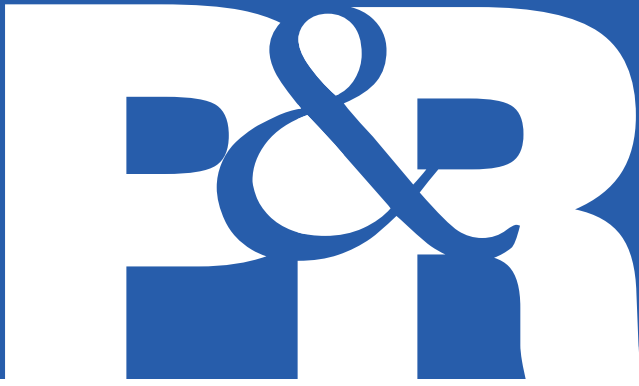


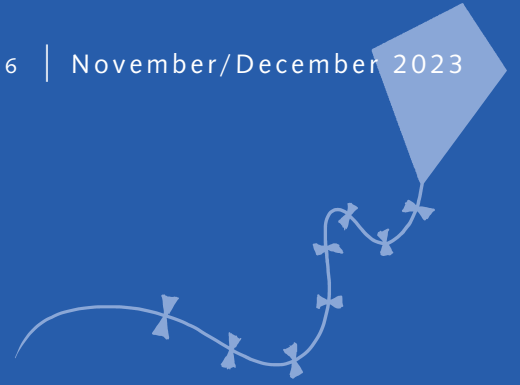
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PARKS AND RECREATION

The magazine of the Illinois Association of Park Districts and the Illinois Park and Recreation Association



trends &  
innovations



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Illinois Parks Association Risk Services



Rock Island



Photo courtesy of Princeton Park District

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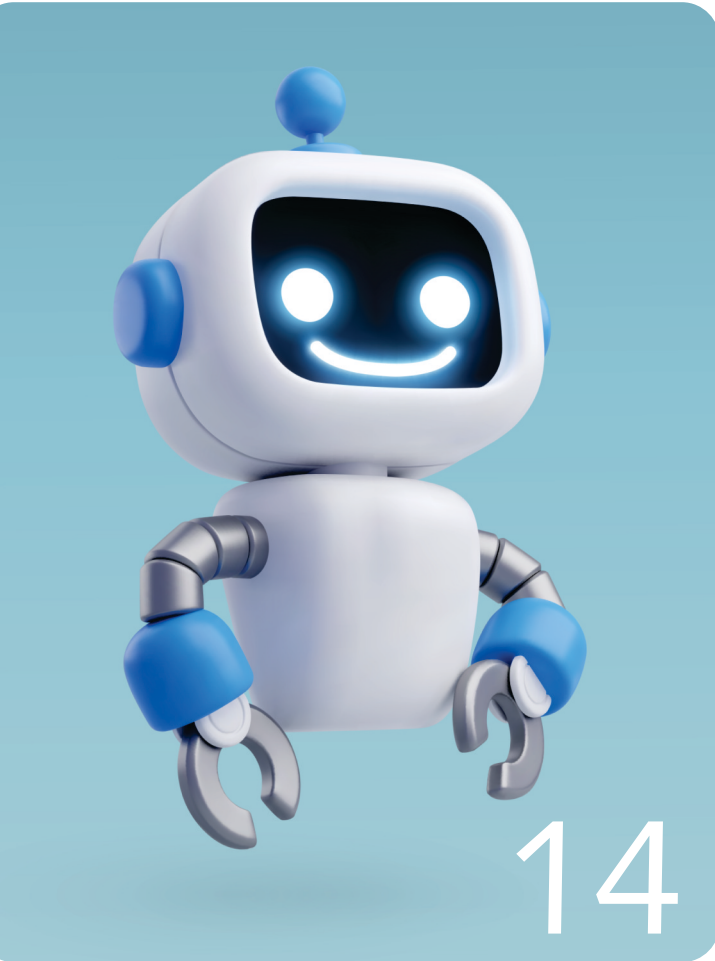
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# FROM THE EDITOR

## Bringing something new to park districts



The ever-growing prominence of technology in all the things we do day in and day out seems to grow at almost an unprecedented rate. New applications, artificial intelligence, and the constant info stream of social media only seem to be taking over conversations these days.

Of these, it feels like artificial intelligence is the biggest wildcard of them all. While it is a powerful tool that can revolutionize automation in things such as customer service and text creation, there are still so many concerns that stem from utilizing it. From deep fake tech being used to spread information, to image generators pulling content from legitimate artists, there are still so many gray areas that need clarity.

Still, it is up to us to not only see this change coming, but to adapt to it and leverage it in ways that benefit our communities.

I'm excited to share with you in this issue some of the trends and innovations that you either have already seen in your agency or will be seeing in the very near future.

In *Artificial Intelligence in Parks and Recreation: How Can Illinois Lead the Way?* on page 20, Neelay Bhatt talks about the pros and cons of artificial intelligence and what you should be ready to tackle. You'll find Leon Younger's article, *Gaming and Esports: A Rapidly Rising Recreational Activity and a Competitive Sport*, on page 26, where he discusses the emergence of gaming leagues in park districts. Finally, Northbrook Park District shares how it is combining green initiatives with technology on page 32 in *Long-term Commitments to Innovation in Parks and Recreation*.

I hope that these stories give you a handle on what you can do to take advantage of technology in your communities. Be sure to give our digital issues of Illinois Parks and Recreation a read as well! Thanks for reading!

— Wayne Utterback, Editor

**Photo Credit:** This issue's cover image is from Casey Smith of the Pekin Park District, which earned third place in the Recreation/People at Play category of the 2022 Give Us Your Best Shot photo contest.



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Peter M. Murphy, Esq., CAE, IOM  
IAPD President and CEO

# Calling All Board Members: This Conference is for You

As we enter the new year, the opportunity to hone your leadership skills and learn about all things parks and recreation is just around the corner. The IAPD/IPRA state conference will be taking place on January 25-27, 2024. This is the largest state conference in the country with an attendance exceeding the states of California, Florida, and Texas combined. This means more sessions with outstanding speakers than at any other location. The Soaring to New Heights Conference offers a number of sessions designed specifically for new and seasoned commissioners to expand their board knowledge, become more effective board members, and sharpen their leadership skills. Take the opportunity to register today and plan to attend this outstanding conference. Here is a sampling of some of the excellent educational sessions available to you.

## **Responsible Leadership - Choosing How We Show Up For Others**

Thursday, 1/25/2024 - 12:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.  
There are four principles for Responsible Leadership, and each of those principles needs to be practiced and demonstrated regularly to enhance team engagement, to develop others through effective delegation and coaching, and to create the environment that builds the next generation of leaders. Research from Harvard Business Review shows that if you are a good leader your impact on your team and your team's direct reports has positive ramifications throughout the organization.

## **Social Media & the Law: Facebook? Instagram? X?**

Thursday, 1/25/2024 - 3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
Julie Tappendorf, an attorney at Ancel Glink and the author of the book "Social Media & Local Governments: Navigating the New Public Square," will discuss the various legal issues that arise in government use of social media, including First Amendment free speech protections, Copyright Act compliance, among many other legal issues.

## **Board Member to Board Leader, Part 1**

Friday, 1/26/2024 - 8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.  
This session will help individual board members ensure that they are being impactful in a positive way. If you are looking for a session that goes beyond the nuts and bolts and digs into real, meaningful, and applicable board topics, then look no further!

## **Board Member to Board Leader, Part 2**

Friday, 1/26/2024 - 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.  
We will dive into NEW topics like working with difficult residents, promoting long-term thinking, advancing agenda items, leading efficient meetings, and assessing your director.

## **Legal/Legislative Part I**

Friday, 1/26/2024 - 8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

## **Legal/Legislative Part II**

Friday, 1/26/2024 - 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.  
Review the many new laws, regulations, court decisions and PAC opinions issued in 2023 with top legal experts.

## **"Survey Says...!" - Best Practices for Community Surveys and Public Engagement**

Friday, 1/26/2024 - 3:45 p.m. - 4:45 p.m.  
Interested in knowing how your community really feels? Keep up with the latest community engagement trends as survey design techniques and new technology continually evolve to address changing respondent preferences.

## **Bidding and Managing a Successful Construction Project**

Friday, 1/26/2024 - 3:45 p.m. - 4:45 p.m.  
The presenters will address when bidding is required, bidding procedures and related problems, how to determine lowest responsible bidder, what to do with defective bids, and when and how to use government joint purchasing cooperatives.

## **So You Want To Stay Out Of Jail?**

Friday, 1/26/2024 - 3:45 p.m. - 4:45 p.m.  
Over the last couple of years there have been some significant criminal trials of Illinois officials. This interactive presentation will examine the Gift Ban Act, Prohibited Political Activity, Conflicts of Interest, Whistleblower Protections and Confidentiality of Closed Sessions.

## Not In My Park! Regulating Controversial Park Activities

Saturday, 1/27/2024 - 10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.  
Park agencies manage many acres of public space where sometimes controversial activities take place. What authority does your organization have to address protests, pickleball, and more?

## Using Robert's Rules of Order in Your Meetings

Saturday, 1/27/2024 - 10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.  
If you are an officer or a board member, it is important to understand how to use Robert's Rules of Order (RONR) during your meeting.

## Boardmanship Essentials Part I

Saturday, 1/27/2024 - 10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.  
This session provides comprehensive information every commissioner needs in order to conduct effective, legal meetings, avoid illegal meetings, follow best practices for special, closed and emergency meetings, comply with current public participation requirements, and observe important special voting rules, electronic participation laws, and the duties and limits of each officer's role.

## Boardmanship Essentials Part II

Saturday, 1/27/2024 - 12:30 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.  
This session explores the often difficult legal and practical challenges of governing with a rogue commissioner, a divided board, and/or an angry public. We will address leadership principles and the legal and practical tools available to overcome challenges, restore board credibility, and grow professionalism. We will identify the traits of an exceptional board.

## Having a Healthy and Prosperous Relationship with your Executive Director

Saturday, 1/27/2024 - 12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.  
Based upon 25 years of advising park boards, hear the do's and don'ts for a happy and functional relationship between the board and the executive director.

## Legal and Economic Update

Saturday, 1/27/2024 - 12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.  
This session will update participants on recent state legislation as it impacts park projects.

## Commissioner Roundtable: The Importance of DEI at our Agencies, Part I

Saturday, 1/27/2024 - 12:30 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.  
In this session, a group of commissioners and executive directors from Champions for Change award winning agencies, will discuss topics relating to implementing diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives at their park districts and in their communities.

## Commissioner Roundtable: The Importance of DEI at our Agencies, Part II

Saturday, 1/27/2024 - 2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.  
This dynamic roundtable discussion will provide an opportunity for an engaging DEI Q and A.

## The Importance of the Board Policy Manual - Why You Need One and What You Can Do With It

Saturday, 1/27/2024 - 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.  
This session will examine best practices for policies to include in the Manual and how the Manual assists with decision making for your agency. We will also examine ways to avoid being tied down by policies and procedures that stifle the process of getting business done.

## Role of Board Members and Leadership in a Crisis

Saturday, 1/27/2024 - 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.  
What happens when a crisis arises? Leadership and board members should be prepared to address the issue with clarity, transparency and accuracy. Attendees will learn the lifecycle of a crisis, what steps to take and how to communicate effectively during a crisis, and what opportunities arise for strong leadership during a crisis.

*On behalf of the Staff and Board of the IAPD, I wish you and your family peace, joy, and happiness during this holiday season. I hope to see you in person, January 25-27, 2024, at the Hyatt Regency Chicago.*

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March 28-30, 2024

**Financial Sustainability Certification Program**  
Chevy Chase Country Club  
Wheeling Park District

May 7, 2024

**Parks Day at the Capitol**  
State Capitol, Springfield

May 7, 2024

**Legislative Reception**  
Illini Country Club,  
Springfield

May 8, 2024

**Legislative Conference**  
Crowne Plaza, Springfield

April-May

**Flying 4 Kids Months**  
Statewide Kite Fly

August 17, 2024

**Park District Conservation Day**  
State Fairgrounds, Springfield

October 25, 2024

**Best of the Best Awards Gala**  
Chevy Chase Country Club  
Wheeling Park District

November 7, 2024

**Legal Symposium**  
Hyatt Lodge/Conference Center  
Oak Brook, IL

January 23-25, 2025

**2025 IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference**  
Hyatt Regency, Chicago

Visit [ILparks.org](http://ILparks.org) and listen to our latest Park Cast podcasts!



