

EFFICIENCY REPORT FOR THE OSWEGOLAND PARK DISTRICT

Creating Opportunities for a Healthy Community!



**APPROVED BY THE OSWEGOLAND PARK DISTRICT'S
DECENNIAL COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY
ON AUGUST 15, 2024**

I. Purpose

The Oswegoland Park District (“Park District”) formed its Committee on Local Government Efficiency on May 23, 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:

Member	Title
Dave Behrens	Board President/Committee Chairperson
Bob Ijams	Board Vice-President/Board Commissioner
Sandy Tartol	Board Commissioner
Dannielle Wilson	Board Commissioner
Holly Wiggins	Board Commissioner
Craig Weber	Resident Member
Ken Holmstrom	Resident Member
Thomas K. Betsinger	Executive Director
Cindy Benson	Board Secretary/Executive Assistant
Tina Ward	Board Treasurer/Director of Finance

III. Committee Meetings

The Committee met as follows:

Meeting Date	Meeting Time	Meeting Place
Thursday, March 21, 2024	5:30 pm	Boulder Point 0 Boulder Hill Pass, Montgomery, IL
Thursday, July 18, 2024	5:30 pm	Boulder Point 0 Boulder Hill Pass, Montgomery, IL
Thursday, August 15, 2024	5:30 pm	Boulder Point 0 Boulder Hill Pass, Montgomery, IL

Minutes of these meetings are available on the Park District’s website at <https://www.oswegolandparkdistrict.org/> or upon request at the Park District’s administrative office.

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

The Oswegoland Park District was established by a referendum initiated and approved by the voters of the Park District in 1950. All Illinois park districts, including the Oswegoland Park District, are governed by the Park District Code, 70 ILCS 1205/1 *et seq.*



The Oswegoland Park District's purpose, vision, core values and strategic goals identify focused efforts on fiscal responsibility in an environmentally sustainable manner in partnership with the community and other community service providers avoiding duplication of efforts. In addition, the Oswegoland Park District takes its role as a steward of its parks, facilities, and open spaces seriously. Changes and improvements made by the Park District are driven by the residents and based on what will best serve the residents of the Oswegoland Park District community while still allowing the Park District to maintain and care for what has already been acquired.

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 five 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 with larger, multi-purpose governments with many 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 extremely 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 an average 4.5% of the local tax bill.

- **Transparency**

As a local government agency, established statutes and regulations guide the Park District to serve its residents with openness and strong communication by disclosing information in an easily accessible manner proving its dedication to transparency, accountability, and efficiency.

The Park District prides itself on its transparency and is evidenced by the importance its Board members place on ensuring public trust by taking steps to apply transparency to all its actions, but specifically giving priority to financial-related documents by posting them to its website. In addition, Park District staff gives careful consideration to providing the best services, programs, and facilities at the lowest possible cost to taxpayers. Resident review of financial-related documents available on the Park District’s website is welcomed. Such documents include:

- Adopted Budget Summary Report
- Adopted Budget Detail Report
- Annual Comprehensive Financial Report
- Popular Annual Financial Report
- Vendor Information Report
- Information on IMRF Employer Cost and Participation

Not only can financial documents be found under the Transparency Tab on the Park District’s website, but because the Park Board and staff work diligently to keep residents informed, other general information is also publicly available.

Visitors can also find Board meeting minutes and agendas on the website.

<https://www.oswegolandparkdistrict.org/>



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:

- **Ordinances Directing Board Policies, Procedures and Fiscal Responsibility**

- Park Ordinances
- Board Policy Manual
- Purchasing Policy
- Vehicle Use Policy Agreement
- Technology Policy
- Anti-Harassment Policy
- Photo/Video Authorization Policy
- Code of Conduct Policy
- Ethics Ordinance Policy

- **Employee Policies & Manuals**

- Administrative Policy Manual
- Employee Personnel Policy Manual
- Department-Specific Manuals
- Volunteer Manual
- Authorized Purchaser Agreement
- Wellness Program
- Employee Assistance Program

- **Safety and Risk Management Policies**

- Mandated Reporting Policy & Procedure
- Employee Safety Manual
- Emergency Operations Plan Manual
- Communicable Disease/Blood Borne Pathogen Required Training
- Allergy Policy and Procedures

- **Master Plans/Strategic Plan**

- Comprehensive Master Plan
- Park Master Plans
- Strategic Plan
- Community Investment Program Plan

- **Public Bids**

- Prevailing Wage Notice and Rates
- Public Bids & Documents and Public Bid Results

- **Freedom of Information (FOIA)**

- Park District Municipal Directory



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.

Below is a comprehensive list of the current partnerships, agreements, and other relationships that assist the Park District’s vision of creating opportunities for a healthy community by delivering the best possible services at the least possible cost to the community. Between 2014 and 2023, the Oswegoland Park District has been awarded \$3.3 million in grant funds (*see below information for more detail on these agreements/partnerships*).

1. Membership in Fox Valley Special Recreation Association (FVSRA)

The Oswegoland Park District is committed to inclusion and providing equal public recreation opportunities in the most integrated setting to individuals with disabilities, as defined under applicable law. Accordingly, the Park District does not discriminate against eligible individuals with disabilities regarding participation in public recreation opportunities. The Oswegoland Park District is committed to complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Illinois Human Rights Act (IHRA), and all other applicable local, state and federal laws in providing reasonable accommodation and shall review requests for accommodation on a case-by-case basis.

