

**CHAMPAIGN PARK DISTRICT
MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL BOARD MEETING
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS**

June 17, 2015

A Special meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners of the Champaign Park District was held at the Bresnan Meeting Center, 706 Kenwood Road, Champaign, Illinois, this being the principal office of the Champaign Park District, on Wednesday, June 17, 2015 at 6:00 p.m.

The meeting was called to order and the Board members present at the meeting were as follows: President Timothy P. McMahon, Vice President Craig H. Hays, Commissioner Barbara J. Kuhl, Commissioner Alvin S. Griggs, and Commissioner Jane L. Solon. Staff and counsel present were Executive Director, Joseph DeLuce, and Attorney, Guy C. Hall. Attorney Hall took the minutes of the meeting. Also present was Ms. Beth Michaels of PrimerMichaels

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

President McMahon called for comments from the public and there were none.

BOARD SELF-EVALUATION

President McMahon tendered the floor to Ms. Michaels. She thanked the Board for the opportunity to assist it in its self-evaluation process and articulated her background and history working with various boards. She also explained to the Board a general overview of the process and course of action to be undertaken during the course of the self-evaluation process. The Board was provided with a written summary of its self-evaluation materials dated June 8, 2015 together with a survey instrument addressing areas of agreement and disagreement among Board members. That instrument was utilized in part for further discussion during the self-evaluation process.

In an effort to assess what the Board would consider to be a satisfactory outcome of the meeting, Ms. Michaels asked each Board member to articulate his or her respective goals for the outcome of the meeting. Among the comments were the following: refresh the roles and focus of the commissioners; become an efficient team that is working together productively; develop a path for setting board goals; clarify the roles of individuals as a Board; and conducting efficient, well prioritized and productive meetings, as well as developing a proper methodology for evaluating the executive director.

Ms. Michaels noted a caveat for the process in that it was developed for a half-day workshop. Thus, there are more materials than may be able to be addressed during the limited time allocated for this meeting. Ms. Michaels then referred the Board to the desired outcomes noted on page 2 of the materials and the eleven (11) questions identified on page 8 of the materials.

The issues of roles and responsibilities were then addressed in a number of contexts. First, there was discussion about the overall Board and executive director interaction. Second, Board and staff interaction was discussed. The third item addressed was the interaction of individual commissioners with the executive director and, fourth, the interactions by commissioners with each other. (At this time (approximately 6:30 p.m.), Lawrence Richards, a local citizen, attended the meeting and expressed his interest in understanding what a board self-evaluation process is.)

The Board proceeded through significant discussion regarding the above context utilizing the metaphors of the "dance floor" (operational) versus "balcony" (policy) matters. A supplemental document summarizing the board self-evaluation materials previously utilized by Ms. Michaels

to develop a vision of the Board's concerns was summarized in a two (2) page document. That document identifies Board issues as well as issues concerning interaction of the Board with the executive director. Furthermore, it addressed the executive director annual evaluation process and performance goals.

Ms. Michaels articulated the view that commissioners are not elected to help the executive director run the Park District, although they may sometimes be invited to do so away from the Board table. Furthermore, she noted that commissioners only act in that capacity at the table or meetings and are, in some measure, essentially senior volunteers. She noted that it is not the role of volunteers to make promises to citizens or constituencies. Accordingly, she reiterated that the Board is the policy or "balcony" entity assessing what the District needs for the future and why it exists.

Ms. Michaels framed a number of questions for the Board to consider as it addresses its business, as follows:

1. Who gets what for how much?
2. We can do whatever we want but not everything we want, so what do we prioritize?
3. Where are we now relative to where we want to be?
4. When are we proud?
5. What does good look like (therefore, clear goals and measures are needed to assess this)? She reminded the Board that the job of commissioners is not a "day job". In general, commissioners have short memories, so it is helpful to review goals periodically.

Ms. Michaels went on to address the elements of the "Cycle for District Responsibility" which include: Board self-evaluation, followed by annual updates and director evaluation, then by annual goal setting, and finally, development of the budget. She again indicated that the methodology is for the Board to do the "balcony" work. She also suggested that the Board refresh its goals every two (2) years or so, and then undertake a more thorough evaluation every five (5) to ten (10) years, including a citizen survey.

Ms. Michaels indicated that most people have a low tolerance for process; that is, they do not enjoy the manner and method of decision-making. She suggested that boards often get entrenched in attending to individual concerns that are within the realm and authority of the executive director. She opined that the commissioners' jobs are to act as stewards, strategizing goals and measures for reaching those goals rather than responding to individual complaints and concerns of citizens.

