

# GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY REPORT

FOR BELVIDERE TOWNSHIP PARK DISTRICT

APPROVED BY THE PARK DISTRICT'S COMMITTEE ON  
LOCAL EFFICIENCY ON JUNE 25, 2024

## **Purpose**

The Belvidere Township Park District (“The District”) formed its Committee on Local Government Efficiency on May 23, 2023, to study efficiencies and report recommendations regarding those efficiencies and increased accountability pursuant to 50 ILCS 70/1, *et seq.* (the “Committee”).

### **I. Committee Membership**

The Committee consisted of the following individuals:

Daniel Noble, Board President

Amy Nord, Board Vice President

Jean Twyning, Board Treasurer

Mary Marquardt, Board Secretary

Gary Thacker, Commissioner

Matt Fleury, Resident

Terri Glass, Resident

Michael Hart, Resident

John Wolf, Resident

Jen Jacky, Executive Director

Aly Graham, Superintendent of Recreation

Jonathan Cudzewicz, Superintendent of Parks

Melissa Merkel, Superintendent of Administrative Services

## II. Committee Meetings

The Committee met as follows:

### Meeting Time

6pm

### Meeting Dates

February 27, 2024

April 23, 2024

June 25, 2024

### Meeting Place

Baltic Mill

920 West Lincoln Avenue, Belvidere, IL

Minutes of these meetings are available on the District's website or upon request at the District's Administrative Office.

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

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

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

- **Elected, non-partisan, non-compensated board.** The District is governed by a board of five commissioners, each with four-year terms. Commissioners must reside within the boundaries of the park district and are elected at the Consolidated Election in odd-numbered years. Pursuant to state law, commissioners are non-partisan and serve without compensation.
- **Accessible and focused representation.** Having a dedicated board to oversee the policies/procedures and financial wellbeing of the organization provides the community with increased access to their elected representatives and allows those elected representatives to remain focused solely on park district related items. This is contrasted with general purpose governments where elected representatives are



responsible for broad oversight on a wide range of issues. This special purpose benefit is particularly advantageous when it comes to budget and finance oversight.

- **Increased transparency.** Having a dedicated unit of local government to provide park and recreation services also improves the relationship between the District and its residents because of the transparency and openness related to the board and park district operations. Having detailed agenda and action items allows taxpayers to be better informed about the inner workings of their local government. When individual units of government are responsible for providing specified services like park districts, transparency is increased because action items and budget procedures are more detailed. Additionally, these items and budgetary decisions are subject to more scrutiny by locally elected officials than is the case with larger, multi-purpose governments with a multitude of departments.
- **Protection of revenues.** Because the District is a separate unit of local government, the revenues it generates can only be used for park district purposes. This assurance is contrasted with general purpose governments like cities, villages, and counties that provide a multitude of services such as fire, police, public works, economic development, etc., where revenues that are generated specifically for parks and recreation can be expended on these other services with limited, if any, input from voters.
- **Protection of assets.** Public parks and other real property owned by the District is held in trust for the residents of the park district, and, subject to very limited exceptions, can only be sold or transferred if residents approve of the sale or transfer by a referendum. This is contrasted with general purpose units of government, which have authority to sell or dispose of property by a vote of the governing board.
- **Providing the Community More with Less.** The District does more with much fewer funding options. Unlike other units of local government that receive direct state funding, and income, sales, use, hotel/motel, motor fuel and other numerous taxes, the Park District's only tax revenues come from a modest portion of a resident's overall property tax bill. In fact, despite its limited funding options, the District share is only 5.5 to 6% of the local tax bill, depending on residence.

As part of good governance and implementing best practices in the management of day-to-day operations, the District has also adopted the following ordinances, rules, policies, and procedures:

- Administrative Policies and Procedures
- Financial Procedures
- General Conduct Ordinances
- Park Policies

- Personnel/Employment Policies & Procedures
- Recreation Policies
- Safety and Risk Management Policies
- Vision/Comprehensive Master Plan

## **IV. List of Shared Services and Partnerships**

The District works diligently to provide the best possible programs, services, and facilities to our community at the least possible cost. One of the many ways the District achieves this goal is by partnering with neighboring park districts, school districts, other units of local government within or near the community, the State, non-profit organizations, and for-profit corporations. Below is a comprehensive list of the current partnerships, agreements, and other relationships that assist the District's mission of delivering the best possible services at the least possible cost to our community.

