

**EFFICIENCY REPORT FOR THE  
GLEN ELLYN PARK DISTRICT**

**APPROVED BY THE PARK DISTRICT'S  
COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY  
ON JULY 16, 2024**



## I. Purpose

The Glen Ellyn Park District ("Park District") formed its Committee on Local Government Efficiency on **May 16, 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:

- Ben Stortz, Board President / Committee Chair
- Julie Nephew, Vice President
- Kathy Cornell, Treasurer
- Alex Durham, Commissioner
- Mary Crickmore, Commissioner
- Michael Ward, Commissioner
- Rob Weber, Commissioner
- Dave Thommes, Executive Director
- John Vitalis, Resident
- Mike Graham, Resident

### **III. Committee Meetings**

The Committee met at 6:30 pm at the Spring Avenue Recreation Center (185 Spring Avenue, Glen Ellyn, IL 60137) on the following dates:

- May 7, 2024
- June 4, 2024
- July 16, 2024

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

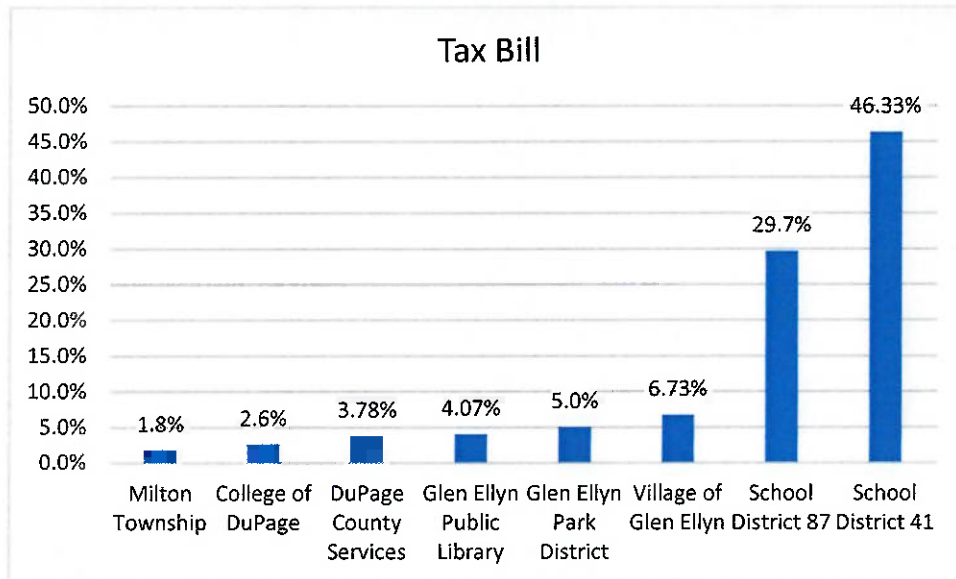
## IV. General Overview of Governing Statutes, Ordinances, Rules, Procedures, Powers, Jurisdiction

The Park District was established by a referendum initiated and approved by the voters of the Park District in 1919. All Illinois park districts, including the Park District, are governed by the Park District Code, 70 ILCS 1205/1 *et seq.*

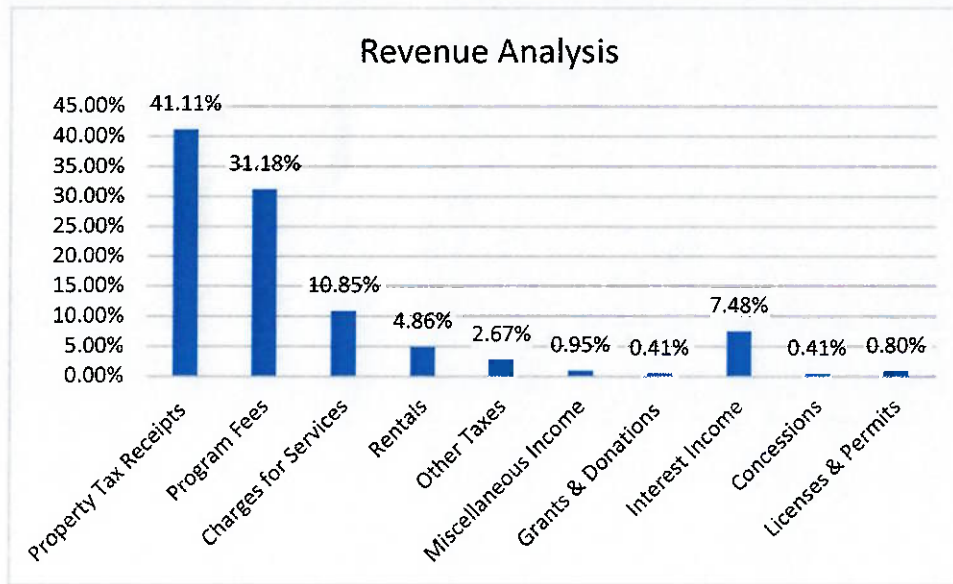
Having a separate and distinct taxing body for parks, recreation, and conservation within the local community, which operates apart from general purpose governments, is extremely beneficial to the community for many reasons, as detailed further in this report.