To meet this objective, the Oswegoland Park District is one of seven local governments that are part of the Fox Valley Special Recreation Association (“FVSRA”). 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 can effectively and efficiently deliver more successful program opportunities to community members with special needs. Furthermore, by participating in the FVSRA, the Oswegoland Park District networks with six other local governments (Batavia Park District, Fox Valley Park District, Geneva Park District, St. Charles Park District, Sugar Grove Park District, and South Elgin Parks & Recreation Department) to provide many more program opportunities for our community members who have special needs and offers a choice between participating in FVSRA’s programs or in programs that are provided by the Park District through inclusion services.



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

- Boulder Point
- Fox Bend Golf Course
- South Point Center
- Wormley Heritage Park
- Civic Center Aquatic Park



FVSRA also provides support for participants with special needs who choose to register for the Park District programs or inclusive programming. FVSRA collects information on the registered participant and determines what support is 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, FVSRA 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 FVSRA.

In 2022, FVSRA successfully served 850 Oswegoland residents in 500 programs. FVSRA also supported 34 participants in inclusive programs provided by the Park District.

The Park District is very proud of the ongoing collaboration with FVSRA. By working cooperatively with other local governments, not only is the district better able to collectively serve all citizens within our communities, including persons with disabilities, but through collaboration and resource sharing, it can be done in the most efficient and effective manner possible.

2. Other Oswegoland Park District Intergovernmental Agreements with other park districts, forest preserve districts, conservation districts, or municipal recreation agencies:

- In 2014-2019, an agreement for shared use of Information Technology Services with Woodridge Park District (50% Woodridge Park District/50% Oswegoland Park District)

3. Oswegoland Park District Intergovernmental Agreements with other units of local government:

- Oswego School District 308 regarding the shared use of facilities and joint programs
- Village of Plainfield regarding the regulation & enforcement of Park District Ordinances
- Kendall County regarding the regulation & enforcement of Park District Ordinances
- Village of Oswego, Kendall County, Will County, Oswego Township, Oswego Library District, Oswego Fire Protection District, and Oswego School District 308 for the sharing of services, staff, and equipment
- Kendall County and Village of Oswego relating to the installation of traffic signals at Plainfield Road and Woolley Road
- Kendall County for geographic information systems (GIS) services
- Kendall County for Kendall County Transportation Alternatives Program (“KC-TAP”) Funding Grant for the installation of a crosswalk along the Fox River Trail
- Kendall County relating to the construction and maintenance of multi-use paths along Collins Road and Grove Road in the Village of Oswego
- Village of Oswego regarding Law Enforcement Officers
- Kendall County for Kendall County Transportation Alternatives Program (“KC-TAP”) Funding Grant for the installation of ADA and safety upgrades along the Grove Road Trail (2020)
- Oswego School District 308 for the purpose of adjusting the property line at South Point Park
- Oswego School District 308 for the replacement and maintenance of playgrounds at school/park sites
- Oswego School District 308 relating to the transfer of property



4. Oswegoland Park District Intergovernmental Agreements with the State of Illinois

- Participation in State of Illinois Federal Surplus Property Program

5. Oswegoland Park District Partnerships or agreements with athletic or similar affiliate organizations that operate sports or other leagues

- Chicago Rush Soccer Club
- Oswego Baseball and Softball Association
- Oswego Youth Tackle Football
- Pop Warner Youth Football League
- Lacrosse America
- Bolingbrook Premier Cricket
- Mid America Cricket
- One Nation Slow Pitch



6. Oswegoland Park District Partnerships or other interrelationships with non-profits:

- Oswego Senior Center
- Oswegoland Heritage Association
- Kid's Around the World (Playground Removals)
- Morton Arboretum (Tree Inventory)
- Aurora University (Little White School Museum Exhibits)
- Illinois Extension/Conservation Foundation (Tree Plantings)
- Pantry Garden Volunteers (Donations for Kendall County Community Food Pantry)



7. Oswegoland Park District Partnerships with for profit organizations:

- Oak + Bean
- Progressive Business Solutions for electric and natural gas supply procurement
- Christina's Grill and Gatherings

8. Informal cooperation with other units of local government which save taxpayer dollars by eliminating redundancy:

- Operations and Maintenance Plan for the Waubonsie Creek Open Space Corridor, Farmington Lakes, Oswego between the Park District and the Village of Oswego
- Implementation of the lower Fox River Land Conservation Project Plan with the Conservation Foundation relating to the lower Fox River basin in Kendall County
- Commitment, along with the Villages of Oswego and Plainfield, to prohibiting use of phosphorous based fertilizers
- Kendall County Multi-Jurisdictional Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan

VI. Other Examples of Efficient Operations

Use of volunteers. One way the Park District reduces the burden on taxpayers is through volunteers. In 2023, 934 individuals volunteered for an estimated 16,224 hours of service to the Park District.

Youth employment. The Park District is a major employer of youth (ages 14-18) in the community. In 2023, the Park District employed 198 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. 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:

- Sourcewell (previously NJPA – National Joint Purchasing Alliance)
- BuyBoard (Purchasing Cooperative)
- Omnia Partners (Group Purchasing)
- Goodbuy (Cooperative Purchasing Program)
- HGACBuy (Cooperative Purchasing Program)

Items purchased through these cooperatives include the following:

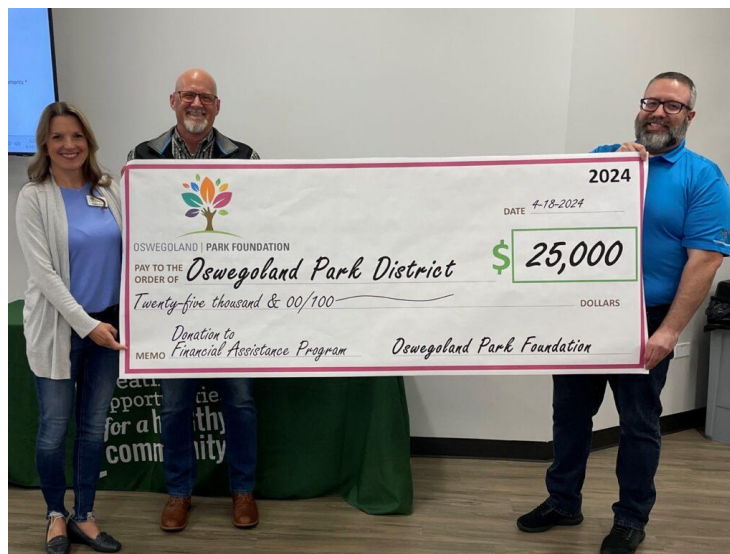
- Vehicles, mowing and maintenance equipment
- Park shelters, shade structures, benches
- Playground equipment and surfacing

Efficient operational best practices through stewardship of resources. The Park District continues to make design and purchasing decisions that consider environmentally friendly alternatives with assessment of the benefits and value of return on these investments.

Some examples of these project implementation include:

- Rain garden at Winrock
- LED lighting conversions at various facilities
- Use of zero fungicides and zero synthetic fertilizers

Oswegoland Park Foundation. The Oswegoland Park Foundation is a 501(c)(3) fundraising organization dedicated to assisting the Oswegoland Park District in providing opportunities for a healthy community. Since 2020, the Park Foundation has donated \$75,000 to the Park District’s Financial Assistance Program. The Foundation receives dollars through private donations, its Sponsorship/Beautification Program, and fundraising events. All dollars received help alleviate the burden on taxpayers.



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, the 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. The 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(s) listed. Information available on the District’s website can be found at <https://www.oswegolandparkdistrict.org/>.

Document	Location(s) Available (website, administrative offices, county clerk, state website, etc.)
Adopted Budget Report	Website/ Administrative Office
Budget & Appropriations Ordinance	Website/ Administrative Office
Annual Comprehensive Financial Report	Website/ Administrative Office
Popular Annual Financial Report	Website/ Administrative Office
Annual Tax Levy	Website/ Administrative Office
Vendor Information Report	Website/ Administrative Office
IMRF Employee Cost & Participation Info	Website/IMRF Website/ Administrative Office
Annual Park Board Meeting Schedule	Website/Administrative Office/ All Park District Facilities
Park Board Agendas and Minutes	Website/ Administrative Office

Strategic Plan	Website/ Administrative Office
Community Investment Program Plan	Website/ Administrative Office
Park Master Plans	Website/ Administrative Office
Comprehensive Master Plan	Website/ Administrative Office
Municipal Directory	Website/ Administrative Office
Freedom of Information Act Requests	Website/ Administrative Office
Current Bids and Requests for Proposals (RFPs) and Results	Website/ Administrative Office
Bonds	County Clerk
Park Ordinances	Website/ Administrative Office
Photo/Video Authorization	Website/ Administrative Office
Code of Conduct	Website/ Administrative Office
Mandated Reporting Policy & Procedure	Website/ Administrative Office
ADA Transition Plan	Website/ Administrative Office

The Park District offers residents many opportunities to provide feedback.

These opportunities include, but are not limited to:

- The Park Board of Commissioners typically meets on the third Thursday of each month. Residents may provide public comment at every meeting. All public meetings are posted on the Park District website.
- 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 630.554.1010 or email at info@oswegolandpd.org. A Staff Directory, with phone numbers and email addresses, is available on the Park District’s website, as well as email addresses for Board members. All residents are welcome to contact through these means.

- The Park District provides the public with the right to access its documents and records per the Illinois Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Persons are able to submit requests in writing, and the Park District’s website includes a FOIA section, providing instruction on how to make such requests along with a link to the Illinois Attorney General’s website where they can learn more about this state statute.

Committees and Boards that have community representation include:

- Oswegoland Park District Park Board of Commissioners
- Oswegoland Park Foundation
- Oswegoland Park District Decennial Committee on Local Government Efficiency
- Fox Valley Special Recreation Association
- Oswegoland Heritage Association
- Oswego Chamber of Commerce
- Village of Oswego Cultural Arts Commission
- Rotary Club of Oswego
- Oswego Junior Women’s Club

It is imperative that the Park District plans for the future, and over the years, challenging economic conditions increased the importance in involving resident input on how tax dollars are allocated. The Park District believes that an evaluation of service must be completed by an independent third party to ensure impartial results and regularly seek resident input through community-wide surveys and studies.

The Park District also conducts internal surveys of its participants to gather interest of program expansion and/or input on how to improve its offerings or facilities.

The Park District has received tremendous support from the community it services, and it is believed this is a direct result of communicating and involving residents in its planning.

Community surveys seeking public feedback include:

- 2018 Community Survey
- 2019 Gobbler Hobbler Survey
- 2019 Holiday Show Survey
- 2019 Preschool Survey
- 2020 Kid’s Connection Survey
- 2021 Dance Recital Survey
- 2021-2022 Kid’s Connection Survey
- 2022 Camp Connection Survey
- 2022 Chesterfield Skate Park Neighborhood Input
- 2022 Gymnastics Survey
- 2022-2023 Kid’s Connection Survey
- 2023 Preschool & Junior Kid’s Connection Survey
- 2023 Floor Hockey League Survey
- 2023 Volleyball League Survey
- 2023 Winter Basketball League Survey
- 2023 Fitness Survey

- 2023 Dance Recital Survey
- 2023 Limelight Theatre Show Surveys
- 2023 Swim Team Survey
- 2023 Flag Football League Survey
- 2023 Adult Softball League Survey
- 2023 Swim Lesson Survey
- 2023 Soccer Survey
- 2023 Gobbler Hobbler Survey
- 2023 Gymnastics Survey
- 2023 Community Survey
- 2024 Preschool & Junior Kid’s Connection Survey