By Heather Weishaar  
IPRA Communications & Marketing Director

## Strategies for a Happy Workplace and Attracting Top Talent

What are your strategies for a happy workplace, with low turnover? How do you stand out from the crowd and recruit new employees?

Let's start with retention - employee retention has always been a hot topic. Organizations, both big and small, are constantly searching for innovative ways to keep their workforce engaged, motivated, and loyal. While traditional methods like competitive salaries and benefits packages are essential, today's forward-thinking organizations are taking employee retention to a whole new level. Let's explore some strategies that are changing the way employers retain their valuable talent.

- **Friendly competition:** According to a recent Forbes magazine article, there are several benefits of healthy competition in the workplace – like boosting creativity and innovation, and also creating a sense of comradery and a healthy office dynamic. To make the most of friendly competition, consider incorporating a variety of activities and games to keep things fresh and engaging. Ideas like trivia games, office decorating contests, and even a game of bingo can all promote healthy competition while adding an element of fun to the workplace. Consider periodically switching up teams or creating cross-departmental collaborations. This not only allows employees to get to know each other better but also promotes diversity of thought and skill-sharing across the organization.
- **Appreciate your seasonal staff:** Lynn Wiltfong, Human Resources & Risk Manager at the Glen Ellyn Park District, highlighted their commitment to providing part-time and seasonal employees with a range of incentives and benefits. These offerings include referral bonuses and end-of-season bonuses, complimentary access to fitness facilities, as well as access to the pool and mini golf, along with four guest passes to invite friends along. When seasonal and part-time staff feel valued and enjoy a positive experience, it not only encourages their return but also prompts them to share their positive experiences with others!

- **Engage your staff:** Acknowledging that a primary source of employee discontent and subsequent departure can be attributed to inadequate management or an unhealthy organizational culture, Nikki Ginger, Senior Consultant at BerryDunn, encourages leaders to assess the workplace environment by conducting an annual, anonymous staff survey. Nikki also suggests that managers have regular 'engagement conversations' with staff – have them respond to statements like 'I get a feeling of personal fulfillment in my role' or 'My personal strengths are being fully utilized.' A strong organizational culture will naturally attract – and keep - talent at your agency, mitigating recruitment challenges.

- **Offer valuable learning opportunities:** You ought to be supporting your employees in their growth and development, rather than just enhancing their existing skills. When employees feel that their employer invests in their growth, they tend to be more engaged and committed. This engagement can lead to increased productivity, job satisfaction, and a stronger sense of belonging.

How do you attract top talent? While the tried-and-true methods like job postings and networking still hold their ground, forward-thinking organizations are adding a dash of innovation to their recruitment recipe. Let's explore some strategies that are changing the way organizations find and hire their next stars.

- **Hire for fit, train for skills:** Prioritize cultural fit during the hiring process and invest in skill development afterward. Approach candidate interviews with an open perspective. Someone who might not seem like the ideal match on paper could become a valuable asset within your team dynamics. Are they eager to learn and bring a fresh perspective to the role? Identifying talent that aligns with your organization's culture can substantially enhance employee engagement, satisfaction, and support long-term retention.



- Use your social media: Interview your current staff and ask them what they love most about their job, the organization's culture, and the opportunities they've had. Share these stories on platforms like TikTok. Highlighting the genuine enthusiasm of your employees can be a compelling recruitment tool. You don't need fancy equipment to create an amazing video – use your smartphone, and there are plenty of free video editing software options – like Vimeo and iMovie.

Give candidates a glimpse into your workplace environment by sharing photos from employee events, such as team meetings, team-building activities, and celebrations like birthdays or work anniversaries. These images not only showcase the fun side of your company culture but also emphasize the importance of teamwork and camaraderie within your organization.

Don't forget to interact with your social media posts - respond to comments and messages promptly. Engaging with potential candidates or those interested in your organization can help establish a connection and answer their questions directly, making them feel valued and more likely to consider joining your team.

- Partner with other organizations: Collaborating with other organizations can be a strategic and mutually beneficial approach to recruiting seasonal staff, as shared by Shannon Tovey, Support Staff Manager at the Southeast Association for Special Parks and Recreation (SEASPAR). In her role, Shannon established a partnership with Midwestern University's Doctor of Dental Medicine program. In this case, aspiring dentists gain hands-on experience, and a deeper understanding, of working with individuals with special needs. Darleen Negrillo, Superintendent of Administrative Services at Northwest Special Recreation Association (NWSRA) shared a similar strategy – they work with area nursing programs. They also work with local high school 'buddy programs' - a program matching volunteers with participants who share their age and have disabilities.

Your professional network is an invaluable resource. Reach out to fellow IPRA members for ideas and resources – what strategies are other agencies using? Share your own successes openly and generously, fostering a collaborative spirit that benefits everyone in the field. Building on the collective wisdom of your IPRA network will be key to creating a happy and stable workplace with low turnover, consistently attracting top-tier talent.

# renew today!

**Your IPRA membership expires 12.31.23**  
**Renew at ILipra.org**





By Duane Smith, CPRP  
IPRA Education Director

## Navigating the Future: Embracing Trends with ChatGPT

As a former practitioner in the park, recreation, and conservation industry, I've always believed in the power of staying informed about the latest trends and innovations. It's what keeps the field vibrant and responsive to the evolving needs of communities, and it adds fulfillment to the challenging responsibility of serving the public. However, innovation comes with risk, especially that daunting feeling of vulnerability and the possibility of failure. I recently faced a challenge that pushed me out of my comfort zone - understanding and embracing a new concept: ChatGPT. "It's just a glorified Google search," I thought. Well, I was proven wrong, and like any other journey of innovation, it was an eye-opening experience.

The rapid pace of technological advancement has brought with it an array of tools and applications designed to enhance the way we work and interact. One such innovation is ChatGPT, a state-of-the-art AI language model designed to engage in conversation with users, thus providing information and assistance on a wide range of topics. My initial encounter with it, a Chat GPT demonstration on a colleague's iOS device at the local pub, left me both curious and apprehensive. "How could AI assist in the mission of creating vibrant and sustainable parks and recreational spaces?" I wondered. With just a few test runs in my free OpenAI account, I learned that ChatGPT has the potential to revolutionize the way professionals communicate, plan, and execute projects in parks, recreation, and conservation. It can help you engage with your communities more effectively, streamline administrative tasks, and provide valuable insights for decision-making.

Some significant benefits of understanding and practicing industry trends like ChatGPT include improved efficiency for daily tasks and enhancing community engagement. By leveraging AI for administrative purposes, you can free up more time and resources for what truly matters - creating exceptional recreational experiences. Whether it's automating routine communications, managing schedules, or responding to inquiries and feedback from the public, ChatGPT can handle it all, allowing you to focus on the creative and strategic aspects of your work. Additionally,

ChatGPT has the ability to analyze vast amounts of data to help you better understand the needs and preferences of your diverse communities. This insight enables you to tailor your programs and services to be more inclusive and appealing, ultimately fostering stronger connections with residents.

While the benefits of embracing industry trends are undeniable, there are challenges to consider as well. Understanding and implementing something new can be met with resistance. Admittedly, I was introduced to ChatGPT with skepticism because I found myself mostly questioning its relevancy and feel of human interaction. While the task of understanding this new concept seemed daunting and ambiguous, the benefit of embracing the opportunity was well worth the effort. I was so pleased with ChatGPT's realistic response to my inquiry that I used it as the foundation for this publication's *Education Corner* article. What typically takes a few days to complete due to the editing process, this article was completed in just a few hours. Moreover, there's always a learning curve with new concepts and ideas, which requires your valuable time. Unless you are intentional about learning for personal or professional gain, you'll never have the time for it. Always remember, continuously learning about new trends helps you innovate, bring fresh ideas to work, and enhance your value proposition to your employer.

My short journey thus far into the world of ChatGPT and AI has reinforced my belief in the importance of staying informed about industry trends and the value they provide to communities. As park, recreation, and conservation professionals, you have a responsibility to create spaces and experiences that enrich the lives of your communities. Embracing industry trends like ChatGPT is not just about keeping up with the times; it's about enhancing your ability to fulfill that responsibility. So, continue to be open-minded and willing to adapt as we navigate the future together, armed with the powerful tools of innovation and knowledge.

*OpenAI. "ChatGPT: Conversational AI Language Model." OpenAI Platform. [To see Duane's original inquiry, visit <https://bit.ly/IPRGPT>*

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## IAPD's Online Resources Available At Your Fingertips

IAPD members that were not among the 100,000 visits to the IAPD website last year are missing out on a great resource. ILparks.org is a repository of information providing members with legal and legislative information, research, educational tools, and other resources to assist with board governance, administration, and day-to-day operations.

The following are just a few examples of information that is available to IAPD members 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

- A history of referendum results on all ballot measures affecting parks, recreation, and conservation in Illinois since 2001
- The latest information on state, federal, and other grant opportunities
- A customized search tool to allow agencies to explore demographic, tax, and additional information and statistics about other IAPD member agencies to be used for benchmarking or similar comparisons
- A comprehensive list of all legislation that IAPD is tracking at the Capitol with a brief synopsis and the latest bill status
- IAPD's current Legal Calendar, Election Calendar, Legislative Calendar, and Legislative Awareness Calendar
- All episodes of IAPD's *Park Cast*
- Legal Resources on more than 30 different topics including model policies, templates, legal primers, and other training materials
- Answers to frequently asked legal questions
- Local Government Efficiency Committee resources, including a sample template
- Webinars and educational materials
- All IAPD Legislative Updates along with numerous advocacy tools
- Easy access to a broad array of federal and state resources on a wide variety of legal and regulatory requirements
- Information about all upcoming IAPD events and details on IAPD publications

This is only a small sample of the resources that we are continuously updating with the latest information. However, several exciting new resources have been recently added as detailed below.

### IAPD Research

During the past decade, IAPD has engaged in numerous cutting edge research projects to support our member agencies. All of this research is available to members under the IAPD Research section of the website, so if your agency has not availed itself of this valuable member benefit, I urge you to do so.

For instance, earlier this year, aQity Research & Insights, Inc. completed an updated statewide citizen satisfaction survey for IAPD that is similar to surveys we completed in 2002 and 2013. The following are among the key findings that are incorporated into a full report that is available under the IAPD research section of the website:

- The availability of recreational programs and facilities and the amount of open space rank among the top three attributes having the biggest impact on a community's perceived quality of life.
- 87% of Illinoisans feel that their local park district is representative and inclusive of all groups in their community.
- Park districts, forest preserves, and conservation districts continue to be held in the highest regard among Illinois residents in comparison to other units of local government.
- 88% of residents agree that parks and open space help to improve local property values.

- Most residents continue to express a willingness to pay for acquiring open space for more trails and maintaining/improving existing park and recreational facilities.
- The vast majority of recent forest preserve and conservation district visitors highly rate their overall experience at these destinations, the amount of agency acreage available, the overall accessibility to these locations, cleanliness and upkeep, and personal safety.

A new five-panel brochure that highlights these positive findings has also been completed and is available at [ILparks.org](http://ILparks.org). Printed copies can be ordered through the IAPD Store.

aQity Research & Insights will soon complete the final analysis of another important IAPD research project: an updated W-2 and Revenue Analysis for park districts, forest preserves, conservation districts, municipal recreation agencies, and special recreation agencies, which will demonstrate the significant role that these agencies represent as employers and job generators within their communities. In addition to the comprehensive report of these statewide findings, each responding agency will also receive charts and graphics that illustrate their own agency's data, and all of this data will be posted to the IAPD website.