- **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 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 only 5.02% of the local tax bill. The graph below shows how tax revenue is allocated among the various taxing districts in Glen Ellyn.



In a typical fiscal year, the Park District's operating budget is approximately \$12 million dollars of which approximately 45% is funded by property tax revenue. The remaining 55% (approximately) is generated from program user fees, grants, fundraising, and rentals.



The annual operating budget produces surplus revenue which contributes to capital replacements and improvements such as parking lot repairs, playground replacements, and athletic field maintenance.

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:

- Board and Administration Policy Manual
- Personnel Policy Manual
- Operating Ordinances
- Administrative Policies and Procedures Manual
- Board Policies and Procedures Manual
- General Use Regulations
- Safety Manual
- Comprehensive Financial Report
- Annual Financial Audit
- Annual Report

The Glen Ellyn Park District has received the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting award from the Government Finance Officers Association for its Annual Comprehensive Financial Report each year since the District began applying in 2008.

## **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 WDSRA**

The Park District is part of the Western DuPage Special Recreation Association ("WDSRA"). Special Recreation Associations (SRA) 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 who have special needs. Furthermore, by participating in the SRA, the Park District networks with nine 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:

- Ackerman Sports and Fitness Center
- Ackerman Park
- Main Street Recreation Center
- Spring Avenue Recreation Center

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 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, 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.

There were 134 inclusion registrations for Park District programs in 2023, serving 29 residents. As well as Park District programs, WDSRA programs served 56 residents with 538 registrations. WDSRA's Rec n' Roll program continues to take place at Ackerman SFC, which serves 23 participants between Monday and Friday.

The Park District is immensely proud of the ongoing collaboration with WDSRA. 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.**

- **Lombard School District 44**
  - Lease agreement for the usage and maintenance of Surrey Park.
- **Western DuPage Special Recreation Association**
  - Lease agreement for facility usage at Ackerman SFC.
- **Village of Glendale Heights**
  - Intergovernmental agreement for the development and maintenance of Greenbriar Park.

## **3. Intergovernmental agreements with other units of local government**

- **Glenbard High School District 87**
  - Glen Ellyn Park District and District 87 have a combined intergovernmental agreement allowing shared use of facilities and fields. This benefits both organizations while maximizing community assets and minimizing expenses.
- **Glen Ellyn School District 41 and Community Consolidated School District 89**
  - The Park District and School Districts 89 and 41 have intergovernmental agreements allowing some shared use of facilities and fields. The Park District also provides maintenance services for some of their properties.
- **Glen Ellyn Public Library**
  - The District has a longstanding partnership with the Glen Ellyn Public Library. Efforts include reading programs, participation in events, the StoryWalk, Little Free Library installations, Donuts & Bingo, and more.
- **College of DuPage**

- Glen Ellyn Park District partners with College of DuPage on recreation space for programs including Cyclones Volleyball and to offer an indoor lap swimming option to members of Ackerman Sports & Fitness Center.
- **Village of Glen Ellyn**
  - The District and Village collaborate and partner to improve services and reduce expenses. Examples include the Downtown Community Park project, stormwater management, snow removal storage, fuel purchase, road salt, open space, planning and development, environmental services, events, Civic Center rentals, and programming.
- **Glen Ellyn Police Department**
  - The District collaborated with the Glen Ellyn Police Department for National Night Out. Additionally, Ackerman Sports & Fitness Center hosts the annual “Shop with a Cop” event.
- **League of Women Voters Glen Ellyn**
  - The Glen Ellyn Park District partnered with the Glen Ellyn League of Women Voters (GELWV) to support community initiatives:
  - Referendum support: Informing and engaging the community about park-related referendums through educational campaigns and sessions to encourage informed voting.
  - Board Candidate Forums: Organizing forums for park district board candidates to present their platforms and answer community questions, promoting transparency and informed decision-making.
  - Voter Registration: Holding registration drives at park district events and facilities to increase voter participation among residents.
  - Anti-Idling Campaign: Launching an initiative to reduce vehicle emissions around park facilities by educating the public on the benefits of turning off engines when parked or waiting, with informational signage and community outreach.
  - This collaboration aimed to foster an engaged, informed, and environmentally conscious community.

