

Winnemac Park Advisory Council
Monthly Meeting Minutes
Wednesday April 19th – 6pm

Call the meeting to order at 6:02PM by Michael Vacala

Introductions:

Attendees introduced themselves and gave their affiliation.

- Mike Vacala - President
- Linda Vacala – Vice-President
- Anne Sylvan
- Deb Miretzky – Keep Winnemac Green
- Dave Miretzky - Keep Winnemac Green/former member of WPAC
- Amy Williamson – Nature Areas/Wet lands
- Lisa Ragucci – Winnemac Park Supervisor
- Margaret O’Conor – Amundsen Athletics
- Mary O’Connor
- Anne Ryan – Save Winnemac Tennis
- Maria Stone – Community Relations Manager at Chicago Park District
- Cathy Vega – Save Winnemac Park/neighbor
- Manny Vega – Save Winnemac Park/neighbor

Mike motioned to establish Manny Vega to act as the meeting chairperson.

Manny:

- Established Cathy Vega to be the meeting secretary.
- Proposed that we follow an agenda created to move the meeting forward and stay on task.

New Business:

Mike Vacala, current President, made a statement:

- Mike advised that he has been President of the Winnemac Park Advisory Council for a long time and that he is stepping down to make room for others who have more time to spend on the reigniting of the WPAC. Linda Vacala (Vice President) and Laura Penna (Secretary) will stay on in their positions until the elections take place and new officers have been elected on May 10, 2023.

Maria Stone spoke on moving the PAC forward and the requirements, expectations and best practices of a PAC

- 14 days’ notice to the public is required before a meeting and posting a sign within the park is the bare minimum required (although more is encouraged – can post in the Alderman’s office, library, local businesses, etc.). Maria recommends using the same day of the week moving forward (ex: second Wednesday of the month)
- Community members can become a member by filling out the application.
- The WPAC will need to elect a new board which would include a President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer at a minimum, but can have more board members if we choose. The WPAC can also have various committees in place.
- All board members are required to be biometric fingerprinted (these are not the same as the fingerprints required for CPS).
- Some Volunteers may also need to be fingerprinted and all are encouraged to do this.

- There is no geographic boundary allowed - anyone who lives within the City of Chicago can be an office or member of the PAC. No fee can be charged for membership, although you can have a suggested donation.
- The WPAC is required to keep the WPAC public binder in the park office. The binder contains the identification of PAC officers, bylaws, sign-in sheets, committees, meeting minutes, financial reports, etc.
- The previous WPAC bylaws are outdated, we will need to create new bylaws. Maria recommends that we use the Chicago Park District template to create bylaws and she will email this to Manny.
- It was brought up that some parks have other parks encompassed in their PAC. Vogle Park is under a different park supervisor – Mark Naumiec (Gross Park).
- Lisa Ragucci advised that Mellin Park in Edgewater is under her supervision.
- Maria mentioned that there are 225 parks with Park Advisory Councils and she would be happy to make connections/introductions if we would like additional resources.

Statement of Accounts:

- The WPAC currently has an account at Wintrust. The balance is unknown, but low. Manny and Mike will confirm.
- The WPAC's 5013c was revoked in 2017.
- Maria recommended that the WPAC use the Chicago Parks Foundation as our fiscal partner. It's less work for the PAC to use the Chicago Parks Foundation and the fee is only \$75.00 per year. We would have to agree to use their designated bank partner, which is Fifth Third Bank. 75 of the Chicago PACs use the Chicago Parks Foundation
- If the WPAC chooses not to use the Chicago Parks Foundation, we would need to get the 5013c re-established as no donations can be accepted until one of the above is in place.
- Manny announced that he sent a \$250 donation to Chicago Parks Foundation and had the funds earmarked for WPAC re-ignition for Q2 of 2023.
- Dave mentioned that there would be cost savings less overhead using the Chicago Parks Foundation – group agreed that this would be best moving forward.
- Maria said that there is a Parks Foundation meeting next Thursday at 6PM and encouraged us to attend.

Electing a New Board:

We discussed completing the process of nominating and electing the new WPAC board at the next meeting. The group discussed that those present should think about the role they would like to have within the WPAC.

- Maria confirmed that nominations and votes for the new WPAC board could be done at the next meeting held (as long as 14 days' notice was given to the public).
- Those present filled out membership applications which indicated their areas of interest. Manny collected the applications and added them to the WPAC binder.
- Sample bylaws were handed out and those present were asked to look them over in order to come to the next meeting with suggestions/ideas for creating the WPAC bylaws.
- The next meeting was set for Wednesday, May 10, 2023 at 6PM at Amundsen High School in room 118. Manny has already confirmed with Kristi Eilers (Principal of Amundsen) that the room is available.
- The group agreed that the WPAC meetings will always be the second Wednesday of the month with the next meeting after that being June 14, 2023 (time/location TBD)
- Manny will post the notice of the meeting within the park tomorrow to invite the public.