## IAPD Position Papers

During the past several months, IAPD has published 13 new policy position papers on various topics impacting park and recreation agencies. These position papers are a concise representation of, and outline, IAPD's approach and proposed actions regarding a myriad of topics, including:

- Before and After School Programming - The Role of Park Districts, Forest Preserves, Conservation and Recreation Agencies
- Capital Funding for Illinois Park, Conservation, and Recreation Agencies
- The Economic Impact of Park Districts, Forest Preserves, Conservation and Recreation Agencies in Illinois
- Ethical Conduct of Park Districts, Recreation and Conservation Agency Boards
- Healthy Living – The Role of Park Districts, Forest Preserves, Conservation and Recreation Agencies
- Recreation Access at Park, Recreation, and Conservation Agencies for People with Special Needs
- Local Government Consolidation in Illinois
- Operations Funding for Illinois Park, Recreation, and Conservation Agencies

- Partnerships and Intergovernmental Cooperation for Park Districts, Forest Preserves, Conservation and Recreation Agencies
- Preserving Open Space and Protecting Natural Resources in Illinois – The Role of Park, Recreation, and Conservation Agencies
- Safety in Park Districts, Forest Preserves, Conservation and Recreation Agencies
- Senior Services – The Role of Park Districts, Forest Preserves, Conservation and Recreation Agencies
- Youth Employment at Park Districts, Forest Preserves, Conservation and Recreation Agencies

These policy position statements will also serve as guiding documents in our legislative advocacy efforts and interactions with legislators, member agencies, and other interested parties. I encourage you to have a goal to review each of these position papers on the IAPD website before the end of the year.

## Another Valuable IAPD Resource Coming Soon

Another very exciting member resource is coming soon!

Among the best practices that many park districts have implemented are comprehensive board governance policy manuals to help guide their agency's operations. Frequently, when districts undertake a review of their existing manual or begin to develop one for the first time, they seek IAPD's assistance with examples.

Because park districts lead the way in intergovernmental cooperation, they are always willing to share with their colleagues. However, like each park district itself, no two of these manuals are the same. This fall, with the assistance of a graduate intern who reviewed and evaluated more than a dozen policy and procedure manuals from park districts throughout the state, IAPD compiled a comprehensive set of examples that agencies can use to establish or update their own board policy and procedure manual.

Dozens of sample board governance policies and procedures related to elections, annual meetings, board meeting best practices, board member attendance and responsibilities, ethical conduct, and financial procedures are included along with many others. We believe this project will help park districts improve efficiency in their operations and thus advance the overall quality of their parks and recreation programming.

Again, all of the examples discussed above represent a small sample of the information that is available at [ILparks.org](http://ILparks.org). If you have not done so recently, I strongly encourage you to peruse the IAPD website today.

# legal calendar 2024

Prepared by Peter M. Murphy, IAPD President/CEO & Jason A. Anselment, IAPD General Counsel

The following park district calendar includes key dates and duties based upon a fiscal year that begins on May 1 and ends on April 30. For those park districts that have adopted another date for the commencement of the fiscal year (70 ILCS 1205/4-4), this calendar must be adjusted for those duties that must be performed at times related to the fiscal year. The calendar is also established around regular park board meetings held on the third Thursday of each month. Selected election dates are based on the General Primary Election to be held on March 19, 2024, and the General Election to take place on November 5, 2024. For additional election dates, consult the Tools section of the IAPD website, ILparks.org.

This Legal Calendar was compiled by the Illinois Association of Park Districts as a resource for our members. It is not an exhaustive list of every law that may impact park districts or a substitute for individual legal research. As with any question requiring legal advice, you should contact your park district's attorney. For questions or additional information, you may also contact the IAPD.

All statutory references are to the Illinois Compiled Statutes (ILCS).

## ANNUAL REQUIREMENTS

### AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CALENDAR (OR FISCAL) YEAR:

- Post the date, time and place of park district regular meetings for the year. Mail copies to the news media. (5 ILCS 120/2.02)
- Review the requirement that all closed sessions are to be recorded verbatim by audio or video. (5 ILCS 120/2.06)
- Review the requirement that open meeting minutes must be approved within 30 days after the meeting or at the public body's second subsequent regular meeting, whichever is later, and made available for public inspection within 10 days after approval. (5 ILCS 120/2.06)
- Review the requirements that all Open Meetings Act and Freedom of Information Act officers must complete the Illinois Attorney General's annual training requirements. Newly appointed officers must complete the training within 30 days after designation or assuming the position. (5 ILCS 120/1.05; 5 ILCS 140/3.5(b))
- Review the requirement that newly elected or appointed members of a public body must successfully complete a course on the Open Meetings Act offered by the Illinois Association of Park Districts or the electronic training curriculum on the Open Meetings Act developed by the Illinois Attorney General's Public Access Counselor within 90 days of their oath of office or otherwise assuming their responsibilities if no oath is required. (5 ILCS 140/1.05)
- Review the requirement that all local governments with Internet

websites are required to post on that website an email address for their elected officials for the public's use in contacting those officials and post a hyperlink on the local government's homepage to allow the public easy access to the contact information. (50 ILCS 205/20)

- Review with the park district treasurer the requirement that all funds of the district not immediately needed for disbursement must be invested within two working days at prevailing interest rates or better. (30 ILCS 225/1)
- Review the requirement that every person, other than the treasurer, receiving money for the district must keep a triplicate record of the money, and deliver the money to the treasurer not later than the middle of the month following the month of receipt. (30 ILCS 20/1)
- The American flag must be displayed and flown each day of the week from each City Hall or Village Hall and Village Square and at the principal entrance to all supervised public parks. (5 ILCS 465/3b)
- Contributions to the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund (IMRF) must be deducted each pay period from covered employees' pay and remitted to the IMRF along with the contribution from the local government. (40 ILCS 5/7-132, 7-172, 7-173)
- Districts that have employees under Social Security must send their FICA contributions at such times as may be designated by the Internal Revenue Service. (40 ILCS 5/21-105.2, 21-109)
- Review the requirement that all newly hired employees must be reported to the Illinois Department of

Employment Security. (820 ILCS 405/1801.1)

- For persons or entities required to report under the Lobbyist Registration Act, review reporting requirements for expenditures. (25 ILCS 170/6, 170/6.5)
- All employers must post a notice developed by the Illinois Department of Human Rights (IDHR) and include information concerning an employee's rights in any employee handbook. Samples of these required notices are available on the IDHR's website. 775 ILCS 5/2-102(K)
- For IMRF employers with a website, ensure that the district's website contains a hyperlink to the IMRF webpage that includes the statutorily required information pertaining to all participating municipalities (40 ILCS 5/7-135.5)
- Review the requirement that Illinois employers must provide sexual harassment prevention training to all employees at least once a year. (775 ILCS 5/2-109)
- All employers that provide group health insurance coverage to their employees must provide all eligible employees with a written list of covered benefits in a format that easily compares those covered benefits with the essential health insurance benefits that are required of individual health insurance coverage that is regulated by the state. The information must be provided upon hire, annually, and upon request, but the employer may do so by email or by providing the information on a website that an employee is able to regularly access.
- Upon commencement of employment and at least once each

year of employment, every employee shall receive a written summary or a complete copy of Section 4.1 of the Public Officer Prohibited Activities Act pertaining to and prohibiting retaliation against whistleblowers. At the same time, the employee shall also receive a copy of the written processes and procedures for reporting improper governmental actions from the applicable auditing official. (50 ILCS 105/4.1)

## EVERY SIX MONTHS

Unpublished written minutes of all closed meetings are to be reviewed at least every 6 months, or as soon thereafter as is practicable, taking into account the nature and meeting schedule of the public body, to determine if (a) the need for confidentiality still exists as to all or part of those minutes, or (b) if the minutes or portions thereof no longer require confidential treatment and are available for public inspection. The results of the review are to be reported in the open session of the board of commissioners. (5 ILCS 120/2.06)

Check the IAPD database to verify that all information is up to date for your agency.

## NOVEMBER 2023

### NOVEMBER 20

Last day notice of intention to file a petition to create a political subdivision, whose officers are to be elected rather than appointed, may be published in a newspaper within the proposed political subdivision, or if none, in a newspaper of general circulation within the proposed territory for the General Primary Election. (10 ILCS 5/28-2(g))

### NOVEMBER 20

Last day to file petitions (must contain original sheets signed by voters and circulators) to create a political subdivision with the appropriate officer or board (for park districts, circuit court clerk) for the General Primary Election. (10 ILCS 5/28-2(b))

NOTE: The specific statutory provisions governing the creation of political subdivisions can be found in the relevant Code governing such subdivisions.

NOTE: Objections can be filed on or before the date of the hearing with the appropriate circuit court clerk. (10 ILCS 5/28-4)

NOTE: If initial officers are to be elected at the election for creation of a new unit of government, candidates for such offices shall file nomination papers 113-106 days before such election (November 27 – December 4, 2023). (10 ILCS 5/10-6)

NOTE: The circuit court clerk shall publish the hearing date for a public policy petition filed in his/her office not later than 14 days after the petition is actually filed, but at least 5 days before actual hearing. Final orders within 7 days of hearing. (10 ILCS 5/28-4)

### NOVEMBER 29

Last day to file objections to a petition to create a political subdivision in the office of the appropriate officer where the petitions were originally filed (for park districts, circuit court clerk) for the General Primary Election. (10 ILCS 5/10-8, 28-4)

## DECEMBER 2023

### DECEMBER 18

Last day for filing of petitions (must contain original sheets signed by voters and circulators) for referenda for the submission of questions of public policy (local) for the General Primary Election. [EXCEPTION: Proposition to create a political subdivision, referenda held under the provisions of Article IX of the Liquor Control Act and Section 18-120 of the Property Tax Code. (10 ILCS 5/28-2, 2A-1.1b, 28-6, 28-7)]

NOTE: Petitions to initiate back door referenda must be filed under the deadline specified in the specific statute authorizing the referenda, but in no case later than 92 days prior to the ensuing election.

### DECEMBER 26

Last day to file objections to petitions for referenda for the submission of questions of public policy (local). Objections to petitions for local referenda are filed with the same office in which the original petitions were filed for the General Primary Election. [EXCEPTION: Proposition to create a political subdivision, referenda held under the provisions of Article IX of the Liquor Control Act, and Section 18-120 of the Property Tax Code.] (10 ILCS 5/10-8, 28-4)

## JANUARY 2024

### JANUARY 2

Last day for local governing boards to adopt a resolution or ordinance to allow a binding public question to appear on the ballot for the General Primary Election. (10 ILCS 5/28-2(c))

### JANUARY 2

Last day for county, municipal, school, township, and park boards to place advisory referenda on the ballot by resolution for the General Primary Election. (10 ILCS 5/28-2(c); 55 ILCS 5/2-3002, 5-1005.5; 60 ILCS 1/30-205, 80-80; 65 ILCS 5/3.1-40-60; 70 ILCS 1205/8-30; 105 ILCS 5/9-1.5)

### JANUARY 11

Last day for the circuit clerk and the local election official to certify any binding public question or advisory referenda to the election authority having jurisdiction over the political subdivision for the General Primary Election. (10 ILCS 5/28-5)

### JANUARY 18

Regular January board meeting.

### JANUARY 19

First day for the election authority to publish a notice of any question of public policy to be voted upon within the jurisdiction at the General Primary Election. The election authority shall also post a copy of the notice at the principal office of the election authority. The local election official shall also post a copy of the notice at the principal office of the political or governmental subdivision. If there is no principal office, the local election official shall post the notice at the building in which the governing body of the political or governmental subdivision held its first meeting of the calendar year in which the referenda is being held. (10 ILCS 5/12-5)

### JANUARY 25-27

Attend the IAPD/IPRA Annual Conference, Hyatt Regency Chicago.

### JANUARY 31

Last day to file with the chief county assessment officer for all tax exempt real estate an affidavit/certificate of exempt status stating whether there has been any change in the ownership or use of the exempt real estate and the nature of any such change to continue the exemption of park property from real estate taxes. (35 ILCS 200/15-10)

NOTE: Copies of leases or agreements related to exempt property that is leased, loaned or otherwise available for profit must be filed with the assessment officer. (35 ILCS 200-15-15)

## FEBRUARY 2024

### FEBRUARY 1

Last day by which the chief administrative officer or his or her designee for a unit of local government with persons described in items (a), (b) and (c) of Section 4A-101.5 of the Illinois Governmental Ethics Act shall certify to the appropriate county clerk a list of names and addresses of such persons who are required to file statements of economic interest. In preparing the lists, each chief administrative officer or his or her designee shall set out the names in alphabetical order. (5 ILCS 420/4A-106.5)

### FEBRUARY 15

Regular February board meeting.

