters, thanks to a generous donor. The goal of the camp is to produce a "normal" day for children who endure a difficult home life – or have no home at all. Their personal situation is protected, for only camp counselors are aware of their varying backgrounds. At camp, the kids engage in sports, games, arts and crafts, along with weekly special event days and field trips

X.Recommendations for Increased Accountability and Efficiency

1. Intergovernmental Fees and Charges

One opportunity for efficiency would be the elimination of fees and charges assessed by other units of government. Other units of local government charge the Park District even though the Park District's taxpayers are also taxpayers of these other units of local government. Such fees and charges, and the bureaucracy that accompanies them, inhibit the park district's ability to deliver programs, facilities, and services at the least possible cost.

Other units of local government should recognize that intergovernmental fees often lead to inefficiency in the expenditure of taxpayer dollars through extra bureaucracy and administrative costs. In many cases, the unit of government assessing the fee ultimately benefits from the project or event, meaning it can recoup its costs through the extra sales tax or other revenue that will be generated. Where such fees are absolutely

necessary, general-purpose units of government should offset the fee by crediting the park district for all benefits they will receive from a project, event, or property. For example, open space that is protected and maintained by the Park District helps mitigate stormwater management costs, so assessing stormwater management fees on the Park District not only leads to inefficiency, but it is also shortsighted.

Governmental units should be discouraged or prohibited from charging more than their out-of-pocket costs associated with the activities covered by a fee that is assessed to another unit of local government with the same taxpayers. Put another way, one unit of local government should not profit by taxing another. Eliminating local permit fees is a way to reduce administrative costs without impacting overall public revenue. Local government best serves the people when it cooperates and works together. Some communities recognize this and do not charge fees to other units. All communities should be encouraged to follow that model to receive the best results for local taxpayers and to promote governmental efficiency.

2. Inefficiency of Other Governments

The Park District can be also negatively impacted by the inefficiency of the state and other units of local government.

3. Unfunded Mandates

Unfunded state mandates are another cost driver. While the Park District recognizes that there are benefits to some of these mandates, modifications could help alleviate some of the burden to the park district.

- a) Non-resident FOIA Requests.** Last year, the park district spent \$2,500 in staff time and legal fees to fulfill FOIA requests. Often the individuals/businesses submitting the FOIA requests are from outside of the park district boundaries, and they appear to be serving a specific agenda, rather than assuring better local government.

Under current law, resident taxpayers end up footing the bill for these non-resident or commercial requests. In order to help alleviate the burden for these non-resident requests the law could be amended to: (1) add a requirement that non-residents identify/explain the purpose of the request for information; (2) add a time limit on how far back a non-resident can request information; (3) staff time and costs could be included in the amount that is reimbursable for non-resident and commercial requests; (4) move back the deadline for non-resident requests 10 business days so that the park district does not have to delay services to its residents in order to comply with a non-resident request.

Sunshine laws are supposed to protect taxpayers by allowing them to shed light on any issue that is not exempt from FOIA. However, local government can be burdened by having to drop everything to rearrange priorities to meet FOIA deadlines, particularly if it has limited resources. Since local residents ultimately

bear the expense of complying with FOIA, treating resident and non-resident requests differently would be justified.

b) Criminal Background Checks. All park districts are statutorily required to conduct criminal background checks on all employees pursuant to Section 8-23 of the Park District Code. The background checks must be done through the Illinois State Police (ISP). The Park District does not recommend eliminating this mandate because it is necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of children and other park district patrons. However, the State should explore ways in which it could improve the current system and make it less costly for park districts to comply with the law.

The mandate also raises the fundamental question as to why one layer of government is forced to charge its taxpayers to comply with a State mandate when the State made the determination to impose the mandate. Put another way, if the State has determined that criminal background checks are necessary for public safety, the State should assist with compliance.

The Park District recommends studying whether there can be a more efficient background check process implemented through the ISP to reduce the time and expense it takes for background checks. Another suggestion is for ISP to waive the fee for checks on minors or waive all fees for name checks. If there is a "hit" from a name check, the fee could be charged for the more costly fingerprint check. Since it is a state mandate, perhaps the fee structure for park districts should also be reviewed to determine whether the fee being charged exceeds the actual cost of doing the check and, if so, perhaps the ISP could consider reducing its cost to local governments.

c) Prevailing Wage. One way to reduce burden on local government staff is to limit the prevailing wage requirement to larger capital contracts. This would free up tracking of the paperwork on small repairs and projects. One reason for creating a threshold requirement is the cost of the administrative burden relative to the cost of the actual project. For example, eliminating prevailing wage on smaller projects, e.g., those less than \$50,000, will result in more local bids and decrease the overall cost for these smaller public works projects.

d) Newspaper Publication. The newspaper is no longer the most effective way to provide notice. Websites are cheaper and reach more people. Permitting the park district to post the information on its website in lieu of newspaper publications would reduce costs.

Dated: 10/23/2023

Signed: 