

## Winnemac Park Advisory Council, January Meeting Minutes

**Date:** Wednesday, January 14, 2026

**Time:** 6:15pm

**Location:** Amundsen Library

*Introduction and Call to Order*

**Approval of November Minutes?** Yes

**Approval of Agenda?** Yes

**Members in Attendance (19 total, 13 total voting members):** Jacob Schuster, Amy Williamson, Tessa Groll, Jon Woolwine, Debra Miretzky, Dave Miretzky, Mike Pavilon, Jeff Borden, Amy Reeder, Claire Howard, Lisa Ragucci, Sarah Harpring, Ron Rasmussen, Chelsea Brown, Paul Rahe, Nancy Rampson, Rick Marron, Oisin Henegan

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### Supervisor Reports

#### Park Supervisor Report, Lisa Ragucci

- Day camp registration begins in February
- Greg Czajkowski(former Area Manager) recently retired, Dennis Gonzalez is the new Area Manager; plans to join WPAC meeting once settled into his new role.

#### Treasurer's Report, Claire Howard

CURRENT FINANCIAL STANDING AS OF JANUARY 14, 2026

We currently have **~\$5,000** in the account. We recently did a Giving Tuesday campaign that resulted in gaining **~\$100** in donations; however, the money we received in that campaign was roughly the same amount that we directed to Cocoa and Cookies, an event that supports the Chappelle's After School Program.

#### Nature Committee Report, Amy Williamson

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**Public Comment:** Mike Pavilon emphasized the importance of the survey that was done on behalf of the park from September-October; he said he was surprised at how many individuals were interested in the birding and wondered what was done to cater to that in the park. We noted the bird tours led by Tessa, Vinod and Edward through the course of the summer alongside the presence of Chicago Ornithological Society at our Winnemac Fourth For All, along with the nature walks in collaboration with Chappell school. We hope to continue this in 2026 with additional tours that focus on not just our feathered friends, but also put a highlight on our trees and wildflowers.

**Member Comment:** none

### Old Business

The WPAC contributed to **Cookies & Cocoa**, an event hosted by Chappelle's after school program; this supported ~25 kids in December. Two members attended this event, Jacob Schuster and Jeff Borden. This is a repeating event for the WPAC (participated in 2024) and was another success this year.

**Total cost contributed to Cookies & Cocoa: \$148.18**

The leftover cookies and cocoa were contributed to the local firehouse directly following the event.

**February Meeting | Volunteer Breakout Groups**

If you expressed interest in helping in Winnemac recently, you will not want to miss our next gathering! Our February meeting will feature breakout groups for those who volunteered on the fall survey to help with fundraising, volunteering, advocacy, and planning events and activities, and seeing how we can best direct that interest throughout the course of the year and beyond.

**WPAC Standard Operating Procedures:** There has been ongoing discussion regarding the creation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) with an Administrative Committee within the WPAC. Jake Schuster, WPAC president, will set up a meeting with interested members to discuss a draft for presentation in a general meeting, along with any necessary revisions to bylaws for 2026.

**New business**

**Quarterly Newsletter starting Q1:** This is projected to go out at the end of January. The goal is to educate neighbors about what the PAC does in service to the park, as well as announce upcoming events (yoga in the park, Shakespeare in the Park, volunteer days, etc.) and share relevant information about issues related to the park. This will enhance the connections already made via WPAC's social media and website

**Current Status:** Chelsea Brown is getting information together to complete the first edition, which should be sent around the end of January to the WPAC email list.

**New fundraising coordinator/head:**

**Nancy Rampson**, who has been a volunteer with us in the park and has a professional background in fundraising, has agreed to bolster our efforts further by taking on a role as fundraising chair. Tessa and Claire met with her to outline the current structure and documentation in place alongside with providing a thorough overview on WPAC and our mission for raising funds. Her goal will be to oversee WPAC fundraising and help create additional opportunities to support community activities and amenities besides Winnemac Fourth For All (WFFA).

**Soccer – Edgewater Castle FC coming to Winnemac Park in 2026**

Edgewater Castle, a semi-professional soccer team, will be playing in Jorndt Stadium for 12-15 games in May-July 2026. At a November meeting with Andrew Swanson, co-director of ECFC, the WPAC board agreed to investigate neighborhood attitudes about beer sales at the games. A survey was posted on various social media sites and 377 responses were obtained, with the majority favoring the sale of beer. The survey did advise respondents that ECFC was hoping to make Jorndt its permanent home and noted there would be further public discussion about this possibility but did not ask for feedback directly about this.

At the time of the PAC meeting, it was unclear who is in charge of, or involved with, any negotiation process for the club to use CPS property for the spring dates as well as future seasons. Given the conflicting and/or limited information regarding both beer sales and issues involving the long-term use of the stadium by ECFC, it was agreed that a vote on the former (beer sales) by WPAC membership would be postponed, and that Alderperson Vasquez would be contacted about scheduling a meeting that would bring all involved parties to the table to

discuss the latter (Jorndt as home stadium). If more clarity can be provided and relevant questions answered the PAC will revisit the vote.

**Some of the main points that arose in during this discussion:**

- There apparently has been communication between varied stakeholders in this process but contradictory information has made it difficult to understand who is involved and who is part of the decision-making process.
- It was agreed that WPAC needed to be part of this discussion, especially since it appears that Alderperson Andre Vasquez wants our input before he weighs in on both beer sales and use of the stadium as a long-term home for ECFC.
- It is unclear that a permit has been obtained in relation to beer sales; it is also unclear who would have the authority to issue the permit (which would not be issued without insurance coverage). Currently the plan is to allow for 2 beers per customer per half (4 total beers/game), and this would be tracked with a wristband and limited to consumption within one particular area of the stadium.
- Parking has also been raised as an issue WPPA baseball continues to use Winnemac Park as an outpost for games. These activities have been problematic for a number of neighbors who responded to the park survey, in terms of congestion and safety; adding soccer fans to the mix would likely exacerbate the problem. The use of Amundsen's Damen Avenue parking lot currently is unclear, with CPS claiming not to have given permission to ECFC for exclusive use.
- Two other stadiums that were suggested to host ECFC were mentioned: Lane Tech and North Park, both larger, better located for a venue potentially drawing visitors from the Chicago area, and in much less residential settings.
- A member inquired if there was a potential for fundraising at the games (some suggested paying for parking, QR codes, etc.). This could be done in the form of selling WPAC merchandise at games which would raise funds for the park, as well as having our QR codes/signage present on game days that would allow for direct donation on-site. However, WPAC is not entitled to any share of revenue raised by Chicago Public Schools via any agreement with ECFC.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 pm

*Minutes submitted by Tessa Groll, WPAC Secretary with edits and inclusions from Deb Miretzky (WPAC Vice President)*