## MARCH 2024

### MARCH 11

Last day for the election authority to publish a notice of any question of public policy to be voted upon within the jurisdiction at the General Primary Election. The election authority shall also post a copy of the notice at the principal office of the election authority. The local election official shall also post a copy of the notice at the principal office of the political or governmental subdivision. If there is no principal office, the local election official shall post the notice at the building in which the governing body of the political or governmental subdivision held its first meeting of the calendar year in which the referenda is being held. (10 ILCS 5/12-5)

### MARCH 19

General Primary Election

### MARCH 21

Regular March board meeting

## APRIL 2024

### APRIL 1

Last day by which the county clerk of each county shall notify all persons whose names have been certified to him or her, other than candidates for office who have filed their statements with their nominating petitions, of the requirements for filing statements of economic interests. The Illinois Governmental Ethics Act, 5 ILCS 420/4A-101.5, requires the following persons to file verified written statements of economic interests: (a) Persons who are elected to office in a unit of local government, and candidates for nomination or election to that office; (b) Persons appointed to the governing board of a unit of local government and persons appointed to a board or commission of a unit of local government who have the authority to authorize the expenditure of public funds but not members of boards or commissions who function in an advisory capacity; (c) Persons who are employed by a unit of local government and are compensated for services as employees and not as independent contractors, and who:

1. are, or function as, the head of a department, division, bureau, authority or other administrative unit within the unit of local government, or who exercise similar authority within the unit of local government;

2. have direct supervisory authority over, or direct responsibility for the formulation, negotiation, issuance, or execution of contracts entered into by the unit of local government in the amount of \$1,000 or greater;

3. have authority to approve licenses and permits by the unit of local government (this item does not include employees who function in a ministerial capacity);

4. adjudicate, arbitrate, or decide any judicial or administrative proceeding, or review the adjudication, arbitration or decision of any judicial or administrative proceeding within the authority of the unit of local government;

5. have authority to issue or adopt rules and regulations within areas under the authority of the unit of local government; or

6. have supervisory responsibility for 20 or more employees of the unit of local government. (5 ILCS 420/4A-106.5; 5 ILCS 420/4A-101.5)

#### **APRIL 1**

The suggested date to prepare the budget and appropriation ordinance in tentative form and place on file for public inspection at least 30 days prior to final action. (All park districts are required to adopt a combined budget and appropriation ordinance within or before the first quarter of each fiscal year.) (70 ILCS 1205/4-4)

**NOTE 1:** IMRF employers must post on their website or at their principal office the total compensation package of employees with a total compensation of \$150,000 or more per year at least six days before the employer approves the total compensation package. The employer must also post the total compensation package within six business days after approving their budget for employees with a total compensation package in excess of \$75,000 or more. If the employer maintains a website, it may choose to post a physical copy of this information at the principal office of the employer in lieu of posting the information directly on the website, but the employer must post directions on the website on how to access the information. (5 ILCS 120/7.3)

**NOTE 2:** Before an IMRF employer increases the earnings of an officer, executive or manager by more than 12 percent, the employer must obtain a "Pension Impact Statement" from the IMRF which states the effects of the salary increase on the employee's pension benefits. (40 ILCS 5/7-225)

#### **APRIL 18**

Regular April board meeting.

### **MAY 2024**

#### **MAY 1**

Update IAPD with information pertaining to new commissioners and verify accuracy of other information.

#### **MAY 1**

The last date for filing statements of economic interest for persons who have not previously filed during the calendar year. (5 ILCS 420/4A-105)

**NOTE 1:** Failure to file a statement of economic interests within the time prescribed shall not result in a fine or ineligibility for, or forfeiture of, office or position of employment, provided that the failure to file results from not being included for notification by the appropriate agency, clerk, secretary, officer or unit of government, and that a statement is filed within 30 days of actual notice of the failure to file. (5 ILCS 420/4A-105)

**NOTE 2:** All statements of economic interests shall be available for examination and copying by the public at all reasonable times. (5 ILCS 420/4A-106.5)

**NOTE 3:** Any person required to file a statement of economic interests who willfully files a false or incomplete statement shall be guilty of a Class A misdemeanor; provided, a filer's statement made in reasonable, good faith reliance on the guidance provided by the Illinois Secretary of State pursuant to Section 4A-102 or his or her ethics officer shall not constitute a willful false or incomplete statement. Failure to file a statement within the time prescribed shall result in ineligibility for, or forfeiture of, office or position of employment,

as the case may be; provided, however, that if the notice of failure to file a statement of economic interests is not given by the county clerk, no forfeiture shall result if a statement is filed within 30 days of actual notice of the failure to file. (5 ILCS 420/4A-107)

**NOTE 4:** The county clerk with whom a statement is to be filed may, in his or her discretion, waive the late fees and penalties, and the ineligibility for or forfeiture of office or position for failure to file when the person's late filing of or failure to file is due to (i) serious or catastrophic illness that renders the person temporarily incapable of completing the statement or (ii) military service. (5 ILCS 420/4A-105)

#### **MAY 1**

(Beginning of new fiscal year.) The date to post the dates, times and places of park district regular meetings for the fiscal year. Mail copies to news media. (As an alternative, this can be done at the beginning of the calendar year.) (5 ILCS 120/2.02; 2.03)

#### **MAY 1**

The date to start the annual audit. Every governmental unit receiving revenues of \$850,000 or more is required to make an annual audit to cover the immediately preceding fiscal year. The audit must be completed and the audit report filed with the Illinois Comptroller within 180 days after the close of the fiscal year. All governmental units are also required to file a copy of the completed report with the county clerk. (50 ILCS 310/2 and 310/3)

**NOTE 1:** Any governmental unit receiving revenue of less than \$850,000 for any fiscal year is required to file a financial report with the Comptroller in lieu of an audit. Governmental units receiving revenue less than \$850,000 for any fiscal year must also provide copies of this annual financial report to each member of that governmental unit's governing board of elected officials and present it either in person or by a live phone or web connection during a public meeting and have the financial report approved by a 3/5 majority vote. Otherwise, that unit must cause an audit of the account to be made once every four years in addition to filing the annual financial report with the Comptroller.

**NOTE 2:** Any governmental unit receiving revenue of \$850,000 or more shall, in addition to complying with the audit requirements, file a financial report on forms required by the Comptroller. (50 ILCS 310/3)

**NOTE 3:** Pursuant to 50 ILCS 310/2 and 310/3, these reports must be submitted to the Comptroller electronically unless the governmental unit provides the Comptroller's Office with sufficient evidence that the reports cannot be filed electronically and the Comptroller waives the requirement.

#### **MAY 1**

The date to begin preparation of the Statement of Receipts and Disbursements. (30 ILCS 15/1)

#### **MAY 3**

The suggested date to publish notice of a public hearing on the budget and appropriation ordinance (must be done at least one week prior to hearing). (70 ILCS 1205/4-4)

#### **MAY 7-8**

Attend the IAPD Legislative Conference in Springfield. The Legislative Reception is held the evening of May 7 with the conference starting the next morning on May 8. May 7 is Parks Day at the Capitol with park district, forest preserve, conservation district and special recreation displays lining the Capitol Rotunda.

#### **MAY 16**

Regular May board meeting. This is the suggested date to hold the public hearing on the budget and appropriation ordinance and the date for enacting the ordinance at the board meeting following the hearing. (70 ILCS 1205/4-4)

**NOTE 1:** The budget and appropriation ordinance must be made available in tentative form for public inspection at least 30 days prior to final action thereon.

**NOTE 2:** All taxing districts are also required to file a certified copy of their budget and appropriation ordinances with the county clerk within 30 days of adoption, as well as an estimate, certified by the district's chief



fiscal officer, of revenues, by source, anticipated to be received by the taxing district in the following fiscal year. Failure of a district to file the required document will authorize the county clerk to refuse to extend the tax levy imposed by the governing authority until such documents are filed. (35 ILCS 200/18-50)

#### **MAY 24**

General Assembly scheduled to adjourn.

### **JUNE 2024**

#### **JUNE 6**

First day notice of intention to file a petition to create a political subdivision, whose officers are to be elected rather than appointed, may be published in a newspaper within the proposed political subdivision, or if none, in a newspaper of general circulation within the proposed territory for the General Election. (10 ILCS 5/28-2(g))

#### **JUNE 14**

The last day for filing a copy of the district's budget and appropriation ordinance with the county clerk, as well as a certified estimate of revenue by source anticipated to be received in the following fiscal year (assuming a passage adoption date of May 16).

#### **JUNE 20**

Regular June board meeting.

### **JULY 2024**

#### **JULY 1**

Deadline to report to the Department of Human Rights specific information regarding any adverse judgment or administrative ruling, which found sexual harassment or unlawful discrimination in the employee's favor and against an employer during the preceding calendar. (775 ILCS 5/2-108)

#### **JULY 8**

Last day notice of intention to file a petition to create a political subdivision, whose officers are to be elected rather than appointed, may be published in a newspaper within the proposed political

subdivision, or if none, in a newspaper of general circulation within the proposed territory for the General Election. (10 ILCS 5/28-2(g))

#### **JULY 8**

Last day to file a petition (must contain original sheets signed by voters and circulators) to create a political subdivision with the appropriate officer or board (for park districts, circuit court clerk) for the General Election. (10 ILCS 5/28-2(b))

NOTE: The specific statutory provisions governing the creation of political subdivisions can be found in the relevant Code governing such subdivisions.

NOTE: Objections can be filed on or before the date of the hearing with the appropriate circuit court clerk. (10 ILCS 5/28-4)

NOTE: If initial officers are to be elected at the election for creation of a new unit of government, candidates for such offices shall file nomination papers 113-106 days before such election (July 15-22, 2024). (10 ILCS 5/10-6)

NOTE: The circuit court clerk shall publish the hearing date for a public policy petition filed in his/her office not later than 14 days after the petition is actually filed, but at least 5 days before actual hearing. Final orders within 7 days of hearing. (10 ILCS 5/28-4)

#### **JULY 15**

Last day to file objections to a petition to create a political subdivision in the office of the appropriate officer where the petitions were originally filed (for park districts, circuit court clerk) for the General Election. (10 ILCS 5/10-8, 28-4)

#### **JULY 18**

Regular July board meeting.

### **AUGUST 2024**

#### **AUGUST 5**

Last day for filing petitions (must contain original sheets signed by voters and circulators) for referendum for the submission of questions of public policy (local) for the General Election. Objections to petitions for local referenda are filed with the

same officer in which the original petitions are filed. (10 ILCS 5/28-2(a), 28-6, 28-7)

EXCEPTION: Proposition to create a political subdivision, referenda held under the provisions of Article IX of the Liquor Control Act, and Section 18-120 of the Property Tax Code.

#### **AUGUST 12**

Last day to file objections to petitions for the submission of questions of public policy for the General Election. Objections to petitions for local referenda are filed with the same office that has the original petitions. (10 ILCS 5/10-8, 28-4)

EXCEPTION: Proposition to create a political subdivision, referenda held under the provisions of Article IX of the Liquor Control Act, and Section 18-120 of the Property Tax Code.

#### **AUGUST 15**

Regular August board meeting

#### **AUGUST 19**

Last day for local governing boards to adopt a resolution or ordinance to allow binding or advisory public questions to appear on the ballot for the General Election. (10 ILCS 5/28-2(c); 55 ILCS 5/2-3002, 5-1005.5; 60 ILCS 1/30-205, 80-80; 65 ILCS 5/3.1-40-60; 70 ILCS 1205/8-30; 105 ILCS 5/9-1.5)

#### **AUGUST 29**

Last day for the circuit court clerk and the local election official to certify any binding public question or advisory referenda to the election authority having jurisdiction over the political subdivision for the General Election. (10 ILCS 5/28-5)

### **SEPTEMBER 2024**

A good month to review and update park district policies and ordinances.

#### **SEPTEMBER 6**

First day for the election authority to publish a notice of any question of public policy to be voted upon at the General Election within the jurisdiction. The election authority shall also post a copy of the notice at the principal office of the election authority. The local election official shall also post a copy of the notice at the principal office of the political or governmental subdivision. If there is no principal office, the local election official shall post the notice

at the building in which the governing body of the political or governmental subdivision held its first meeting of the calendar year in which the referenda is being held. (10 ILCS 5/12-5)

#### **SEPTEMBER 19**

Regular September board meeting.