#### 4. **Intergovernmental agreements with the State of Illinois**

- Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity grant agreements total \$723,600 the past two years.
- Illinois Department of Natural Resources Open Space Land Acquisition and Developments grants of \$1,000,000 the past two years.

#### 5. **Partnerships or other interrelationships with non-profits**

- **Kiwanis Club of Central DuPage**
  - Last year, the Glen Ellyn Park District collected a total of 3,446 pounds of food and toiletry donations for Glen Ellyn Food Pantry. Items were collected over 11 drives in partnership with Kiwanis and State Representative Terra Costa Howard. The District also partners with the Kiwanis to offer free fish release events at Lake Ellyn and Lake Foxcroft Parks.

- **Go Green Glen Ellyn**
  - Two Sportswaps and a new OAKtoberfest event were offered in partnership with Go Green Glen Ellyn. They also participated in this year's Native Tree and Shrub Sale, offered a composting class, and a DarkSky Night Hike, and arranged for Flat Can Recycling to be at the Pumpkin Smash.
- **Friends of Glen Ellyn Parks**
  - In partnership with the Foundation, the District offered the Fireworks from the Fishing Pier Raffle, KOKOMO: A Vacation Darty, and Photo Sessions with Santa.
- **The Conservation Foundation**
  - The Earth Day Celebration, 6th Annual Native Tree & Shrub Sale, and DuPage River Sweep were offered in partnership with The Conservation Foundation.
- **The League of Enchantment**
  - The Toys for Tots Toy Drive with Characters, which collected around 1,000 toys for DuPage County Toys for Tots, was offered in partnership with the League of Enchantment.
- **SCARCE**
  - The District partnered with SCARCE on the 4<sup>th</sup> annual Pumpkin Smash event at the Community Garden Plots.
- **Glen Ellyn Garden Club**
  - Stewards of the Austin Eischeid Garden at Lake Ellyn Park.
- **Charlie's Corner Foundation**
  - Since 2017, the District has partnered with Charlie's Corner Foundation on planning and staging the Glow in the Park Lantern Walk.

## 6. Partnerships with for profit organizations

- **Parkview Community Church**
  - Agreement between the Glen Ellyn Park District and Parkview Community Church for the shared use of facilities, including parking lots.
- **Tivity Health Services LLC**
  - Silver Sneakers Health Membership Program
- **Kelly Stetler Real Estate**
  - Advertising and sponsorship agreements.
- **Duly Health and Care**
  - Advertising and sponsorship agreements.
- **Jewel-Osco**
  - Vaccination clinics
- **ComEd Energy Efficiency Program**
  - Through its partnership with ComEd, the Park District has saved over \$74,000 on recent energy efficiency projects.

## VI. Other Examples of Efficient Operations

**Use of volunteers.** One way in which the Park District reduces the burden on taxpayers is using volunteers. Last year, over 500 individuals volunteered thousands of hours of service to the Park District.

**Youth employment.** The Park District is a major employer of youth in the community. Last year, the Park District employed approximately 300 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:

- Sourcewell
- Omnia
- TIPS
- US Communities
- State of Illinois Vehicle Purchasing Program

**Glen Ellyn Parks Foundation.** The Glen Ellyn Park District and Foundation seeks donations and sponsorships to support major capital projects, recreation programs, and operations. The District is grateful for the donations received in 2023.

2023 Sponsorships and Donations		
Donor	Purpose	Amount
Friends of Glen Ellyn Parks Foundation events	Scholarship Program	\$20,473
Event Sponsorships	Scholarship Program	\$7,250
Glen Ellyn Sports Trivia Night	Scholarship Program	\$7,000
Athletic Program Sponsorships	Youth Athletic Programs	\$3,250
Girl Scout Service Unit 509	Forestry Fund	\$500
Go Green Glen Ellyn	Scholarship Program	\$475

**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. The Glen Ellyn Park District routinely collaborates with neighboring park districts to maximize value on the services it provides. Currently, the Wheaton and Elmhurst Park Districts partner with the Glen Ellyn Park District for senior programs and trips. This allows all three districts to serve their senior populations in the most cost-effective manner possible.