### **1. Membership in a Special Recreation Association**

Special Recreation is a department of the District. To create the largest impact for services, the Park District is part of the Northlands Association for Special Recreation (NASR). Special Recreation Associations (SRA) are a form of intergovernmental cooperation among units of local government that are authorized under the Illinois Constitution, the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act, the Park District Code, and the Municipal Code. Their formation is rooted in a fundamental belief and recognition that "Recreation is for Everyone." They are shining examples of local government efficiency.

By partnering together, local communities can effectively and efficiently deliver more successful program opportunities to community members who have special needs. Furthermore, by participating in the SRA, the District networks with two other local governments to provide many more program opportunities for our community members who have special needs and offers a choice between participating in the SRA's programs or in programs that are provided by the District. NASR is comprised of Belvidere Township Park District, Rockford Park District and Freeport Park District. The District also partners with Districts 100 and District 200 for special recreation programming and support.

The District and the SRA also achieve efficiency by utilizing existing facilities that are owned and operated by the SRA's members, including the District. Utilizing these existing facilities allows the SRA to deliver services to its member communities at a lower cost. Currently the District provides the SRA access to the following facilities for their program offerings:

- Special Recreation Facility, 6581 Revlon Drive, Belvidere
- Rivers Edge Recreation Center, 1151 West Locust Street, Belvidere
  - Indoor Sports Courts
  - Outdoor Bocce Court

- Multipurpose Rooms
- All District parks and playgrounds, but most frequented:
  - Prairie Fields Park, 1111 Fairgrounds Road, Belvidere
    - Sports Fields
    - Playgrounds
  - Aberdeen Park, 1343 Orth Road, Caledonia
  - Bloom Playground, 1006 West Lincoln Avenue, Belvidere
  - Sundstrand Park, 2100 Newburg Road, Belvidere
    - Baseball Fields
    - Shelters
  - Doty Park, 365 West Locust Street, Belvidere
    - Pavilion
    - Riverside Ice Arena
    - Doty Sprayground
  - Glenn Green Open Space, 8484 Distillery Road, Belvidere
  - Cottonwood Playground
- Administration Building, 1006 West Lincoln Avenue, Belvidere
- Historic Baltic Mill & Stage, 920 West Lincoln Avenue, Belvidere
- Meehan Elementary School

Special Recreation also provides the support needed for participants with special needs who choose to register for the District programs or inclusive programming. Special Recreation collects information on the registered participant and determines what support is needed for that participant to be successful in this inclusive setting or the District program. This could include additional training of the supervisory staff, additional support staff, the use of adaptive equipment, behavior management, and/or other measures that will assist in the successful participation of this individual in the District program. Although success may not look the same for everyone, the Special Recreation works with all District's staff to ensure the best possible results for all the participants in the program. The District's cost of providing these services would be much greater without its participation and partnership in the SRA.

In 2023, the Special Recreation successfully served 109 residents in 78 programs. Special Recreation also supported 12 participants in inclusive programs that were provided by the Park District.

The District is very proud of the ongoing collaboration with NASR. By working cooperatively with other local governments, not only are we better able to collectively serve all citizens within our communities, including persons with disabilities, but we are able to do so in the most efficient and effective manner possible.

## **2. Other intergovernmental agreements with other park districts, forest preserve districts, conservation districts, or municipal recreation agencies**

The District currently works closely with the Boone County Conservation District, but the two entities do not currently have any formal agreements.

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

- **Belvidere School District** | 3<sup>rd</sup> Base Contract | Agreement to provide afterschool elementary aged childcare on site at District 100 elementary schools
- **Belvidere Fire Department** | Onsite Training Agreement
- **IDA Public Library** | Storybook walk Memorandum of Understanding
- **Boone County** | Road Salt Purchase Agreement

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

- **Department of Child and Family Services** | Childcare assistance funding for 3<sup>rd</sup> Base, Club Horizon, Camp Compass and Camp Horizon participants.
- **Build Illinois (Senator Dave Syverson)** | Funding for Kiddieland Playground refresh.

### 5. Partnerships or agreements with affiliate organizations, independent contractors & other partners

Partnership and agreements between affiliate organizations, independent contractors and other partners are a great way for groups to utilize existing facilities and amenities that the group may not be able to afford to construct themselves and/or does not duplicate other facilities needed to carry out such programs/activities.