### **OCTOBER 2024**

#### **OCTOBER 1**

The suggested date to review documents to determine which records can be destroyed. Permission of Local Records Commission required. See 50 ILCS 205/7 for authorization to digitize records. (50 ILCS 205/1)

#### **OCTOBER 8-10**

Attend the NRPA Congress in Atlanta, Georgia

#### **OCTOBER 17**

Regular October board meeting. Review non-referendum bonding needs preparatory to selling bonds before close of calendar year. (70 ILCS 1205/6-4)

NOTE: Before adopting any ordinance selling non-referendum general obligation bonds or limited bonds, the district must hold a public hearing concerning the intent to sell the bonds. Although the hearing may be part of a regular meeting, the ordinance authorizing the bonds may not be adopted for a period of seven days after the hearing. Notice of the hearing must be published not less than seven nor more than 30 days before the hearing. (30 ILCS 352/10, 352/15, 352/25)

#### **OCTOBER 17**

The suggested date for the board to determine the amount of money estimated to be necessary to be raised by the tax levy ordinance and to determine whether the funds to be raised exceed, by more than 105 percent of the amount, which has been extended or is estimated to be extended, upon the final aggregate levy of the preceding year. (This determination must be made at least 20 days prior to enactment of the levy ordinance.) (35 ILCS 200/18-60; 200/18-65)

NOTE 1: Local governments must file either a certificate of compliance or a certificate indicating the inapplicability of the Truth in Taxation Law with the tax levy ordinance filed with the county clerk. (35 ILCS 200/18-90)

NOTE 2: It is recommended that the park district attorney review all determinations and proceedings relating to this reference, which is the Truth in Taxation Law. (35 ILCS 200/18-55 *et seq.*)

#### **OCTOBER 27**

The last day to file annual audit report (or financial report if district received revenue of less than \$850,000) with the Illinois Comptroller and county clerk (within 180 days of close of fiscal year) and make a copy open to public inspection. Governmental units receiving revenue less than \$850,000 for any fiscal year must also provide copies of this annual financial report to each member of that governmental unit's governing board of elected officials and present it either in person or by a live phone or web connection during a public meeting and have the financial report approved by a 3/5 majority vote. Otherwise, that unit must cause an audit of the account to be made once every four years in addition to filing the annual financial report with the Comptroller. Any governmental unit receiving revenue of \$850,000 or more shall, in addition to complying with the audit requirements, file a financial report on forms required by the Comptroller. (50 ILCS 310/2; 310/3; 310/6)

NOTE: Pursuant to 50 ILCS 310/2 and 310/3, these reports must be submitted to the Comptroller electronically unless the governmental unit provides the Comptroller's Office with sufficient evidence that the report cannot be filed electronically and the Comptroller waives the requirement.

#### **OCTOBER 28**

Last day for the election authority to publish a notice of any question of public policy to be voted upon within its jurisdiction at the General Election. The election authority shall also post a copy of the notice at the principal office of the election authority. The local election official shall also post a copy of the notice at the principal office of the political

or governmental subdivision. If there is no principal office, the local election official shall post the notice at the building in which the governing body of the political or governmental subdivision held its first meeting of the calendar year in which the referenda is being held. (10 ILCS 5/12-5)

#### **OCTOBER 31**

The last day to publish the annual statement of receipts and disbursements and file a copy with the county clerk for districts on a May 1-April 30 fiscal year. In lieu of publishing the annual statement of receipts and disbursements, the district can publish a notice of availability of its audit report that includes the time period covered by the audit, the name of the firm conducting the audit, and the address and business hours where the audit may be publicly inspected. (Must be accomplished within six months after expiration of fiscal year.) (30 ILCS 15/1; 15/2)

### **NOVEMBER 2024**

#### **NOVEMBER 5**

General Election

#### **NOVEMBER 7**

Attend the IAPD Legal Symposium at The Conference Center / Hyatt Lodge (formerly McDonald's University), Oak Brook

#### **NOVEMBER 11**

The suggested date to publish the notice of hearing (Truth in Taxation Law) if the district's proposed levy is greater than 105 percent of last year's extension or estimated extension. The notice must be published not more than 14 days, nor less than seven days prior to the date of the public hearing. Publication date assumes a hearing date of November 18-22, 2024. The notice must also be posted on the taxing district's website if the taxing district has a website that is maintained by the full-time staff of the taxing district. (35 ILCS 200/18-70; 200/18-75)

NOTE: The form of the notice is set forth in the Truth in Taxation Law. Be sure to check special publication requirements found in statute. Further, any notice that includes information in excess of that specified and required by the Act shall be considered an invalid notice. (35 ILCS 200/18-80)

#### **NOVEMBER 21**

Regular November board meeting and the suggested date to hold a hearing pursuant to the Truth in Taxation Law. (35 ILCS 200/18-55 *et seq.*)

#### **NOVEMBER 21**

The suggested date to enact a tax levy ordinance at the regular meeting following the Truth in Taxation hearing (if required).

#### **NOVEMBER 26**

Last day for appropriate canvassing board to canvass the results of referenda submitted to the voters at the November 5, 2024 General Election. (10 ILCS 5/22-17)

### **DECEMBER 2024**

#### **DECEMBER 1**

The suggested date to verify that, for real estate acquired in 2024, appropriate applications have been filed to exempt the real estate from real estate taxes. (35 ILCS 200/15-5)

#### **DECEMBER 1**

The suggested date to confirm that a certified copy of the levy ordinance was properly filed with the county clerk. (70 ILCS 1205/5-1 and 35 ILCS 200/18-15 require that a certified copy of the levy ordinance be filed with the county clerk not later than the last Tuesday in December.)

#### **DECEMBER 6**

(If levy ordinance was enacted on November 21, 2024) the last day to publish a Truth in Taxation notice if levy amounts as enacted exceed prior published figures, or if levy exceeds 105 percent of last year's extension and there was not prior publication. The notice must also be posted on the taxing district's website if the taxing district has a website that is maintained by the full-time staff of the taxing district. (Notice must be given within 15 days of the date the levy ordinance was enacted.) (35 ILCS 200/18-85)

#### **DECEMBER 19**

The regular December board meeting date and suggested date to enact a bond ordinance for non-referendum bonds to be issued prior to the end of the calendar year. (70 ILCS 1205/6-4)

#### **DECEMBER 20**

The suggested date to prepare and file with the Supervisor of Assessments the annual affidavit/certificate of exempt status stating whether there has been a change in the ownership or use of the district's exempt real estate and the nature of any such change to continue the exemption of park property from real estate taxes. (Last day for filing is January 31, 2025.) (35 ILCS 200/15-10)

#### **DECEMBER 20**

The suggested day by which bond ordinances should be filed with the county clerk in order to receive extensions of taxes for the payment of principal and interest on general obligation bonds or limited bonds for 2024 taxes collected in 2025. The filing must actually take place prior to March 1, 2025. (30 ILCS 350/16)

NOTE: This filing has no relationship to the General Tax Levy filed by park districts.

#### **DECEMBER 31**

Because some offices are closed on Tuesday, December 31, in those counties the last day to: (a) file certified copy of tax levy ordinance with county clerk (70 ILCS 1205/5-1; 35 ILCS 200/18-15), and (b) file the board president's certificate of compliance with the county clerk. The certification of levy and supplemental or supportive documentation may be submitted electronically pursuant to Public Act 102-0625. (35 ILCS 200/18-90)

NOTE 1: State statutes require a certified copy of the tax levy ordinance to be filed with the county clerk on or before the last Tuesday in December.

NOTE 2: State statute requires that all local governments file either a certificate of compliance or a certificate indicating the inapplicability of the Truth in Taxation Law with the certified copy of the tax levy ordinance filed with the county clerk.

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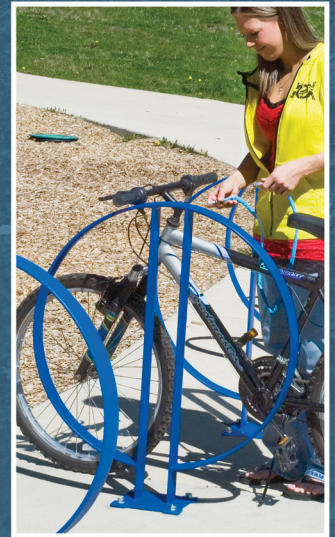
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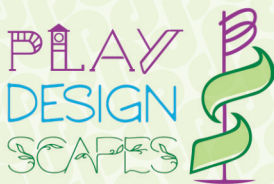
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# ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN PARKS AND RECREATION:

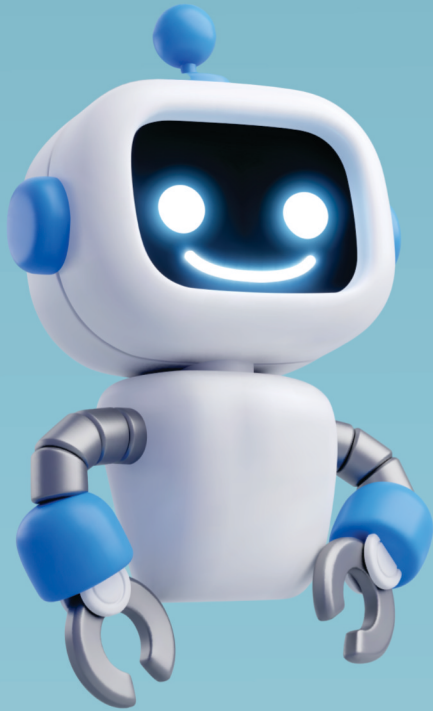
How can Illinois lead the way?

By **Neelay Bhatt**,  
Founder and CEO,  
Next Practice  
Partners, LLC

When it comes to Artificial Intelligence (AI), future eras will forever be divided into: **BGPT & AGPT – Before ChatGPT & After ChatGPT.**

ChatGPT (Chat Generative Pre-trained Transformer) is an LLM (large language model) based chatbot developed by OpenAI and launched on November 30, 2022. This allowed users to add prompts to a variety of queries and instantly obtain human-like responses.

This launched the era of Generative AI with other chatbots such as Google's Bard, Anthropic's ClaudeAI, among others which have fundamentally transformed industries globally.



For most people, AI has been a part of their lives for a while now. If you have a Netflix account and get recommendations for what to see, that's AI.

## TRADITIONAL VS. GENERATIVE AI

Today, for a lot of people recently dipping their toes in the world of AI, ChatGPT has become synonymous with AI. For most people, AI has been a part of their lives for a while now. If you have a Netflix account and get recommendations for what to see, that's AI. If you ask Siri to call someone, that's AI. If your Amazon account tells you what is frequently bought with the item you just purchased, that too is AI.

Traditional AI (Weak AI / Narrow AI)	Generative AI (Strong AI / Creative AI)
Analyzes existing data to make predictions	Uses existing data to create new content
Follows specific sets of pre-assigned algorithms and rules	Follows large language models it is trained on
Excels in single activity or restricted sets of tasks (e.g. playing chess, diagnosing diseases, translating languages)	Excels in utilizing machine learning to learn patterns and generate new data (e.g. text, images,
Strength is pattern recognition	Strength is pattern creation
Does not generate new content	Generates new content
E.g. Voice Assistants (Alexa, Siri) or Recommendation Engines (Netflix, Amazon)	E.g. Chatbots (ChatGPT, Bard, Claude, DALL-E)

## AI FOR PARKS AND RECREATION

Today, Traditional AI and Generative AI are rapidly transforming a variety of industries and functions from content creation, customer service, education, healthcare, entertainment and, of course, parks and recreation.

In Illinois, home to several national gold medal winning and innovative park and recreation agencies, many are beginning to explore the potential of AI.

Chicago Park District offered workshops on AI in video / content production, setting up personal AI and using AI for business needs at River Park in October 2023.

Champaign Park District's Executive Director Sarah Sandquist shared how they're implementing AI in their 2023 National Gold Medal winning agency. "We have embraced the use of AI as a tool to help in writing technical documents such as resolutions, memos, and job descriptions and for transcribing meeting minutes. Emphasis is placed on usage of AI as a tool for staff and not a replacement of staff."