**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 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, Administrative Offices, County Clerk
• Annual budget and appropriation ordinance	Website, Administrative Offices, County Clerk
• Agenda and minutes	Website, Administrative Offices
• Comptroller's annual finance report (AFR)	Website, Administrative Offices
• Annual audit	Website, Administrative Offices
• Statement of Receipts and Disbursements	Website, Administrative Offices
• Conduct Ordinances	Website, Administrative Offices
• Long range plans	Website, Administrative Offices
• Strategic plans	Website, Administrative Offices
• Capital improvement plan	Website, Administrative Offices
• Municipal Directory	Administrative Offices

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

- The board of commissioners meets up to twice 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 630-942-7255 or email at [dthommes@gepark.org](mailto:dthommes@gepark.org).
- **Resident Advisory Committees**
  - **Citizen's Finance:** The Park Board initiated and formed the Citizens' Finance Committee, comprised of Glen Ellyn professionals in the financial

and business community, whose task was to oversee and provide guidance regarding District finances. The committee has been instrumental in reviewing, advising, and establishing financial direction and oversight. These efforts have contributed to the financial stability of the District both present and for the future.

- **Ackerman SFC:** Formed in 2015, the committee is comprised of Ackerman SFC users and members whose task is to provide guidance and advice regarding the facility.
- **Environmental:** Formed in 2016, the committee is comprised of users and members whose task is to provide guidance and advice regarding environmental efforts throughout the Park District.
- **Youth Sports:** Formed in 2018, the committee is comprised of key stakeholders whose task is to provide ideas, input, and feedback regarding Glen Ellyn Park District's youth athletics programs.
- **Community Input Sought**
  - Panfish Park Public Meeting
  - On-going Program and Event surveys
  - Contact Us page on [www.gepark.org](http://www.gepark.org)
  - Joint Village of Glen Ellyn and Glen Ellyn Park District Board meetings for downtown community for (2)
  - Downtown Event Park Community Survey #2
  - Village Green Park Public Meeting
  - Downtown Even Park Public Engagement Opportunity #2
  - Downtown Event Park Public Engagement Opportunity #1
  - Gymnastics Expansion and Facility Improvements Open House
  - 2021 Community Survey
  - Indoor Aquatic Post Referendum Survey
  - Ackerman Park Public Meeting
  - Neighborhood Public Meetings for all playground replacements.

## **VIII. District Awards and Recognition**

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

- National Park and Recreation Association Gold Medal Finalist: 2003, 2004, 2010
- Government Finance Officers Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting (2008 – 2023)
- Illinois Policy Institute Local Transparency Project Certificate of Achievement
- Lake Ellyn Boathouse Gold-level LEED certification
- Versiti Blood Center of Illinois Beacon of Hope Award (2021 – 2022)



## 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:

Ackerman Sports & Fitness Center	Glen Ellyn Manor Park
Clay Tennis Courts	Glen Oak Park
Community Garden Plots	Greenbriar Park
Holes & Knolls Mini Golf	Lake Ellyn Park
Lake Ellyn Boathouse	Lake Foxcroft Park
Main Street Recreation Center	Main Street Park
Maryknoll Clubhouse	Marie Ulhorn Presidents Park
Maryknoll Splash Park	Newton Park
Newton Skate Park	Panfish Playground Park
Platform Tennis Center	Pfuetze Park
Spring Avenue Dog Park	Prairie Path Park
Spring Avenue Fitness Center	Spalding Park
Spring Avenue Recreation Center	Stacy Park
Sunset Pool	Sunset Park
Ackerman Park	Surrey Park
Babcock Grove Park	Village Green Park
Churchill Park	Walnut Glen Park
Co-Op Park	Benjami Gault Nature Preserve
Danby Park	Ellynwood Nature Preserve
Frank Johnson Park	Joseph Sam Perry Preserve
George Ball Tennis Courts	

### 2. Programs

Enrollment in District fee-based activities has grown by 45% over the past 5 years. The revenue from fee-based activities and events supports other District programs, services, and projects for the community. Holes & Knolls admissions revenue performance for the 2023 season showed a stable trend. Sales and attendance closely matched numbers from 2022, with \$101,733 in adult golf revenue, compared to \$102,949 in 2022, \$54,078 in youth golf tickets, compared to \$52,344 in 2022, and \$4,440 in discount golf, compared to \$3,550 in 2022. This translates to an additional 376 visits in 2023 compared to 2022. Daily admissions at Sunset Pool totaled at 9,646 for the 2023 pool season. The largest category of visitors was individual child residents at 4,001 entries, followed by adult residents with 3,029. These numbers reflect a minor increase for child

residents, but a 20% increase for adult residents. Additionally, the non-resident numbers improved, with a 78% increase of adult non-resident visitors (up to 554 from 310), a 70% increase in child nonresidents (535 from 310), and a 203% increase in non-resident seniors (82 from 27). A total of 410 5-Visit Passes were sold this summer.