Keep Winnemac Green – Earth Day 4/22 – Deb Miretzky

- Being held this Saturday, April 22, 2023 from 9AM-12PM
- The group is meeting on the west facing steps of Amundsen
- Deb already picked up the supplies from the Park District.
- Deb and Maria discussed this process as it was difficult for Deb and the supplies given weren't ideal.
- Maria asked Deb to send her an email detailing the process and giving suggestions to improve the process.
- Volunteers – the group discussed the number of volunteers and where the sign-up has been shared.
- Needs:
- -Lisa will have Ken bring a table and garbage bags to the steps and he will open the stadium and bathrooms for the event.

Prairie/Nature Updates – Amy Williamson

- Prairies are 25 years old.
- She is working on getting a master naturalist/gardener to come out to educate herself and the group.
- Manny recommended signage for the prairie areas. Amy said that some has recently been added by the Park District, but due to the number of kids going through Winnemac Park, vandalism of signs in the area and the many different species growing and blooming at different times, more signage is not necessary.
- Amy mentioned two apps that she uses – the Merlin app identifies birds using sound and the PictureThis app identifies flowers, plants and trees from pictures.

Save Winnemac Park and Save Winnemac Tennis

- Winnemac Park TIF funds were approved by the City Council earlier in the day.
- Communicated with Alderman with this and advised that we still have a lot of work to move forward to get these completed ASAP (or by the end of 2024 at the latest so that we don't lose the funds).
- Tennis – Anne Ryan: concerns regarding pickle ball being put in at Winnemac Park when tennis courts renovated as there are only 2 tennis courts available.
- Anne spoke to Jill Segal from USA Tennis who advised that the Welles Parks courts were not re-done very well. There was discussion around the Park District process as they have vendors that they have to utilize. We can discuss this with Michael Lange and obtain a list of the qualified contractors.
- We need to invite Michael Lange to the meetings. We decided not to invite him to the next meeting as it will focus on elections and the creation of the WPAC bylaws. We will invite him to the June 14, 2023 meeting and send the invite ASAP before his calendar fills up.

Winnemac Park Unleashed - Manny Vega

- Chicago Park District Security has added Winnemac Park to their daily rounds as a special focus for 60 days. They have been driving through and advising people to leash their dogs.
- Neighbors submitting concerns to 311 which has resulted in animal control also coming out to Winnemac Park and asking neighbors to leash their dogs.
- There has been about a 95% reduction in the number of dogs off leash
- Bo (CPD Security) will continue their focus on Winnemac Park for another 30 days.
- No tickets have been issued yet – only warnings

- The group has concerns that if no tickets are issued, the park visitors with off-leash dogs will continue their behavior.
- The group also discussed that some of the off-leash dog behavior may be reduced due to the sports teams that are present in the park recently.

Park Supervisor – Lisa Ragucci

- Lisa cited concerns that many programs have been taken away from Winnemac Park because of the loss of use of Chappel Elementary School and Amundsen High School amenities, specifically the gyms and the pool.
- There are a lot of community concerns around the lack of access to bathrooms at Winnemac Park.
- The intergovernmental agreement between CPD and CPS came up as there is concern that the CPD is not getting access to all the facilities (including the stadium bathrooms and school gyms) as agreed upon in the IGA (see IGA attached).
- Maria asked for a copy of the IGA and advised that there is a new Chief Executive at CPD and she will bring it back to them.
- Manny agreed to send the intergovernmental agreement to Maria Stone
- June 17th will be The Movies in the Parks at Winnemac Park. The movie will be The NeverEnding Story and will start at dusk.
- The Movies in the Parks supplies popcorn for the event, but the WPAC will be able to sell other items (candy, water, chips, juice boxes, etc.) if they have either joined the Chicago Parks Foundation or had the 501c3 reinstated before then.
- An Activity Request Form needs to be filled out and turned into the Chicago Park District when selling something at one of their events.
- The previous Aldermen (Schulter and O'Connor) have sponsored a second movie at Winnemac. We want to reach out to ask Andre if he would like to sponsor a second movie?

Miscellaneous:

- Concerns for the recent graffiti in the park (Latin Kings). A 311 request was already sent in. Everyone agreed that we need to be diligent to report all graffiti seen.
- Mike Vacala mentioned reaching out to the local schools to get kids involved in cleaning up the park as many of them will need volunteer hours for school.
- Master list for marketing (maybe Amundsen has it)
- Pitch in for the Parks runs June to October and kicks off with It's Your Park Day on June 3, 2023. It generally includes volunteers picking up trash, tree mulching, etc. and is hosted by PAC.

Priorities For Next Meeting (May 10, 2023):

- Nominating members for positions on the WPAC and holding officer elections
- The creation of WPAC bylaws
- Letters to the Park District regarding the Intergovernmental Agreement between CPD and CPS and how the terms of the agreement are not being honored.
- We discussed creating a message about the 4th of July fireworks in Winnemac Park and protecting the improvements that will be completed in the park.
- Confirm next meeting as June 14, 2023 and confirm location

Meeting Adjourned at 7:20PM