In addition to resident surveys, the Park District enables the community to provide public input at its monthly Park Board meetings and public hearings related to future planning. Public hearings or meetings where community input was obtained over the past 5 years include:

- Annual Budget & Appropriation Public Hearings
- Annual Public Truth in Taxation Hearings
- Bond Issuance Notification Act (BINA) Hearing on October 19, 2023
- Village of Oswego Planning & Zoning Commission Public Hearing on March 7, 2023 regarding the proposed Administration & Operations Center facility. Neighbors within a 250’ radius of this proposed facility’s location were invited by certified mail to attend this Public Hearing.
- Public Comments sought out at Decennial Committee Meetings held March 21, 2024; July 18, 2024; and August 15, 2024
- Andover Park OSLAD Development Project Public Comment Meeting 2019
- Kendall County Hazard Mitigation Plan Public Hearing 2023
- Chesterfield Park Skate Park Public Comment Meeting 2024
- Farmington Lakes Park OSLAD Development Project Public Comment Meeting 2023



VIII. District Awards and Recognition

The Oswegoland Park District’s achievements have been recognized in numerous ways and credits its success to the efforts of its staff and a dedicated Park Board of Commissioners providing direction and leadership to the Park District staff while representing its residents. Below provides a snapshot of Board Member volunteer service:

Board Member	Position(s)	Years Served
<p>Dave Behrens</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park Board President • Past Board Vice President • Open Meetings Act (OMA) Designee 	<p>Serving the Oswegoland Park District Community since 2015</p>
<p>Bob Ijams</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park Board Vice President 	<p>Serving the Oswegoland Park District Community since 2017</p>
<p>Sandy Tartol</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park Board Commissioner • Past Board President • Past Board Vice President • Past Open Meetings Act (OMA) Designee 	<p>Serving the Oswegoland Park District Community since 2014</p>
<p>Dannielle Wilson</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park Board Commissioner • Park Foundation Liaison 	<p>Serving the Oswegoland Park District Community since 2021</p>
<p>Holly Wiggins</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park Board Commissioner 	<p>Serving the Oswegoland Park District Community since 2024</p>

2023 District Awards & Recognition

- GFOA Award for Excellence in Financial Reporting
- IPRA/IAPD Agency Showcase First Place Award – Large Format
- IPRA/IAPD Agency Showcase Second Place Award – Short Form Video
- IPRA/IAPD Agency Showcase Third Place Award – Website

2022 District Awards & Recognition

- GFOA Award for Excellence in Financial Reporting
- IAPD Best Shot Photo Contest – 1st Place Sports Category
- IAPD Best of the Best Award – Intergovernmental Cooperation



2021 District Awards & Recognition

- GFOA Award for Excellence in Financial Reporting
- Camp Connection Accredited through the American Camping Association
- Illinois Association of Museum Award of Merit in COVID Response Category
- Illinois Association of Museum Award of Excellence in Special Projects Category

2020 District Awards & Recognition

- GFOA Award for Excellence in Financial Reporting
- Camp Connection Accredited through the American Camping Association
- IPRA/IAPD Agency Showcase Third Place Award – Large Format
- IPRA/IAPD Agency Showcase Third Place Award – Logo Design
- IPRA/IAPD Agency Showcase Third Place Award – Promotional Item

2019 District Awards & Recognition

- GFOA Award for Excellence in Financial Reporting
- Camp Connection Accredited through the American Camping Association
- Illinois Association of Museum Award of Merit for Best Practices in Exhibit Category

2018 District Awards & Recognition

- GFOA Award for Excellence in Financial Reporting
- Illinois' Healthiest Employers Award Finalist



2017 District Awards & Recognition

- Illinois Distinguished Accredited Agency
- GFOA Award for Excellence in Financial Reporting
- IPRA/IAPD Agency Showcase First Place Award – Promotional Item
- IPRA/IAPD Agency Showcase Third Place Award – Website
- Gold International Aquatic Safety Award from Jeff Ellis & Associates

2016 District Awards & Recognition

- GFOA Award for Excellence in Financial Reporting
- IPRA/IAPD Agency Showcase First Place Award – Logo Design
- Gold International Aquatic Safety Award from Jeff Ellis & Associates



2015 District Awards & Recognition

- GFOA Award for Excellence in Financial Reporting
- IPRA Exceptional Workplace Award
- Aquatic Staff earned two “Exceeds” on their audits by Jeff Ellis and Associates
- The Aquatic Park Concession Stand received 99 out of 100 from the Health Department

**2014 District Awards & Recognition**

- GFOA Award for Excellence in Financial Reporting
- FVSRA Member Agency of the Year
- IPRA/IAPD Agency Showcase First Place Award – Electronic Communication
- IPRA/IAPD Agency Showcase Second Place Award – Print Advertisement
- IAPD Best Shot Photo Contest – 2nd Place Little Soccer Star

**IX. Benefits and Services**

From open space, to natural areas, to playgrounds and facilities, the Park District serves the entire Oswegoland community from the youngest child to the oldest adult and all ages in between, approximately 20,000 households, and it does so in a variety of ways.

1. Parks and Recreation Amenities

The Oswegoland Park District strives to deliver exceptional value to its community. It provides parks, playgrounds, and natural areas where residents can play, gather, celebrate, learn, and enjoy nature.

The Park District owns and maintains 66 parks across more than 1,300 acres:

- 33 Neighborhood Parks
- 3 Community Parks
- 5 Community Parks and Sport Fields
- 16 Natural Area Parks
- 9 Greenways (Linear Parks)



Here is a snapshot of the outstanding parks and recreation amenities the Park District offered to its community last year:



For more information, visit the District’s website at <https://www.oswegolandparkdistrict.org/> or view the District’s interactive facilities and parks map at <https://www.oswegolandparkdistrict.org/locations/>.