Over 15,511 kids participated in youth athletics programs, including instructional classes, private lessons, house and travel leagues, tournaments, and summer camps in 2023. To meet the growing demand for more programs, the District continued to expand athletics opportunities. This expansion included increased Chicago White Sox programming, the addition of 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade levels for Girl's Flag Football, and the introduction of instructional levels for baseball and basketball, to name just a few. To expand the District's available space, the District partners with outside facilities, including College of DuPage, True Lacrosse, DuPage Training Academy, Glendale Heights Sports Hub, Pickled!, and Naperville Yard. Additionally, a 6,000-square-foot gymnastics center expansion was included in the 2022 referendum, and planning is underway to bring new and expanded gymnastics programming to the community as soon as fall 2024.

Ackerman SFC ended 2023 with 3,972 members and 62 classes running weekly year-round at the facility, including one class at Spring Avenue Recreation Center, four aquatic classes at Sunset Pool, and one class at Lake Ellyn Park from Memorial Day through Labor Day. This totals 68 classes weekly every year. The facility offers numerous in-house-run programs and events, experiencing significant growth over the years and concluding 2023 with \$205,000 in revenue.

The Recreation department excelled in providing effective, efficient, high-quality programs, events, services, and facilities to best serve our community, its residents, and visitors to Glen Ellyn. Every year, the District continues to experience increased participation and waitlist requests for popular activities, special events, and programs, such as day camps, early childhood, and youth programming. To expand opportunities for participation, the District continues to offer additional sessions where available, adjust to alternate locations to increase maximum capacity, and alter how programs are organized to accommodate more participants. In 2023, the District increased program capacity by over 10%, offering 80,325 program spots compared to 72,942 in 2022.

### **3. Additional Services**

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

- Monthly blood drives benefitting Versiti Blood Center of Illinois
- Monthly food drives benefitting the Glen Ellyn Food Pantry
- Complimentary electric vehicle testing stations at Sunset Pool and MaryKnoll Park
- Complimentary holiday light recycling program

#### **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.

## **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, and the bureaucracy that accompanies them, inhibit the Park District's ability to deliver programs, facilities, and services at the least possible cost. In 2023 the Glen Ellyn Park District paid almost \$234,000 to other units of government for various fees and charges.

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 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. Examples of municipalities that do not charge their Park District's permit fees include Warrenville, Carol Stream, Roselle, Bloomingdale, Oak Brook, and Glenview, to name a few.

### **2. Inefficiency of Other Governments**

The Park District is also negatively impacted by the inefficiency of the state and other units of local government. The Park District has experienced significant delays in receiving funds when it comes to appropriations from the State of Illinois. To date, \$1,334,600 has been appropriated to the Glen Ellyn Park District through the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity that has yet to be received by the District.

### 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 approximately \$5,000 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.

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). Last year, the Park District spent \$5,000 for criminal background checks. 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.

## XI. OTHER

1. **Redevelopment Agreement Negotiations:** Continue negotiating and finalizing the Redevelopment Agreement with the Village of Glen Ellyn to secure the future park site at 453 Forest Avenue. This will enable the Park District to enhance services for residents with a new park and event space in downtown Glen Ellyn, benefiting both local businesses and the Village.
2. **Standardized Legal Templates for IGAs:** Encourage the state to create standardized legal templates for Intergovernmental Agreements (IGAs) to reduce legal fees for public agencies.
3. **Shared Services and Joint Contracting:** Explore opportunities for sharing or jointly contracting certain operational functions with other governmental units (e.g., Village, school districts). Potential areas include:
  - IT hardware procurement
  - Software licensing
  - Application and hardware support services
  - Cybersecurity
  - End-user support
  - Legal services
  - Accounting and audit services
  - Insurance
  - Selected maintenance services (e.g., custodial, lawn mowing)
  - Grant applications
4. **Volunteer SME Advisory Corps:** Establish a volunteer advisory corps of subject matter experts (SMEs) from the GEPD community with expertise in areas like grant writing, IT, project management, and marketing. These volunteers could provide periodic advice or assistance on specific projects, such as developing/reviewing RFPs or marketing new programs.

**Dated:** July 16, 2024

**Signed:**   
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Ben Stortz, Board President / Committee Chair