Commissioner Griggs suggested that it was not a healthy process for commissioners to deal directly with staff in a manner that might be perceived to undermine the executive director. However, a caveat was noted if a board has a suitable working relationship with the executive director and the executive director concurs that it is satisfactory to do so. This commentary led to further discussion about selective communication with the executive director, which can lead to undesirable results. Related to that, is where to distinguish between meaningful communication and intrusiveness. Ms. Michaels' impression in this context is that for the purpose of trust building, the Park District should err on the side of too much information. Nevertheless, it is the role of the Board to monitor outcomes that may indicate problems.

Further discussion ensued regarding the role of commissioners and the role of staff, and Vice President Hays addressed his concern with the operational process of contracting for goods and services. Ms. Michaels noted that it is suitable for Board members to bring their professional and life experiences to the table where it is needed, but that the Board should be careful about overstepping the bounds of management. Vice President Hays reiterated his concern about how to determine where the line is between giving proper oversight and being too involved in the operational process.

Ms. Michaels then turned to the role of the president and vice president. She believes the role of the president is servant leadership; that is, a facilitative leader. She noted that a board is a group of equals, and that the role of the president is to facilitate amongst those equals. Thus, a president is to lead the process of assuring that what the board wants in plans and measures is completed, as well as assist and help with the board agenda and organization.

Discussion then ensued about historical issues, including the Park District's involvement in matters related to a new location for a high school in Champaign as it related to parks. With regard to the role of a vice president, Ms. Michaels noted that the position is simply a substitute for the president in his or her absence.

The subject then turned to the formulation of board agendas. Ms. Michaels directed the board to the "Board President Cheat Sheet" on page 4, of the materials. First, she suggested development of an annual planning calendar, including goals for education about various subjects. She also indicated that a strategic plan is not designed to be a "straight jacket", and can be altered as circumstances dictate.

It was noted that agendas should allow for questions to the executive director with answers shared with the entire board. Agendas should first be developed with the assistance of the president, but in the end, the agenda will be determined by the majority of the board. The Board addressed and discussed the routing and natures of the issues that are presented to it for consideration and action. Ms. Michaels then addressed the foundational principals of the governance, including vision, capacity, long term focus, and data search.

Commissioner Kuhl commented positively about how the McKinley Aquatic Center (MAC) matter was handled in late December, 2014 and January, 2015 with the involvement of the public, staff and the Board.

NET SUMMARY

Ms. Michaels addressed some of the issues that she saw as concerns. First, she noted a concern about voting upon matters. Second, she addressed pattern voting, and that it may signify difficulties within a board. She further noted that board members have been elected to work together, although they are obviously to bring their individual perspectives to the task. She opined that it is inappropriate to discuss board matters and relations outside the boardroom. With regard to unanimity, she indicated that unanimous votes are indicative of a strong board, and are not necessarily an indication of "rubber stamping". If a board does not speak with one voice it is possible for the executive director to be compromised and unable to act to the board's satisfaction. She reiterated that it is proper for the board to come to a *consensus*, although there may not be *agreement* in all respects about a course of action. She noted that it is important for board members to be communicative and share their opposing views.

Ms. Michaels went on to address page 2. of the self-evaluation document, explaining in particular certain categories as follows:

Organizational Mission and Purpose, Section 1.1;
Stakeholders Connection Efforts, Section 2.1; and
Director Contract Renewal Process, Section 3.3.

There was further discussion regarding this subject. It was noted that the Board should be clear in the goals and standards for the executive director. For if that is not done, the executive director cannot meet the goals. In addressing the criteria for the latter item, it was suggested that the executive director propose goals and target dates for meeting them. The Board could then evaluate the proposed goals, and finally the executive director would be charged with preparing the data necessary to complete the process. Ms. Michaels suggested that this all be part of the annual progress report.

Ms. Michaels also suggested that Mr. DeLuce prepare a self-evaluation which would be presented to the Board. The Board would then do a supplemental evaluation and provide it to the president who would communicate that to the executive director. Here, there are three (3) overarching aspects related to:

1. Job function;
2. Strategic goals; and
3. Process goals (e.g. Communication).

Thereafter Ms. Michaels addressed the subject of the board concentrating on ends, referring to Section 4.4. of the "Desired Outcome" table. This subject again dealt with separating involvement in the "balcony" versus "dance floor."

TAKE AWAYS

Commissioner Griggs indicated that the self-evaluation was helpful in clarifying the roles of the Board and staff. Vice President Hays indicated he had a better sense of the operational versus policy components of the Park District, and Commissioner Solon agreed with that assessment. Executive Director DeLuce noted that there were four (4) to five (5) matters that all of the attendees agreed upon. Commissioner Kuhl noted that there are select items for the Board to address on a going forward basis. Ms. Michaels suggested that the Board examine its policies.

Vice President Hays then made a motion to adjourn the special meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Solon and unanimously approved. The meeting concluded at 8:20 p.m.

Approved:

Craig Hays, Vice President

Guy C. Hall, Legal Counsel