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	Neighborhood Parks	Acres	Trails/ Path	Amenities
1	Andover Park 334 Andover Dr, Oswego	6.610	0.35 Miles	Playground, Ballfield/Backstop Only, Half-Court Basketball, Area for Sports Practice, Picnic Table(s), Shelter, Drinking Fountain
2	Ashgate Park 26920 Ashgate Crossing, Plainfield	6.602	0.3 Miles	Playground, Sandbox, Ballfield/Backstop Only, Half-Court Basketball, Area for Sports Practice, Picnic Table(s), Shelter
3	Augusta Lake Park 116 August Rd, Oswego	5.029	0.3 Miles	Playground, Ballfield/Backstop Only, Area for Sports Practice, Picnic Table(s), Fishing Area
4	Barnaby Park 443 Barnaby Dr, Oswego	2.875	0.16 Miles	Playground, Sandbox, Half-Court Basketball, Area for Sports Practice, Picnic Table(s), Shelter
5	Bluegrass Park 275 Bluegrass Pkwy, Oswego	16.304	0.23 Miles	Playground, Half-Court Basketball, Area for Sports Practice, Sand Volleyball, Tennis, Pickleball, Picnic Table(s), Shelter, Drinking Fountain, Restroom
6	Briarcliff Woods Park & Lake 100 US Route 30, Montgomery	17.251	0.5 Miles	Playground, Half-Court Basketball, Area for Sports Practice, Pickleball, Picnic Table(s), Fishing Area, Restroom
7	Chesterfield Park 139 Chesterfield Dr, Oswego	24.817	0.9 Miles	Playground, Sandbox, Ballfield/ Backstop Only, Half-Court Basketball, Area for Sports Practice, Skate Park, Sled Hill, Picnic Table(s), Shelter, Fishing Area, Drinking Fountain
8	Deerbrook Park 2220 Barrington Dr West, Aurora	7.045	0.3 Miles	Playground, Sandbox, Ballfield/ Backstop Only, Half-Court Basketball, Area for Sports Practice, Sled Hill, Picnic Table(s), Shelter
9	Heritage Park 72 Polk St, Oswego	0.461	-----	-----
10	Hidden Creek Park 1800 Pontarelli Ct, Oswego	6.118	0.3 Miles	Playground
11	Hunt Club Park 4395 Bickford Ave, Oswego	4.180	-----	Area for Sports Practice
12	Jaycee Park 134 Saugatuck Rd, Oswego	7.105	0.07 Miles	Playground, Ballfield/Backstop Only, Area for Sports Practice, Picnic Table(s), Shelter, Drinking Fountain, Restroom
13	Lakeview Park 541 Lakeview Dr, Oswego	1.000	-----	Playground, Area for Sports Practice, Picnic Table(s), Shelter
14	Linden Park 165 Linden Dr, Oswego	4.610	-----	Playground, Area for Sports Practice, Drinking Fountain
15	Morgan Creek Park 360 Morgan Valley Dr, Oswego	5.299	0.2 Miles	Playground, Sandbox, Ballfield/ Backstop Only, Half-Court Basketball, Area for Sports Practice, Picnic Table(s), Shelter
16	North Adams Park 127 N Adams St, Oswego	1.111	0.05 Miles	Picnic Table(s), Shelter, Fishing Area, Drinking Fountain
17	Northampton Park 310 Northampton Dr, Oswego	7.459	0.15 Miles	Playground, Half-Court Basketball, Area for Sports Practice, Sled Hill, Picnic Table(s), Shelter, Drinking Fountain
18	Ogden Falls Park 375 Ogden Falls Blvd, Oswego	4.700	0.2 Miles	Playground, Sandbox, Ballfield/ Backstop Only, Half-Court Basketball, Area for Sports Practice, Sled Hill, Picnic Table(s), Shelter
19	Pearce's Ford Park 601 Pearces Ford Dr, Oswego	2.360	-----	Playground, Tennis, Pickleball, Picnic Table(s)

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20	Prairieview Park 394 Prairieview Dr, Oswego	4.630	----	Playground, Ballfield/Backstop Only, Half-Court Basketball, Area for Sports Practice, Picnic Table(s), Shelter, Fishing Area, Drinking Fountain
21	Silverleaf Park 12902 Grande Pines Blvd, Plainfield	8.236	0.4 Miles	Playground, Sandbox, Ballfield/ Backstop Only, Half-Court Basketball, Area for Sports Practice, Picnic Table(s), Shelter, Drinking Fountain
22	South Point Park 800 Preston Lane, Oswego	9.360	----	Playground, Restroom
23	Summerlin Park 2121 Summerlin Dr, Aurora	22.100	0.4 Miles	Playground, Sandbox, Half-Court Basketball, Area for Sports Practice, Picnic Table(s)
24	SuzanJohn Park 29 Hampton Rd, Montgomery	1.322	----	Playground, Sandbox, Half-Court Basketball, Area for Sports Practice, Picnic Table(s)
25	Timber Wood Park 12857 Timer Wood Circle, Plainfield	9.294	0.4 Miles	Playground, Sandbox, Ballfield/ Backstop Only, Half-Court Basketball, Area for Sports Practice, Picnic Table(s), Shelter
26	Townsend Park 418 Devoe Dr, Oswego	7.000	0.45 Miles	Playground, Sandbox, Ballfield/ Backstop Only, Half-Court Basketball, Area for Sports Practice, Picnic Table(s), Shelter, Drinking Fountain
27	Tuscany Trail Park 445 Grapevine Trail, Oswego	12.731	0.08 Miles	Playground, Sandbox, Ballfield/ Backstop Only, Half-Court Basketball, Area for Sports Practice, Picnic Table(s), Shelter
28	Veterans Serenity Park 33 N. Adams St, Oswego	0.360	----	Drinking Fountain, Restroom
29	Village Green Park 47 Monroe St, Oswego	0.659	----	Playground, Sandbox, Picnic Table(s), Drinking Fountain
30	Washington Park 309 Millstream, Oswego	9.026	0.5 Miles	Playground, Sandbox, Ballfield/ Backstop Only, Half-Court Basketball, Area for Sports Practice, Picnic Table(s)
31	Whispering Woods Park 26202 Whispering Woods, Plainfield	14.161	0.3 Miles	Playground, Sandbox, Picnic Table(s), Shelters, Fishing Area
32	Willowgate Park 12515 Cherry Blossom Rd, Plainfield	5.700	0.2 Miles	Playground, Half-Court Basketball, Area for Sports Practice, Sled Hill, Picnic Table(s), Shelter
33	Winrock Park 21 Winrock Rd, Montgomery	9.994	0.3 Miles	Playground, Half-Court Basketball, Area for Sports Practice, Picnic Table(s), Fishing Area
TOTAL ACRES		245.509		