- **PCF** | Independent Contractor Agreement | Combination of high and low impact fitness classes
- **Belvidere Bandits** | Independent Contractor Agreement | Wrestling
- **Belvidere Youth Baseball** | Affiliate Agreement | Club baseball
- **Belvidere Fury High School Hockey** | Affiliate Group Agreement | High school ice hockey
- **Belvidere Tornadoes** | Affiliate Group Agreement | Cross country
- **Belvidere Bolts** | Rental Agreement | Club baseball
- **J&J Dance** | Independent Contractor Agreement | Youth dance programming
- **Jeff Leach Yoga** | Independent Contractor Agreement | Yoga classes
- **Shadow Premier** | Affiliate Group Agreement | Club soccer
- **Academia Belvidere Soccer** | Rental Agreement | Club soccer
- **Creative Learning Center** | Rental Agreement | Arts & theater programming
- **Kids Spot Tumbling** | Independent Contractor Agreement | Youth tumbling and gymnastics programming
- **Rockford Academy** | Independent Contractor Agreement | Youth martial arts programming



- **Boone County 4-H** | Independent Contractor Agreement | Program partner for programs and club events.
- **Belvidere Police Department** | Program Partner | Junior Police Academy co-host
- **Young Rembrandts** | Independent Contractor Agreement | Youth art classes
- **Tracy Nogacz Art** | Independent Contractor Agreement | Youth & adult art classes

## 6. Partnerships or other interrelationships with non-profits

- **Belvidere Area Chamber of Commerce** | Activity Partner | Hometown Christmas event
- **Belvidere Family YMCA** | Summer Camp Memorandum of Understanding | Swap out for discounted rates for swimming services at the YMCA to general recreation and special recreation summer campers with the District with rock climbing services at the District for YMCA campers.
- **Boys Scouts of America** | Project Partner | Boy Scout Michael Glass is working with the District and Ida Public Library for an Eagle Scout project to construct a story walk. Rental of park space for Boy Scout camp. Volunteers.
- **Build-A-Bike** | Planning Partner | Collaboratively work on details from start to finish of the annual event to provide bicycles to 100 youth in need in the community.
- **Boone County 4-H Federation** | Summer Camp & Program Partners | Collaboratively market to start a Park District 4-H Club. Education programs about animals to summer campers.
- **Boone County Arts Council** | Activity Partner | Use of space in Concerts in the Park summer series. Providers of art in the park.
- **Boone County Council on Aging** | Informational Partner | Community information sharing
- **Boone County Community Foundation** | Charitable Partner | Support includes funds for the Oasis Room at Special Recreation and the Park & Play Rec Mobile
- **IOU Club of Belvidere** | Activity Partner | Annual Easter Egg Hunt at Joe Lewis Field.
- **Community Foundation of Northern Illinois** | Charitable Partner | Support includes funds for the Oasis Room at Special Recreation.
- **Growth Dimensions** | Informational Partner | Community information sharing.
- **Parks & Conservation Foundation** | Charitable Partner | Act as the 501c3 charitable arm for the District for donations and landholding.
- **University of Illinois Extension** | Program Partner | Community garden grant partners for Special Recreation



## 7. Informal cooperation with other units of local government which save taxpayer dollars by eliminating redundancy

- **Belvidere School District** | Cooperative use of Meehan gymnasium. 3<sup>rd</sup> Base partnership to provide afterschool care onsite at the elementary students, with transportation assistance between sites. Summer school programming with District 100 COVID funds to support students attending general recreation and special recreation camp after the enrichment attendance days for the school.
- **North Boone School District** | Summer school funding with COVID funds to support students attending special recreation camp.
- **Boone County Health Department** | Staff sit on Behavioral Health Taskforce, Hunger Coalition, Board of Health and Maternal Child Health Coalition to fulfill community needs. WIC on Wheels bus utilize District properties to feature/offer services.
- **IDA Public Library** | Community event partners at Summer Reading Kickoff and UnPlug Illinois Day. Bookmobile featured in parks.
- **Boone County Conservation District** | Equipment sharing. Idea sharing and supportive of one another's grant efforts. Partners with the Parks & Conservation Foundation.
- **City of Belvidere** | Assist one another in troubleshooting issues in each entity's expertise. Work collaboratively with community planning.
- **City of Belvidere Police Department** | Conduct safety training for staff. Analyze community trends of crime or areas of concern. Program partner with Junior Police Academy. Utilize spaces for training. Help with safety training for early education participants. Assist with Special Olympics parade.
- **Boone County Sheriff's Department** | Analyze safety and community trends of crime or areas of concern. Assist with Special Olympics parade.
- **City of Belvidere Fire Department** | Work collaboratively with training. Fire education for early childhood. Assist with Special Olympics parade.