Huntley Park District Executive Director Scott Crowe said, "We have enhanced our operations with the use of ChatGPT. Our next step is to use a platform that can take our own data and give results. For example, adding weather information combined with actual concessions

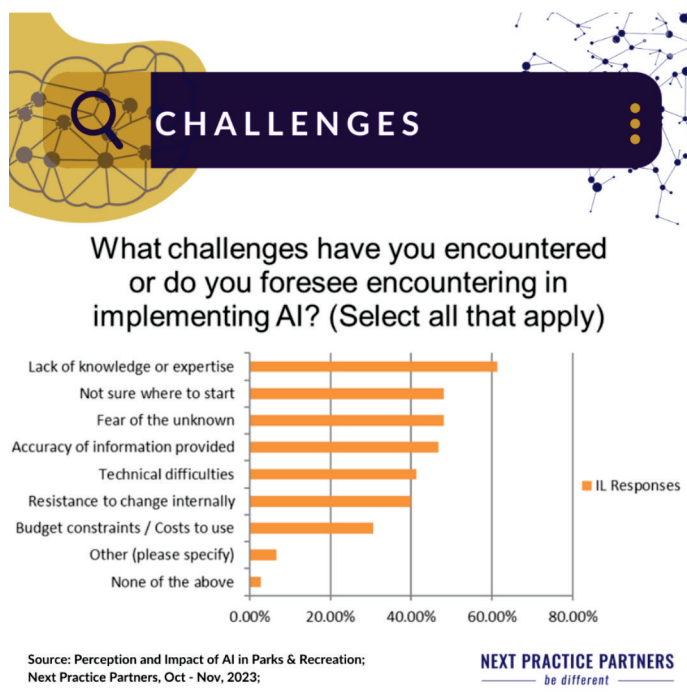
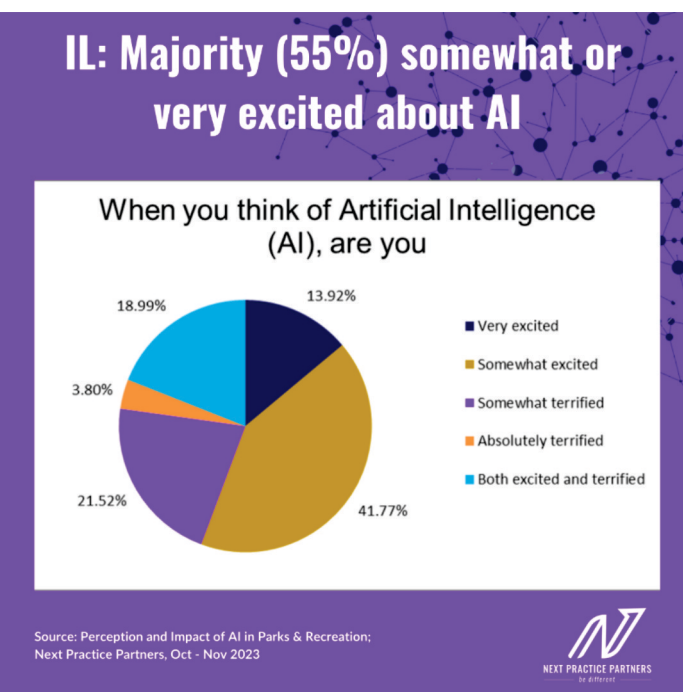
sales data to project what we can expect to sell on any given day based on weather and previous sales information. This will help us schedule staff more efficiently, cause less food loss, and help with ordering supplies."

## PERCEPTION AND IMPACT OF AI FOR PARKS AND RECREATION

In Oct – Nov 2023, Next Practice Partners conducted the first national survey on the perception and impact of AI for parks and recreation agencies. The surveys were administered via surveymonkey and users had the option to participate anonymously. 1200+ respondents nationwide participated in this survey with 20+ agencies from Illinois participating in it.

**Perception:** As expected, the findings were wide ranging. Nationally, 43% respondents said they were somewhat or very excited when they think of AI while 28% were both excited and terrified. In comparison, in Illinois 55% respondents said they were somewhat or very excited while only 19% were both excited and terrified.

**AI Tools used:** No surprise ChatGPT was the most frequently used with 41% respondents using it nationally and in Illinois. Interestingly, Copy.ai was the second most used tool in Illinois with 13% respondents using it while only 3% used it nationwide.



**Challenges:** Nationally, nearly two out of three respondents (63%) cited lack of knowledge or expertise as a challenge in implementing AI, while a slightly lower 61% cited the same challenge in Illinois.

**Plans for 2024:** 30% of all Illinois respondents were likely or very likely to invest in additional AI technology in 2024. A respondent mentioned “intimidating but already highly integrated in our daily lives and will only continue to move into all areas of our lives.” The following are some of the uses for AI that parks and recreation agencies in Illinois could implement in the future.

## FUTURE USES OF AI FOR PARKS AND RECREATION AGENCIES

- 1. Improve park safety:** To monitor park cameras and identify potential safety hazards, such as suspicious activity, a potential drowning in a pool or unattended children and maybe point out the "suspicious-looking ducklings" to avoid.
- 2. Elevate Customer service:** AI can provide 24/7 customer service to park visitors where chatbots can answer questions about park programs, registration info and amenities, and virtual assistants can help visitors plan their trips or even listen to you complain about the Chicago Bears' season.
- 3. Park Cleanliness:** Tired of hearing your trash cans upset about being too full? AI can take it a step further and turn them into "smart bins." When they're full, they'll send you a polite notification like, "Excuse me, I'm feeling stuffed. Please give me some breathing room, or I might stage a garbage rebellion!"
- 4. Optimize operations and predictive park maintenance:** AI can automate manually performed tasks such as scheduling and billing to help staff focus on strategic planning and programming. By analyzing data from sensors and historical maintenance records, AI can predict when equipment and facilities require maintenance or replacement and even praise how well you've mowed the parks.
- 5. Personalize park experiences:** Several parks and recreation agencies in the Next Practice Partners' Perception and Impact survey stated they use

Placer.ai, a location intelligence platform that helps identify user visitation and insights for specific sites including parks and recreation facilities. This information can help personalize park experiences, such as recommending activities or avoiding gatherings of overenthusiastic squirrels.

## CHALLENGES OF USING AI IN PARKS AND RECREATION

It is key to ensure that we do not prioritize innovation at the expense of inclusion! Innovation that leaves people behind is not true progress and it is important for agencies to be mindful of AI's drawbacks when implementing it.

Here are a few of the most significant:

- 1. Loss of human connection:** We are ultimately in the people business and need to ensure that we always prioritize people: internal staff engagement and external customer service training.
- 2. Bias:** AI systems are a function of inputs which can be biased and could lead to unfair or discriminatory outcomes be it for image recognition, HR practices etc. E.g., The Stanford University (Institute for Economic and Policy Research) Study of IRS audits discovered that



Source: Perception and Impact of AI in Parks & Recreation; Next Practice Partners, Oct-Nov 2023; n=1200+

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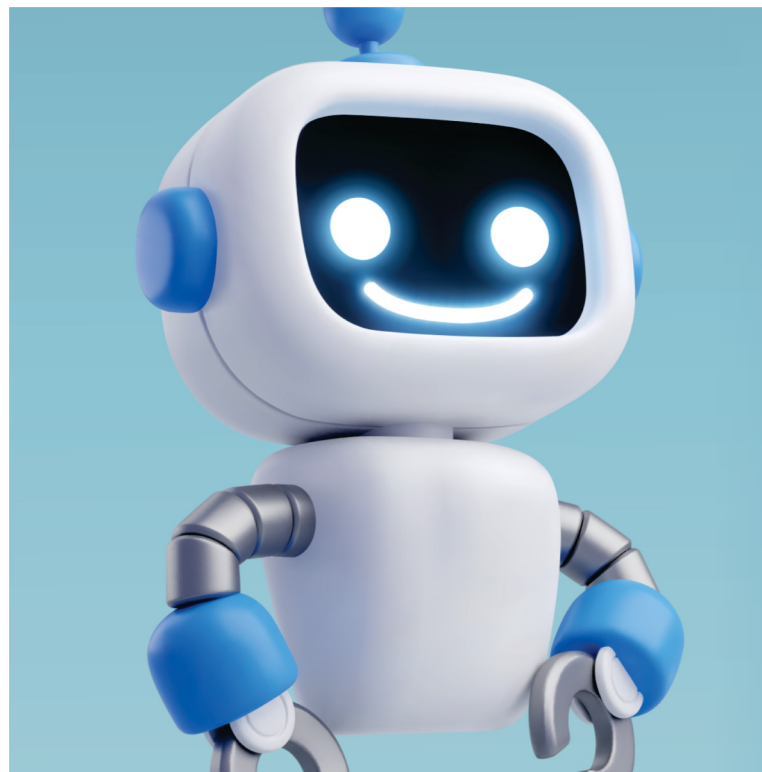
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despite race-blind audit selection, Black taxpayers are audited at 2.9 to 4.7 times the rate of non-Black taxpayers.

3. **Cost:** AI technology, particularly, proprietary ones can be expensive to implement and maintain.
4. **Privacy:** AI systems collect and store data about park visitors, including facial recognition, which raises privacy concerns. What information is in the public domain and what can be collected, with permission from users, will need to be clarified.
5. **Deepfakes:** AI systems can replicate human voices and videos to a significant degree of accuracy making it difficult to identify real from fakes. Before reacting to something, be sure to check for accuracy.

Ultimately, agencies will need to create their internal AI guidelines and policies in conjunction with citywide or districtwide staff including IT and communications to ensure appropriate structures and guardrails are in place regarding use of AI.





For additional details, check out the *White House Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights* (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/ostp/ai-bill-of-rights/>) that lays out five principles to help guide the design, use, and deployment of automated systems to protect the rights of the American public in the age of artificial intelligence.

### Summary

The word cloud encapsulates all the different sentiments felt by parks and recreation professionals about AI. The potential benefits of AI for parks and recreation are significant though as with any change, it will cause discomfort.

**Your Moment of Zen:** If agencies in Illinois want to continue leading the way in serving the community (and winning national gold medals), understand that AI may or may not take jobs but someone using AI will take the job of someone not using AI.

### Watch IAPD's Park Cast Episode with Neelay



If agencies in IL want to continue leading the way in serving the community (and winning national gold medals), understand that AI may or may not take jobs but someone using AI will take the job of someone not using AI.

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## A RAPIDLY RISING RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY AND A COMPETITIVE SPORT



THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GAMING AND ESPORTS IS A MISUNDERSTOOD RECREATION ACTIVITY AND A COMPETITIVE SPORT ACTIVITY THAT NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED AS IT APPLIES TO HOW PARKS AND RECREATION AGENCIES DETERMINE THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN PROMOTING AND ENCOURAGING THESE RECREATION AND SPORT ACTIVITIES.