	Community Parks	Acres	Trails/ Path	Amenities
1	Civic Center Park 5 Ashlawn Ave, Oswego	8.784	0.24 Miles	Playgrounds, Sandbox, Half-Court Basketball, Area for Sport Practice, Tennis, Pickleball, Picnic Table(s), Shelter, Drinking Fountain, Restroom
2	Hudson Crossing Park & Oswego Bridge 65 N Harrison St, Oswego	5.881	0.43 Miles	Playground, Sandbox, Picnic Table(s), Shelters, Canoe Access, ADA Accessible Fishing Area, Drinking Fountain, Restroom
3	Violet Patch Park 1425 Route 25, Oswego	4.247	0.25 Miles	Picnic Table(s), Shelter, Canoe Access, Fishing Area, Restroom
TOTAL ACRES		18.912		

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	Community Parks & Sports Fields	Acres	Trails/ Path	Amenities
1	Community Park at Grande Park 26333 Grande Park Blvd, Plainfield	82.870	1.8 Miles	Playground, Sandbox, Ballfield/Backstop Only, Full Court Basketball, Area for Sports Practice, Roller Hockey, Sand Volleyball, Tennis, Pickleball, Sled Hill, Picnic Tables, Shelters, Drinking Fountain
2	Old Post Park 116 Old Post Park, Oswego	19.746	0.62 Miles	Playground, Baseball/Softball Game Fields, Half-Court Basketball, Area for Sports Practice, Roller Hockey, Sand Volleyball, Drinking Fountain
3	Prairie Point Community Park 4120 Plainfield Rd, Oswego	65.400	0.4 Miles	Baseball/Softball Game Fields, Full Court Basketball, Area for Sports Practice, Splash Pad, Sand Volleyball, Skate Park, Sled Hill, Picnic Tables, Shelters, Drinking Fountain
4	PrairieFest Park (Leased from SD308) 91 Plank Rd, Oswego	29.136	-----	(15) Soccer Game Fields
5	Wormley Heritage Park 331 Century Dr, Oswego	15.519	0.8 Miles	Playground, Baseball/Softball Game Fields, Half-Court Basketball, Area for Sports Practice, Roller Hockey, Sand Volleyball, Picnic Tables, Shelters, Drinking Fountain
	TOTAL ACRES	212.671		

	Natural Area Parks	Acres	Trails/ Path	Amenities
1	Eagle Ridge Park 1300 Route 25, Oswego	22.167	0.19 Miles	Disc Golf
2	Bartlett Prairie/Wetland Lakeview Dr & Prairieview Dr, Oswego	34.742	-----	Accessible Fishing Pier/Area
3	Bluegrass Prairie Park West Fifth St & Yoakum Blvd, Oswego	65.909	1.63 Miles	Fishing Area
4	Bluegrass Prairie Park East Bluegrass Pkwy & Fifth St, Oswego	42.910	0.86 Miles	Area for Sports Practice, Sled Hill
5	Farmington Lakes 2031 Farmington Lakes Dr, Oswego	70.859	2.01 Miles	Fishing Area
6	Marina Woods Park 64 Marina Dr, Oswego	1.790	0.15 Miles	Picnic Table(s), Fishing Area
7	Millstone Park 4669 Mill Rd, Oswego	2.740	0.2 Miles	Picnic Table(s), Fishing Area
8	Morgan Creek Prairie/Wetland 511 Danbury Dr, Oswego	51.000	2.4 Miles	-----
9	Mundsinger Woods 3390 White Oak Dr, Oswego	6.030	-----	-----
10	Saw Wee Kee Park 7350 Sundown Ln, Yorkville	134.38	5.5 Miles	Picnic Table(s), Shelters, Canoe Access, Fishing Area, Restroom
11	Stonegate Park 56 Route 25, Oswego	2.063	0.16 Miles	Picnic Table(s), Fishing Area
12	Troy Park 201 N Adams St, Oswego	1.094	-----	Fishing Area
13	Waa Kee Sha Park 4700 Reservation Rd, Oswego	22.059	0.05 Miles	Playground, Picnic Table(s), Shelter, Restroom,

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14	Waubonsie Park 10 W Jefferson St, Oswego	0.460	----	Fishing Area
15	Waubonsie Wetland Cascada Ln, Oswego	4.956	----	----
16	Weaver Prairie Wetland Hunt Club Dr & Weaver St, Oswego	37.310	0.7 Miles	----
TOTAL ACRES		500.47		