## Other Examples of Efficient Operations

**Use of volunteers.** One way in which the Park District reduces the burden on taxpayers is using volunteers. Last year, 82 individuals volunteered more than 875 hours of service to the Park District.

**Youth employment.** The Park District is a major employer of youth in the community. Last year, the Park District employed 23 youth. Not only is this an efficient way to deliver services, but youth employment serves as a valuable training tool for the future workforce.

**Joint purchasing.** The Park District participates in joint purchasing cooperatives pursuant to the Governmental Joint Purchasing Act (30 ILCS 525/0.01 *et seq.*) thereby

saving taxpayer dollars through economies of scale. The District has purchased through OMNIA and Source Well for supplies and equipment.

**Park & Conservation Foundation.** During the Foundation's last fiscal year, \$6,100 raised in private donations, which help alleviate the burden on taxpayers. While funds were raised for the District, the other important function of the Foundation is as a land holder for property donated to the District. The Foundation holds 61.96 acres of land for the District.

**Collaboration with other park districts on best practices.** Because park districts are not in competition with one another, they are more willing than the private sector to share best practices. These best practices help to avoid unnecessary costs and deliver services more effectively and efficiently.

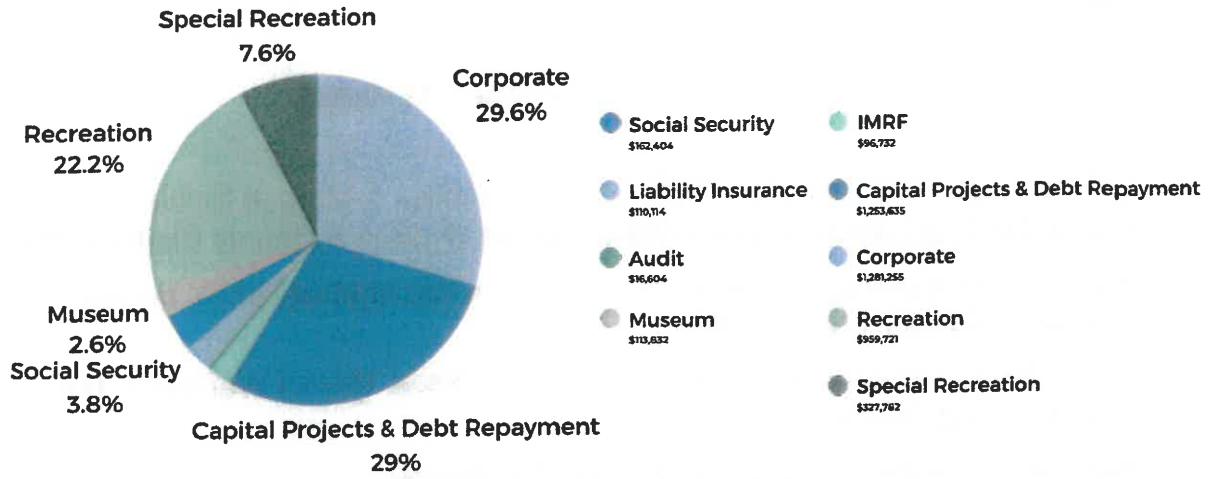
**Reliance on Non-Tax Revenue.** Unlike most local governments that rely on a wide range of sales, use, and income taxes, the District is not permitted to assess these types of taxes. Additionally, although the District is an economic engine for the community and generates much revenue for the state and our community in the form of hotel/motel, sales, and motor fuel taxes, our District does not receive any of these revenues. Also, unlike Illinois cities, villages, counties, and school districts that received billions of dollars in direct financial assistance from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), our District did not receive any such direct federal aid. Our District also does not receive state funding under the Local Government Distributive Fund (LGDF) or General State Aid (GSA) that these same cities, villages, counties, and school districts receive through the State budget.

Instead, the District provides all of programs, facilities, and services to the community with a very modest amount of property taxes and from **non-tax sources** such as memberships, program registrations, and other user fees as well as private donations and grants.