**FOLLOWERS OF GAMING INCLUDE  
YOUTH AND ADULTS OF ALL AGES  
AND INCLUDE BOYS AND GIRLS AND  
MEN AND WOMEN WHO PLAY  
VARIOUS GAMES IN THEIR HOMES,  
WITH THEIR FRIENDS, ON  
AIRPLANES, AT GAMING ARCADES  
AND WHAT THEY WATCH ON TWITCH,  
A STREAMING SERVICE.**

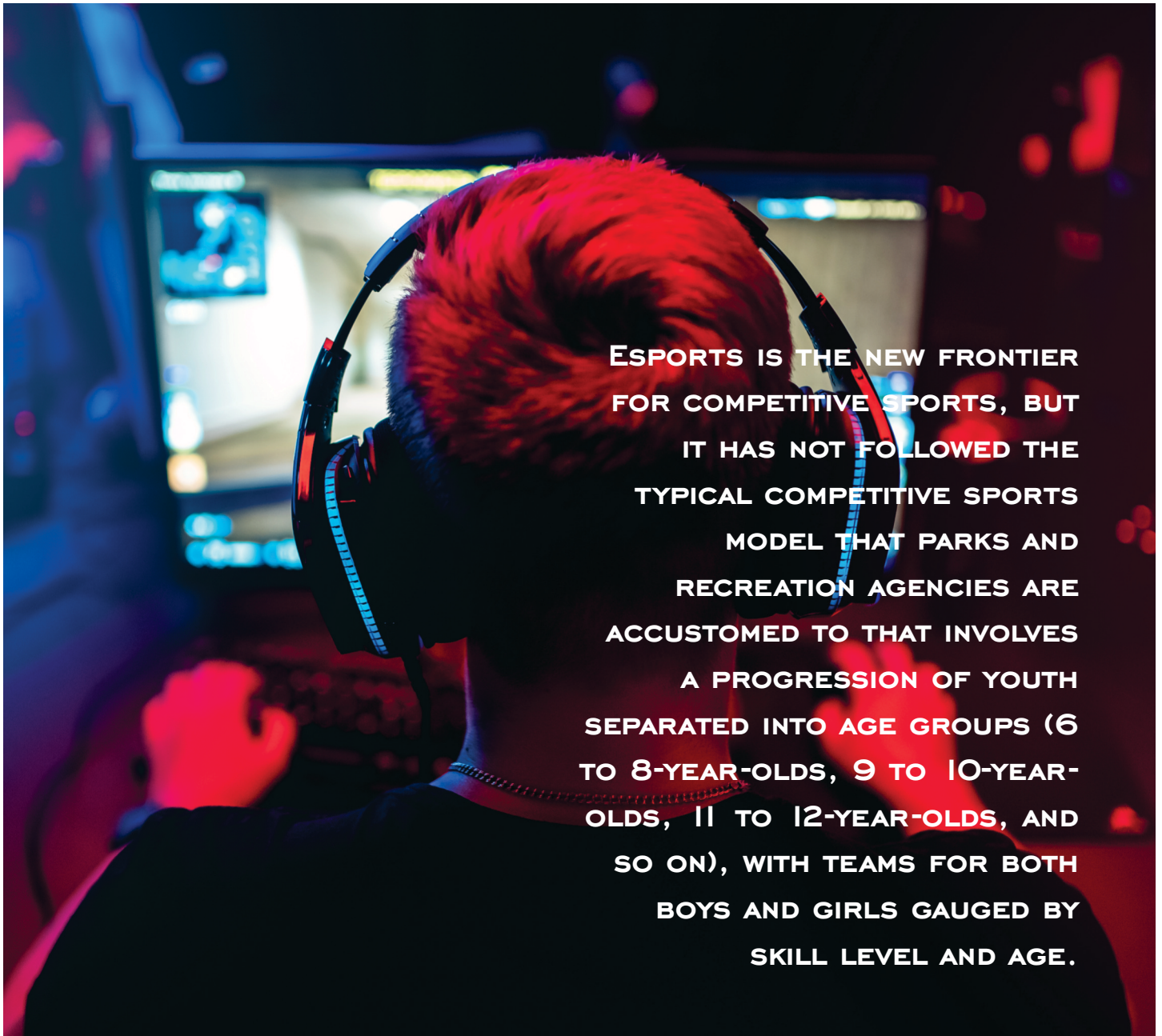
Gaming has a long history of over 50 years in the public realm in attracting youth and adults to participate in general video games. This industry started in 1972 and has had its ups and downs over the last 50 years with periods of incredible growth and, at times, years of stagnation.

Gaming has grown substantially over the last 50 years into a 100-billion-dollar industry. Followers of gaming include youth and adults of all ages and include boys and girls and men and women who play various games in their homes, with their friends, on airplanes, at gaming arcades and what they watch on Twitch, a streaming service. It is casual fun and a recreational entertainment activity for most people involved who enjoy playing video games. Video gaming has risen to a competitive competition sport called Esports in high school, college and professionally for individuals across the United States and the world.

The growth of gaming over the last 10 years has been substantial but more on an individual basis than an organized basis which is how most youth and adult sports have grown in the United States. The number of players who play video games in 2022 was 227 million people. During the pandemic, this activity grew substantially.

The mix of players and the diversity of players mix is as follows:

- 67% of players are 18-34 years of age.
- 30% are women.
- 46% are people of color
- 17% are LGBTQ+
- People with disabilities make up 1% of the players.



**ESPORTS IS THE NEW FRONTIER FOR COMPETITIVE SPORTS, BUT IT HAS NOT FOLLOWED THE TYPICAL COMPETITIVE SPORTS MODEL THAT PARKS AND RECREATION AGENCIES ARE ACCUSTOMED TO THAT INVOLVES A PROGRESSION OF YOUTH SEPARATED INTO AGE GROUPS (6 TO 8-YEAR-OLDS, 9 TO 10-YEAR-OLDS, 11 TO 12-YEAR-OLDS, AND SO ON), WITH TEAMS FOR BOTH BOYS AND GIRLS GAUGED BY SKILL LEVEL AND AGE.**

As it applies to competitive gaming there is a big difference between gaming and Esports. These two terms consistently get mixed into the same discussion which needs to be unconnected. Esports is professional gaming at the highest level possible and is growing but currently occupies 1% of the gaming market and players. Parks and recreation agencies currently are not involved in professional gaming but are involved in providing video gaming opportunities into community centers primarily and general competition between groups in their recreation centers and gaming rooms.

Esports is the new frontier for competitive sports, but it has not followed the typical competitive sports model that parks and recreation agencies are accustomed to that involves a progression of youth separated into age groups

(6 to 8-year-olds, 9 to 10-year-olds, 11 to 12-year-olds, and so on), with teams for both boys and girls gauged by skill level and age. In Esports, highly competitive gamers and professional gamers are primarily 16 to 24 years old and haven't grown up through a similar process that we see in youth sports due to complexity of gaming in general and the lack of gaming coaches and organizers to build a framework for the sport as a competitive recreation program.

There are limited agencies who offer summer gaming day camps and leagues for youth primarily because as professionals we are constantly encouraging parents and youth to play outdoors, exercise and get involved in team related activities versus sitting in front of screen learning a competitive gaming skill. However most community

centers have teen program rooms that have some gaming amenities for youth to play on an individual basis and not on a competitive basis.

While many players purchase their own gaming equipment and the games themselves, these programs offer a setting and equipment to help meet competitive needs. Over the last ten years there have been more colleges creating Esports teams, stadiums, and hiring coaches to train and coach young adults in how to play video games in a competitive environment.

Gaming terminology is very misunderstood. Understanding gaming terminology helps you to understand gaming in general and how it will impact parks and recreation in the future.

So, if you want to establish a Gaming Studio in your parks and recreation community center here are some things you need to consider and understand based on Andrew Cooley CEO and Co-Founder of Esports Performance Academy (EPA).

### **1. WHAT ARE THE MOST POPULAR GAMES?**

- For youth: Roblox/Rocket League and Minecraft
- For teens: Fortnite, Rocket League, Minecraft, Valorant, League of Legends, Overwatch FIFA, NBA 2K and Super Smash Bros.
- For college students: Fortnite, Rocket League, Minecraft, Valorant, League of Legends, Overwatch, Counter-Strike, Call of Duty, FIFA, NBA 2K and Super Smash Bros.

### **2. WHAT ARE LOCAL GAMING SITES CALLED:**

Local gaming sites in public agencies are called youth gaming clubs. It is not unusual now for park and recreation agencies to develop gaming rooms in community centers for youth to play as an individual, or as a team (usually 3-5 people, depending on the game) on a team and to play against other teams in the building or against other schools in their area. It is important that you have a professionally designed gaming room to accommodate individual, team and league play in one setting.

### **3. GAMING LEAGUES:**

Recreation leagues, academic leagues, amateur tournaments and semi-pro leagues. Typical players on a gaming team are (3-5) people per team, depending on the game.

### **4. WHAT ARE GAMING TOURNAMENTS CALLED AND WHAT IS THE COST TO PLAY:**

Gaming tournaments are called an open or invitational. The typical cost to play in a tournament can vary depending on

the purpose, size, and prizing available. Tournaments are typically located in "LAN Centers", general event spaces, or dedicated Esports stadiums.

### **5. WHY SHOULD A PUBLIC PARK AND RECREATION AGENCY GET INTO GAMING?**

The goal is to bring gaming from an online experience to one that can be played in real life with your friends. It connects a community, and it is a fun thing for people and kids to get out of their houses and also to spend time together with friends. Gaming can and it does create a diversity of users, has wide age segment appeal, exposes non-users to your recreation facilities and gaming center and it connects people.

### **6. WHAT DOES IT COST TO GET INTO GAMING FOR YOUR RECREATION CENTER?**

According to Tom Poulus of Williams Architects if you have a room available that can be converted to a gaming area it will cost \$750,000-\$850,000 all in costs that includes design, equipment and room set up. Williams Architects has been involved in several of these gaming centers in recreation centers over the last five years.

### **7. WHAT DOES IT COST TO PLAY ON A GAMING MACHINE OR TO PLAY IN A TOURNAMENT?**

- A typical game for a one-hour pass is \$15-\$30 an hour and \$45 to \$50 for a 2-hour pass. Gaming facilities also provide weekday and weekend all day passes from \$65 to \$125 dollars.
- Typical tournament cost is \$60 to \$70 dollars per person.
- A typical league cost is \$150 per person for ten league games.
- Gaming facilities also sell party packages based on what is purchased from \$300 to \$700 per group.

### **8. WHAT ARE THE PROS AND CONS OF GAMING FOR KIDS? FOR A GAME OR A TOURNAMENT?**

Many parents are concerned that their child will become addicted if park and recreation agencies provide gaming services. Why yes this could happen, but it is in the best interest of the park and recreation agency involved to promote other activities with gaming as it applies to outdoor recreation activities, sports related activities, fitness activities and group play both indoor and outdoor to overcome that perception as part of a gaming program.

### **9. HOW DO YOU TRAIN GAMING COACHES?**

Most gaming coaches come from past players who no longer play competitively and want to share their skills with others. The industry is still in a state of flux and the validation/accreditation process that people are used to in traditional sports does not currently exist in esports. This is one flaw of the industry that key players in the industry

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have been working to rectify. At the EPA, they have certified over 500 beginner level coaches.

## 10. WHERE DO YOU FIND GAMING OFFICIALS?

Training for gaming officials usually comes from people who have played before and from local college and high school gaming officials. Now that gaming is a sport in high school and college more gaming officials will be onboarded to provide their services to local organizations that offer gaming leagues and tournaments.

## 11. WHAT GROUPS ARE THE MOST SUCCESSFUL AT GAMING AND ESPORTS?

High school teams will continue to organize the sport based on the traditional competitive sports model in the United States for other sports like baseball, softball, basketball, volleyball, and soccer.

College Esport teams have become a bigger element on college campuses and offer recreational and varsity gaming (which can include scholarships) as an opportunity to grow competitively for male and female students.

## 12. WHERE DO YOU GO FROM HERE?

Organized and competitive gaming will continue to grow. With the growth of high school and college Esports and gaming competitive teams it will achieve higher acceptance and will resemble more traditional sports. As our parks and recreation industry changes it will be important for recreation professionals to understand the difference between gaming and Esports. They need to understand how to build a program that allows youth and adults to practice, play on a team and compete against others with similar skills and to offer programs for youth (boys and girls) and men and women. It would make sense for Illinois park and recreation agencies that do have gaming in their facilities and has leagues and tournaments to work together and learn together to make this recreation activity work for the people who play the games but also how they can participate in other recreation opportunities offered by the park district or city as part of the overall experience. Let the games begin!





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# LONG TERM COMMITMENTS TO INNOVATION IN PARKS AND RECREATION

By **Elena Ferrarin**, Communications Coordinator, **Bill Meyer**, Superintendent of Grounds and Golf Maintenance  
**Randy Truhlar**, Facility and Fleet Manager, **Jake Vest**, Trades Manager

IF YOU VISIT TECHNY PRAIRIE PARK AND FIELDS IN NORTHBROOK ON ANY GIVEN DAY, YOU MIGHT SEE A 40-INCH-LONG, BRIGHT BLUE METAL BOX ON WHEELS, QUIETLY WHIRRING AS IT ROLLS ALONG THE GRASS.





That commitment is reflected in the numbers: from 2019 to 2022, the park district has experienced a 45% reduction of energy usage, at a savings of \$147,461 in yearly expenses.

Acquired in the spring by the Northbrook Park District, the field line-marking robot doesn't emit carbon monoxide, unlike its gas-powered predecessor. It uses RTK GNSS technology to map the precise dimensions of sports fields, so lines are painted within a quarter-inch accuracy, a task that used to require eight hours of work, once a week.

The robot, which reduces labor and emissions, is among a wide array of technological innovation at the Northbrook Park District, which has had a longstanding, forward-thinking commitment to investing in cutting-edge systems and machinery to promote efficiency and sustainability.

That commitment is reflected in the numbers: from 2019 to 2022, the park district has experienced a 45% reduction of energy usage, at a savings of \$147,461 in yearly expenses.