	Linear Parks	Acres	Trails/Path	Amenities
1	Amber Fields Greenway Barrington and Lundquist, Aurora	5.000	----	
2	Fox River Trail River Frontage County Line to Hudson Bridge	6.231	3.25 Miles	Fishing Area
3	Grove Estates Greenway Fitkins Dr, Oswego	15.562	0.47 Miles	----
4	Grove Road Trail Prairie Point Park to Reservation Rd	1.524	3.25 Miles	----
5	Matena Greenway Matena Dr, Oswego	4.770	----	----
6	Northampton Greenway Northampton Dr & Nottingham Dr	7.700	0.5 Miles	----
7	Oswego Prairie Trail (ComEd Lease) Douglas Rd & Barnaby Dr, Oswego	6.944	0.5 Miles	----
8	Prairie Point Greenway Prairie Point Park to Morgan Valley	24.504	2 Miles	----
9	Waubonsie Greenway Barnaby Dr to Chesterfield Park	39.166	3.75 Miles	----
TOTAL ACRES		111.401		

	Bicycle/Pedestrian Trails	Acres	Trails/Path	Amenities
1	Fox River Trail	----	3.250	----
2	Grove Road Trail	----	3.650	----
3	Oswego Prairie Trail (Leased from ComEd)	----	0.500	----
4	Prairie Point Trail	----	1.800	----
5	Waubonsie Trail	----	2.700	----
TOTAL MILES			11.90	

	Cross Country Ski Trails	Acres	Trails/Path	Amenities
1	Fox Bend Golf Course	----	2.50 Miles	----
2	Saw Wee Kee Park	----	5.50 Miles	----
3	Waa Kee Sha Park	----	1.00 Miles	----
TOTAL MILES			9.00	

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	Nature Trails	Acres	Trails/Path	Amenities
1	Saw Wee Kee Park	-----	5.50	-----
2	Waa Kee Sha Park	-----	1.00	-----
3	Weaver Prairie Wetland	-----	0.700	-----
	TOTAL MILES		7.20	

	Undeveloped Park Property	Acres	Trails/Path	Amenities
1	Fox River Islands In Fox River at Route 30 & River Rd	10.079	-----	-----
2	Haines Property Route 25 & Glendale Ave, Oswego	4.439	-----	-----
3	Riverfront Property (Brooks) 2nd St & N Adams St, Oswego	2.160	-----	-----
4	Hudson Crossing South 161 S. Harrison St, Oswego	1.69	-----	-----
5	Marquis Pointe Emerald Dr, Montgomery	7.3	-----	-----
6	Wade Property 1703 Route 25, Oswego	1.12	-----	-----
7	Wolf's Crossing/Fox Bend Parcel Wolf's Crossing & Southbury Blvd	2.44	-----	-----
	TOTAL ACRES	29.228		

	Golf Course	Acres	Trails/Path	Amenities
1	Fox Bend Golf Course 3516 Route 34, Oswego	160.00	-----	Golf Course, Restroom
	TOTAL ACRES	160.00		

	Facilities	Acres	Trails/Path	Amenities
1	Boulder Point 0 Boulder Hill Pass, Montgomery	2.137	-----	Playground
2	Civic Center 5 Ashlawn Ave, Oswego	-----	-----	Pool
3	Little White School Museum 72 Polk St, Oswego	-----	-----	Museum
4	Admin & Ops Center (Under Construction)	4.230	-----	
5	South Point 810 Preston Lane, Oswego	-----	-----	
6	Willowgate Farm 26500 W 127 th St, Plainfield	4.000	-----	
7	Winrock Pool 21 Winrock Rd, Montgomery	-----	-----	Pool
	TOTAL ACRES	10.367		

2. Programs

The Park District offers a variety of program types each year. The following programs were offered last year. Registration details for last year, as well as from 2019, are provided below to demonstrate pre-Covid 19 participation levels compared to current participation levels post-Covid 19.

Program Type	Programs Offered in 2019	Programs Offered in 2023	Participant Numbers in 2019	Participant Numbers in 2023
As We Grow Preschool	7	8	197	309
Junior Kid's Connection	1	2	22	39
Kid's Connection	12	8	1158	792
Summer Camp Connection	5	4	311	338
Summer Jr. Camp Connection	1	2	20	30
Dance	187	277	1733	1963
Gymnastics	818	571	3753	3967
Fitness	215	323	1827	2235
Youth Sports	260	339	8323	5472
Adult Sport Leagues	21	25	1656	2695
Aquatics	162	1349	677	1285
History	12	46	80	644
Theatre	48	50	553	598
Special Events	72	80	5550	5160



3. Additional Services

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

- Community Garden
- Kendall County Food Pantry Garden
- Financial Assistance Program for families in need to participate in Park District programs
- Scholarship Program
- Free use of Park District facilities and parks to Oswegoland not-for-profit civic groups for charitable causes
- Rental space available for various celebrations and events (includes room rentals, park shelter rentals, athletic fields, and pool rentals)
- Special Events
 - PrairieFest
 - Oswego Country Market
 - Monday Miles
 - National Night Out
 - Brew at the Bridge
 - Unplug Illinois
 - Oswego Holiday Express



4. Other Benefits

While the Park District is a special purpose district, its impact on 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 Park District is a leader in the establishment, restoration, and advocacy of natural landscaping, and owns and maintains unique and diverse natural areas throughout its boundaries including, but not limited to, prairies, wetlands, woodlands, ponds, basins, designed constructed wetlands, and retention/detention areas.

Natural areas owned and maintained by the Park District provide a myriad of benefits that include, but are not limited to, improved water quality, compensatory water storage, erosion control, elimination of nitrogen-based fertilizers, reduction of chemical herbicide usage, proliferation of wildlife habitat and creation of sustainable landscapes.