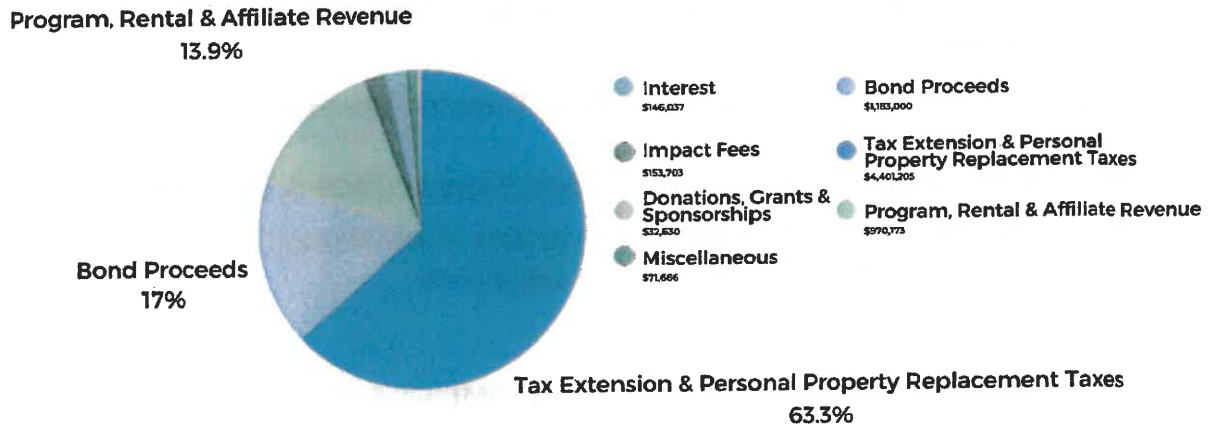
The District is very cognizant of funds and strives to run a zero-balance budget, meaning that they do not extend outside of their means to run District operations.

**Donations.** The District utilizes donations to offset taxpayer dollars while covering costs of overhead for facilities and/or programs to keep participant fees low. Last year, donors graciously gave over \$30,000 through private donations, sponsorships, grants and fundraising to support the efforts of the District. In 2023, the District created robust sponsorship packages and expanded sponsorship opportunities for different events that will kick off in 2024. Sponsorships assist in alleviating the burden of the taxpayers while also offsetting programs costs to keep participant fees low.

## 2023 TAX EXTENSION BREAKDOWN



## 2023 REVENUE BREAKDOWN





## V. Transparency to the Community

The District is more than happy to share information regarding its operations with the public. The following information about the Park District may be obtained by citizens in the location listed.

### Documents & Locations Available

- Annual audit | Administrative Office, District Website & State of Illinois
- Annual tax levy | Administrative Office, District Website & County Clerk's Office
- Annual budget and appropriation ordinance | Administrative Office, District Website & County Clerk's Office
- Bids & Requests for Proposal | Administrative Office, District Website & The Boone County Journal
- Bid Awards | Administrative Office & District Website
- Board agenda and minutes | Administrative Office & District Website
- Compensation Package Report | Administrative Office
- Comptroller's Annual Finance Report | Administrative Office & State of Illinois
- Conduct Ordinances | Administrative Office & District Website
- GO Guide | Mailed to homes, District Facilities & District Website
- Operating Budget | Administrative Office & District Website
- Public Hearing Notices | Administrative Office, District Website & The Boone County Journal
- Treasurer's Report | Administrative Office, District Website & County Clerk's Office
- Vision/Comprehensive Master Plan | Administrative Office & District Website
- The District also responds back to all Freedom of Information Act requests in a timely manner, following State of Illinois guidelines

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC COMMENT & FEEDBACK

The District is always open for public feedback daily through in person, phone and/or email communication. In a more formal setting, the District offers residents many opportunities to provide feedback. These include:

- The board of commissioners meets twice each month. Residents may provide public comment at every meeting.
- The Park District's annual Budget and Appropriation Ordinance is available in tentative form at least 30 days prior to its adoption at an open meeting of the

Park District board. Additionally, at least one public hearing is held prior to final action, and notice of the hearing is published in the newspaper at least one week prior to the hearing.