## **A SMORGASBORD OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY**

Another robot used by the park district is a mower that runs about 10 hours per day, seven days per week, for an ongoing pilot project at Techny Prairie Park and Fields. The battery powered mower recharges itself at a station powered by 833 solar panels on the roof of Techny Prairie Activity Center (TPAC).

The top-of-the-line robotic mower also uses RTK GNSS technology and can be operated at any park, rather than being confined to one location, like earlier fenceless boundary models.

TPAC, which opened in 2021, produces net-zero energy — meaning, the total amount of annual energy generated with the solar panels is equal to or greater than the amount of energy used by the building — and



is the park district's foremost initiative focused on modern technology and stewardship of natural resources. It is only the third verified net-zero building in Illinois, according to the nonprofit New Buildings Institute. Through continued monitoring by staff, the building was verified net-zero 12 months after the solar panels started producing energy. The building was certified as a PHIUS+ 2015 and Source Zero project by the Passive House Institute US, meaning its climate-specific standards maximize the efficiency of the HVAC equipment, further lowering energy consumption.

The park district intends to install solar panels on additional buildings over time.

The park district has an array of electric and hybrid equipment, including electric debris blowers, electric line and hedge trimmers, and a hybrid reel mower with electric components powered by a diesel generator. The latter replaced a mower with all-hydraulic components, which more easily break down and leak oil. In the fall, the park district expects to receive a fully hybrid reel mower with all-electric motors powered by a diesel generator.

An all-electric van is expected to be delivered for a trial period this fall. The van will be powered by a smart charger programmed to charge overnight, when electrical costs are lower due to nonpeak rates. If the pilot program is successful, the park district will investigate acquiring more EV vans in the future. Its fleet of vehicles also includes a hybrid car used for administrative purposes.

### **INVESTMENT INTO EFFICIENT SYSTEMS**

The park district also has made a concerted effort to invest in HVAC upgrades that reduce energy usage.

TPAC and other buildings have heat pump systems that reduce the use of natural gas for heating and cooling. The park district is currently installing an electric heat pump water heater at its Leisure Center, and the plan is to implement electrification of other domestic hot water systems.

Nearly 95% of park district lighting has been converted to energy efficient LED with a project that started in mid-2022 utilizing a grant from ComEd. The lighting now has adjustable levels of brightness that further lower energy consumption.



LED lighting has been a positive addition to the ice rink at the Northbrook Sports Center. The previous fluorescent lighting produced heat that altered the ice, which put a higher demand on the building's refrigeration system. Adding insulation to the envelope of the ice rink also has had a positive effect on energy usage.

This year, the park district invested in major upgrades for its water wells at Heritage Oaks Golf Club and Anetsberger Golf Course.

The new well infrastructure is much more efficient, with motor pumps that can be programmed with variable frequency drives and remote-controlled irrigation. In case of malfunction, the old pump system only indicated an unspecified error, so staff members spent a couple of days troubleshooting to identify and repair issues. The new pump system logs more than 20 types of errors and notifies staff via text message, prompting a faster, more efficient response.

## **COMMITMENT TO PRESERVING NATURAL RESOURCES**

The park district achieved a major recognition this year, when Techny Prairie Park and Fields and Wood Oaks Green Park met the rigorous standards required for certification as

a cooperative sanctuary program by Audubon International. These two parks are among only three non-golf locations in Illinois to meet the standard, which requires developing and implementing a deliberate environmental management plan.

For example, the pond at Techny Prairie Park and Fields is used as an irrigation reservoir for Anetsberger Golf Course and the Techny Prairie natural turf ballfields and has a system that employs a rain shut-off sensor. At Wood Oaks Green Park, the park district engaged in a two-year shoreline restoration project which included a substantial increase in native plantings, which now represent 90% of the park's flora, creating additional buffer zones to limit erosion.

The park district is proud of its commitment to ecological management of public lands. While investing in modern technology might, at times, require a larger investment upfront, those costs are offset during the equipment's life cycle. Also, the park district is always in search of grants and other funding opportunities, in line with its mission to be a good steward of taxpayer dollars and our natural resources.

## PEOPLE & PLACES



### Adams Set to Retire from Woodridge Park District

**Mike Adams**, executive director of the Woodridge Park District, has announced his scheduled retirement effective June 30.

Mike has proudly served the Woodridge Park District and Woodridge community, which he lives in, for over 34 years. He started his employment in 1990 as the park district's first landscape architect, first superintendent of planning & development, first Deputy Director and the district's second executive director appointed in 2006.

His accomplishments include, but are not limited to, the design and construction of Mending Wall Park, the Janes Avenue Park Sports Complex Renovation & Skate Park expansion, Cypress Cove Family Aquatic Park development and expansion, Orchard Hill Park Sports Complex development, Community Center & Administrative Office expansion, 21 miles of paved off-road multi-use pathway system and numerous high-quality neighborhood parks.



### Knitter Accepts Executive Director Position for Woodridge Park District

**Jenny Knitter** has accepted the position of executive director of the Woodridge Park District, which will be effective July 1, 2024.

Jenny has been employed by the district since 2004, first hired as the district's landscape designer. In 2006, Knitter was promoted to superintendent of planning and development managing

the district's comprehensive capital improvement program. In 2021, following a strategic management process and decision to improve department/division efficiencies, the Planning, Development & Natural Resource's department combined with the Park Operations department into the new Parks, Planning & Development (PPD) department. Jenny was promoted as the new director of parks, planning & development to oversee this new department.

In addition to receiving a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture degree from the University of Illinois, Jenny recently obtained a Certificate of Graduate Studies in Public Management from Northern Illinois University, completed year one of two at the National Parks and Recreation Association's (NRPA) Director's school, graduated from Indiana University's Executive Development Program and graduated with honors from the Illinois Parks and Recreation Association's Leadership Academy. Jenny is a National Parks & Recreation Association Certified Parks and Recreation Professional (CPRP) and Professional Landscape Architect (PLA).



### Executive Director of Medinah Park District Retires

The Medinah Park District announces the retirement of its executive director, **Bruce Baum**, after 40 years of Illinois parks and recreation. Bruce will retire at the end of 2023.

Bruce received his bachelor's degree in Park and Recreation Administration from North Central College. He started his career at the Romeoville Park District in 1983, and went on to work for the Warrenville, Bourbonnais, LaGrange, and Naperville Park Districts before coming to Medinah in

2005, as the superintendent of recreation. In 2013, Bruce was named as the executive director of Medinah Park District. During his tenure, he has overseen many projects and improvements within the district, including: renovation of the Connolly Recreation Center, playground replacements at Spring Hill, Manary, Nordic, and Goodenough Parks, and most recently an outdoor fitness court at Thorndale Park. He was instrumental during COVID in the NE Quadrant of DuPage County, assisting in over 15 park district cooperative immunization clinics.

Bruce was a North East DuPage Special Recreation Association (NEDSRA) Trustee for 10 years, serving in capacities of secretary, vice-president and president. Bruce also spent 33 years as an IHSA basketball official, mostly officiating high school games around the Chicagoland area.



## Paul Friedrichs retires from Lombard Park District

After serving over 36 years in the parks and recreation field, and devoting over 25 years in Lombard, Executive Director **Paul Friedrichs** announces he will retire at the end of 2023.

During his time at the Lombard Park District, he oversaw the construction of the park district's facilities, Paradise Bay Water Park and Madison Meadow

Athletic Center. Friedrichs secured Illinois Department of Natural Resources grant funds for the redevelopment of Four Seasons, Sunset Knoll and Southland parks. In 2021, Friedrichs recognized the challenges of COVID-19 vaccine access and equity in Lombard. With his determination and passion for the community, the district partnered with Jewel Osco to provide over 5,000 individuals with COVID-19 vaccines at the Madison Meadow Athletic Center.

During his remaining time with the district, Friedrichs is looking forward to developing the expansion plans for Lilacia Park, working with the board to complete a new Comprehensive and Strategic Plan, completing Phase II of Four Seasons, beginning the Southland redevelopment, while ensuring a seamless transition to a new executive director.



## Joe McCann named Executive Director of Lombard Park District

**Joe McCann** will become executive director at the Lombard Park District starting January 1, 2024. McCann has served as the director of recreation at the district for the last eight years and has over twenty years of experience in the field. McCann earned an undergraduate degree from the University of Illinois at

Urbana-Champaign and is a Certified Parks and Recreation Professional. McCann is involved in many organizations and recently served as president for the Kiwanis Club of Lombard and was on the board for Healthy Lombard. Joe works closely with park district affiliate groups, Northeast DuPage Special Recreation Association, and many other community partners.

Through his time at the Lombard Park District, McCann has achieved numerous accomplishments. He was a key member of the leadership team for the construction and opening of the Madison Meadow Athletic Center, collaborated with School District 44 to expand a shared use agreement that led to the development of the Club Rec before and after school program, and worked with the team to achieve agency national accreditation in 2016 and 2021.

## IN MEMORIAM



The *Illinois Parks and Recreation* family lost an amazing advocate for parks, recreation, and conservation with the sudden passing of **Kevin Dolan** on October 7.

Kevin was a dedicated 26-year commissioner for the Mundelein Park & Recreation District and a former trustee and chairman of the Illinois Association of Park Districts.

He was an enthusiastic supporter of the IAPD, serving on nearly every committee including the Honors and Resolutions, Membership, Board Development, Program, Bylaws, Research, Joint Legislative, Joint Distinguished Park and Recreation Accredited Agency, Joint Conference, and Joint Editorial Committees.

He attended many IAPD Summer Golf Tour events, participated in educational programs, volunteered at events, and proudly displayed a Park District Youth License Plate on his vehicle. He was a Master Board Member in IAPD's Board Member Development Program and was the 2017 recipient of the prestigious statewide Mike Cassidy Commissioner Community Service Award.

Kevin had a confident ability, energetic motivation, and optimistic attitude that made him the perfect champion for Illinois parks, recreation, and conservation.

He left a lasting impression on the Illinois park district family, and we are indebted to him for inspiring us all to continue the work he cared so deeply about.

## PEOPLE & PLACES



### **NEDSRA Elevates Jerry Barton to Executive Director**

The North East DuPage Special Recreation Association (NEDSRA) has announced its new executive director, **Jerry Barton**.

Jerry is no stranger to special recreation in Illinois. While attending the University of Iowa, he began his career as a recreation intern at NEDSRA, before landing his first position as a recreation specialist with NSSRA. Jerry then moved to NEDSRA as a recreation coordinator for the next five years, and back to NSSRA as a manager of programs until 2016. In 2016, Jerry returned to NEDSRA as the superintendent of recreation. Throughout Jerry's career he has managed and coached adaptive sports, planned and led camps, provided inclusion and ADA support, assisted with grant writing, provided veterans services, implemented new registration and HR software; and most recently provided leadership for the process of developing a new Strategic Plan for NEDSRA.

Jerry is heavily involved in the IPRA Therapeutic Recreation Section, the current IPRA TR Section Treasurer, presenter at the TR Leadership Summit and is CTRS certified.



### **Executive Director of Oswegoland Park District Retires**

After 17 years with the Oswegoland Park District and 30 years within the parks and recreation field, **Rich Zielke** retires from the Oswegoland Park District on December 29, 2023.

Under Rich's guidance, the district was successful in securing over \$3.5 million in OSLAD, DECO, PARC and local TAP grant awards, that aided in completing various acquisition, construction and renovation

projects, enhancing facilities for the community.

Prior to Oswegoland, Rich was the director of recreation for the Plainfield Park District and started his career with the Village of Matteson Parks and Recreation Department.



### **Walter Johnson receives award from the University of Illinois**

This October, park and recreation veteran **Walt Johnson** received the 2023 Distinguished Alumni Award from the University of Illinois, College of Applied Health Sciences. He graduated from the University of Illinois in 1958 with an undergraduate degree from the RST program. Two years later, he entered the graduate program in RST. Upon graduation from the RST master's program in 1962, Johnson moved immediately into a career in parks and recreation where he served in positions including serving as the executive director of the Glencoe, Naperville and Cary Park Districts, as well as the Great Lakes regional director of NRPA.

His passion for parks and recreation and the University of Illinois inspired both his daughter and granddaughter to follow in his footsteps to achieve a master's degree from RST, and they are now both working in key leadership positions in Illinois park districts.

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