Most of the Park District's natural areas are well defined with diverse native plants that provide wildlife with food and shelter. The deep roots of these native plants help stabilize shorelines and prevent fertilizer runoff, keeping the basins free of silt and algae.

Natural areas increase biodiversity by creating greenways that provide a safe haven for mammals, reptiles, amphibians, birds, and beneficial insects and birds. They also sustain an environment where native Illinois plants can thrive and be successfully reintroduced.

The Oswegoland Park District’s parks provide outdoor places to play, socialize and retreat within the community while also providing diverse habitats for wildlife, while these unique areas provide non-traditional recreational opportunities for the entire community.



The Oswegoland community can all benefit the following ways from investing in parks and recreation:

- **Health:** Access to parks and recreation facilities leads to healthy lifestyles for people of all ages. Recreation can build self-esteem, reduce stress, and improve overall wellness.
- **Community:** Parks give communities a vital identity. Well maintained, accessible parks and recreation facilities are key elements of strong, safe, family-friendly communities.
- **Economy:** Parks enhance property values, contribute to healthy and productive workforces, and help attract and retain businesses.
- **Environment:** Parks play a key role in preserving water and air quality, reducing congestion, and protecting wildlife. People learn about the environment firsthand in parks and take those lessons home with them.

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. By way of example, below are amounts that 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 that are not waived, and the bureaucracy that accompanies them, inhibit the park district’s ability to deliver programs, facilities, and services at the least possible cost to the community.

Unit of Government	Intergovernmental Fee Description (2023)	Fee Paid
Oswego School District 308	Rental/Space Fees	\$120,163
Oswego School District 308	Transportation Fees (School Breaks/Camps)	\$18,587
Village of Oswego	Community Festival Police	\$14,581
Village of Oswego	Local Liquor License Fees	\$1,350
Oswego Fire Protection District	On-Site EMS for Community Festival	\$6,120
Kendall County Health Dept.	Food Permit Fees for Kid’s Connection	\$2,100
Will County Health Dept.	Food Permit Fees for Kid’s Connection	\$400
Village of Montgomery	Engineering Permit Fee/Briarcliff Parking Lot	\$257
State of Illinois	Liquor License Fees	\$875
Illinois State Police	Background Checks (Employees/Volunteers)	\$9554

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. Maintaining Relationships for Improved Efficiency with Other Governments

The Park District is also negatively impacted by the inefficiency of the state and other units of local government. Significant delays in grant reimbursements have negative financial impacts to the District. Most recently, the District has been waiting on a \$1.8 million reimbursement from the State of Illinois for the Park and Recreational Facilities Construction Program (PARC). The project related to this grant was completed in 2022. Since the program requires the District to fund project costs up front, the District loses interest income opportunities and misses chances to spend these funds for other community capital needs until these funds are reimbursed.

By conducting this report, staff have realized the importance of intergovernmental relationships and plans to meet more frequently and communicate with other state and local government entities to ensure efficient use of resources.



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 Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Requests.

Last year, the Park District spent approximately \$8,000 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. Below is a list of non-resident and/or commercial FOIA requests addressed by the Park District:

- Commercial request (four separate requests) for any all purchasing records
- Non-profit request for bid results for 2023 Shelter Project
- Non-profit request for bid results for Willowgate Farm Siding Project
- Non-profit request for bid results for Exterior Painting Little White School Museum and Willowgate Farmhouse & Garage
- Commercial request for Portable Restroom Services Contract
- Commercial request for 2023 Shelter Project bid document submittals
- Commercial request for 2023 Trail Paving Project bid document submittals
- Commercial request for Architectural Services Capital Improvement Program bid document submittals
- Individual request for financial statements
- Individual request for internal incident report
- Commercial request on the costs of challenges to the release of public records
- Commercial request for software services contracts
- Commercial requests for bid document submittals
- Commercial requests for past bid information

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). In 2023, the park district spent \$9,554 for criminal background checks on both employees and volunteers. These background checks include employee background checks with ISP, two sex offender registry searches, social security number verification, and a national criminal database search. 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 the 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.

e) Bikeway Path Signage for Highway Crossings.

Bikeway signage is a new unfunded mandate effective January 1, 2024, that requires posting permanent warning signage on bikeways 150 feet ahead of all roadway crossings, posting signage about known dangerous conditions, severe curves or slippery when wet as well as posting temporary signage with temporary dangerous conditions (construction projects). This seems to be a subjective requirement with many of these conditions that in the past have fallen under tort immunity as open and obvious for path users.

4. Opportunities for Increased Transparency

As illustrated above, the Park District is very transparent in its operations. For this reason, the committee does not see any additional opportunities for increased transparency.

5. Opportunities for Other Intergovernmental Agreements

The Oswegoland Park District works closely with other local governments and continues to seek ways to work together to support and achieve its purpose and vision.

6. Opportunities for Savings such as Energy Efficiency Projects, Joint Purchasing

Every year, the Park District participates in the Illinois Park and Recreation Association (IPRA) Environmental Report Card. This is a district-wide assessment of our sustainability in managing our facilities, parks, and natural areas. The assessment is quantitative and allows the district to look at areas to improve our “score” annually in areas of facility management and maintenance, parks and natural resources management, fleet management and maintenance, and programming.

I. FINAL REPORT CERTIFICATION

The signature of the Committee Chairperson and date indicates the Decennial Committee on Local Government Efficiency’s final review and approval of this Efficiency Report for the Oswegoland Park District.

Dated: August 15, 2024 [DATE FINAL REPORT APPROVED BY EFFICIENCY COMMITTEE]

Signed: David Behrens

Name: David Behrens, Board President and Committee Chairperson