- The District’s annual property tax levy is approved at an open meeting of the District board in accordance with the Open Meetings Act. The District follows all public notice and hearing requirements under the Truth in Taxation Law prior to the adoption of this annual tax levy. The District’s annual levy is also subject to the limitations of the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law.
- Residents may contact or request information from the District by phone at 815-547-5711 or email at [administrator@belviderepark.org](mailto:administrator@belviderepark.org).
- **Local Government Efficiency Committee.** Public comments are allowed at the beginning of the meeting and a poll/survey of the public is taken at the end of the meeting with emailed responses allowed for seven (7) days following the meeting.
- **Surveys.** The District encourages the public and participants to share their thoughts through surveys. The District has conducted the following surveys:
  - Aquatic Study Public Survey | 2021-2022 (English & Spanish)
  - Comprehensive Vision Plan Survey | 2023 (English & Spanish)
  - Beginning in 2022, surveys at the end of each recreation program, participants (or their families) receive a satisfaction survey
- **Community Input Sessions & Public Hearings.** The District values the voices of the public and provides numerous opportunities for the public to share their opinions to form the vision of the park and the direction in which it is headed. The District has conducted the following community input sessions and public hearings:
  - Aquatic Study Virtual Community Input Sessions | 2021
  - Comprehensive Vision Plan Community Input Sessions | 3 sessions in 2023
  - Public Hearings in accordance with all Park Codes for items such as budget amendment and the general obligation bond

## VII. District Involvement

### Involvement

The District is involved in many community initiatives, coalitions, and organizations. Involvement in a diverse variety of activities assists in the reach, network, and continued education both to the District and about the District.

- Belvidere Area Chamber of Commerce | Member (District)
- Boone County Arts Council | Members (Gary Thacker & Jean Twyning)
- Boone County Behavioral Health Task Force | Member (Katie Humphrey)

- Boone County Board of Health | President (Jen Jacky)
- Boone County Community Foundation | Board Members (Jean Twyning & Jen Jacky)
- Boone County Housing Authority | Board Member (Jen Jacky)
- Boone County Hunger Coalition | Member (Taylor Kuchenreuther)
- Boone County Providers Group | Member (Sean Cramer)
- Build-A-Bike | Planning Team (Aly Graham & Jen Jacky)
- Boone County CASA | Advocate (Melissa Merkel)
- Community Building Complex of Boone County Board | President (Katie Humphrey)
- District 100 Strategic Plan, Facilities Plan & Community Partner Communication Committees | Member (Jen Jacky)
- District 100 Wellness Committee | Member (Aly Graham)
- Heritage Days Committee | Member (Taylor Kuchenreuther & Aly Graham)
- Hometown Christmas Committee | Member (Katie Inman & Aly Graham)
- Illinois Association of Park District | Member (District)
- Illinois Government Finance Officers Association | Member (Melissa Merkel)
- Illinois Parks & Recreation Association | Member (District)
- Illinois Parks & Recreation Association Therapeutic Recreation Legislative & Advocacy Committee | Member (Katie Humphrey)
- Illinois Parks & Recreation Association Therapeutic Recreation Sports Committee | Member (Gina Ruvalcaba)
- Illinois Parks & Recreation Therapeutic Recreation Day Program & Youth/Day Camp Committee | Member (Sean Cramer)
- Maternal Child Health Coalition | Committee Member (Aly Graham)
- Midwest Institute of Park Executives | Executive Board Member (Jonathan Cudzewicz)
- Northlands Association for Special Recreation Council | Member (Katie Humphrey)
- Northlands Association for Special Recreation Supervisors Group | Members (Sean Cramer & Gina Ruvalcaba)
- Northwestern Illinois Parks & Recreation Association | Member (District) & Board Member (Aly Graham)
- Parks & Conservation Foundation | Board Members (Mary Marquardt, Daniel Noble & Jen Jacky)
- Rockford Area Visitors & Convention Bureau Master Plan Steering Committee | Member (Amy Nord)
- Young Professionals | Members (Aly Graham & Carlos Villarreal)



## VIII. Benefits and Services

The Park District serves the entire community from the youngest child to the oldest adult and all ages in between. It does so in a variety of ways.

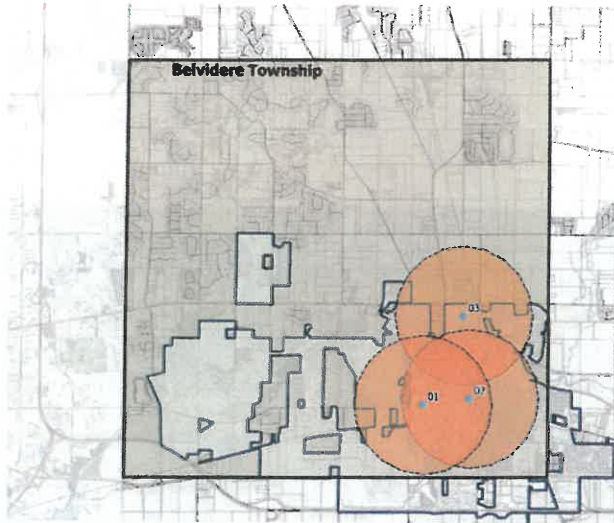
### 1. Facilities & Properties

#### PARK RECREATION AREAS MATRIX

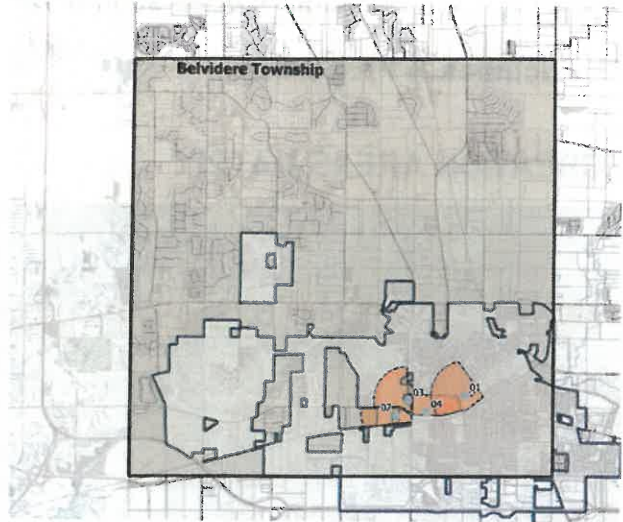
PARKS	ACRES	PARK CLASSIFICATION	SHELTER	BASKETBALL	BASEBALL	TENNIS	PICKLEBALL	HORSESHOE	BOCCE BALL	SHUFFLEBOARD	SOCCER	VOLLEYBALL	PLAYGROUND	SOFTBALL	FOOTBALL	SPRAYGROUND	RESTROOMS	PATHS	RECREATION SPACE	ICE RINK
Aberdeen Park	9.4	N	1	1	1	2		3			1	1	1				1	X		
Belvidere Park	55.2	C	5	3	1	3	6					1	4				2	X		
Bob's Park	1.2	N	1										1							
Doty Park	9.8	C	1										2			1	1	X	X	X
Fridh Recreation Area	27.6	N	1	1	1			3			1	1	1				1	X	X	
Glenn Green Park	71	S																		
Hamilton Sundstrand Park	15.5	S	3		2							4					3			
Harkless Park	6.3	N		1	1								1					X		
Prairie Fields Sports Park	82.3	C	2		2						6		2	2	6		1	X	X	
Red Horse Bend Park	20	S																		
River's Edge Rec. Center	11.8	S							1								1			
Tot Lot	0.4	M											1							
Winterroth Park	6.7	N									1		1						X	
TOTALS:	317.2		14	6	8	5	6	6	1	0	9	7	14	2	6	1	9			

Park Classification: N=Neighborhood Park, C=Community Park, M=Mini Park , S=Special Park

Community Parks Map



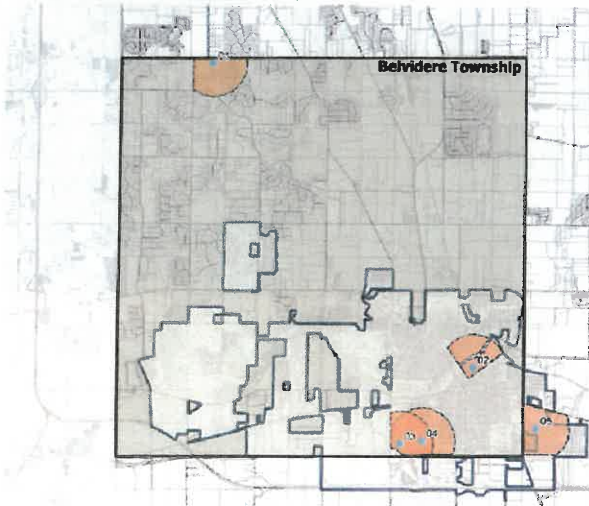
Special Use Parks Map



2. The District proudly offers a wide array of amenities on its properties. They have 13 shelters situated on its properties. Each property has its own unique amenities such as playgrounds, sports fields, and walking/bike trails. The Park District offered the following facilities and properties to the community last year:

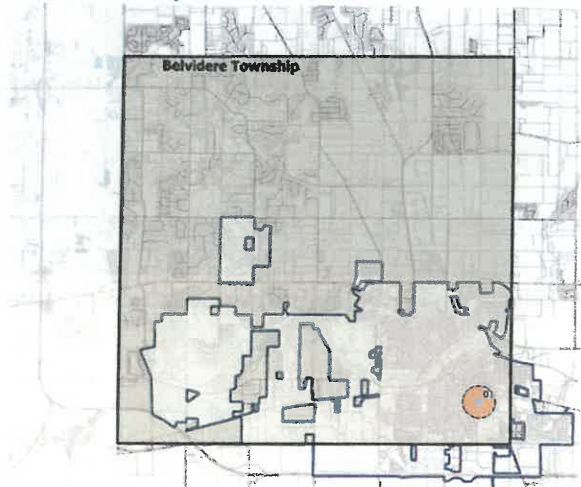
- **Aberdeen Park, 1343 Orth Road, Caledonia** | At 9.7 acres, Aberdeen features basketball courts, sand volleyball courts, tennis courts, shuffleboard, playground, picnic shelter, restrooms, ball diamond, soccer field, horseshoes, and path.

Neighborhood Parks Map



Shelter

Mini Parks Map



includes electricity and a grill. Park amenities include restrooms. Shelter can accommodate up to 50 individuals.

- **Belvidere Park, 1006 West Lincoln Avenue, Belvidere** | The flagship park is 105 acres of beauty and wonder with a wide range of amenities to keep the families of Belvidere active and healthy. Within its 105 acres are: 4 shelters, public restrooms, tennis courts, sand volleyball courts, basketball courts, ball



diamond, playground areas, accessible fishing pier, the historical swinging bridge, Bloom, Cottonwood and Kiddieland playgrounds. The Kishwaukee River and the Mill Race separate the park into three areas – north, center and south. It also features the Historic Baltic Mill, the Administrative Building and preschool program.

- **Bob's Park, 524 East Locust Street, Belvidere** | This park features two playgrounds providing fun for children ages 2-5 and 5-12.
- **Doty Park, 365 West Locust Street, Belvidere** | Development of these 12.5 acres includes a shelter, playground equipment, open recreation space and continuation of the Kishwaukee Riverfront Path. The park also prominently features, the Riverside Ice Arena, Rock River Valley's only full-size outdoor ice rink, along with the AJ Johnson warming house and private rental cabins. Additionally, Doty offers a summertime sprayground. Park amenities include restrooms and a pavilion that can accommodate up to 100 people.
- **Farmington Fields Open Space, 3082 Hidden Green Drive, Belvidere** | This area is an open space owned by the District.
- **Fridh Park, 1420 West 9th Street, Belvidere** | This 20-acre park features soccer/football fields and open recreation space. Amenities include playground and restrooms. The shelter can accommodate up to 120 individuals.
- **Glenn Green Open Space, 8484 Distillery Road, Belvidere** | The 23-acre park is a natural prairie restoration area that offers more than a mile of walking paths.
- **Harkless Park, 918 West 9th Street, Belvidere** | This small neighborhood park showcases six acres including youth ball fields and a playground.
- **Historic Baltic Mill, 920 West Lincoln Avenue, Belvidere** | A historic grist mill, this site has been turned into a museum with indoor and outdoor rental space. The area features a rustic stage with stone bleachers for everything from shows to weddings. Alongside the Mill, runs the Mill tranquil Mill Race. A number of sculptures are featured around the property.
- **Mary Bracken Open Space, 2884 Spring Creek Road, Belvidere** | This area is an open space owned by the District.
- **Prairie Fields Sports Park, 1111 Fairgrounds Road, Belvidere** | This 90-acre sports park contains soccer/football fields, baseball/softball diamonds, and two playgrounds with off street parking. The Sports Park has restrooms and two shelters. The area features the OSF Fitness Court which is designed to support every workout type, goal, and program imaginable for ages 14 and up.
- **Red Horse Bend Canoe Launch, 6301 Lawrenceville Road, Belvidere** | This twenty-acre parcel includes public access canoe launch, parking lot and fishing area.
- **Rivers Edge Recreation Center, 1151 West Locust Street, Belvidere** | This 20,000 square foot facility houses most of the District's active recreation programs and general recreation summer camp. Programs span across the gamut such as basketball, pickleball, volleyball, indoor soccer, and wrestling.

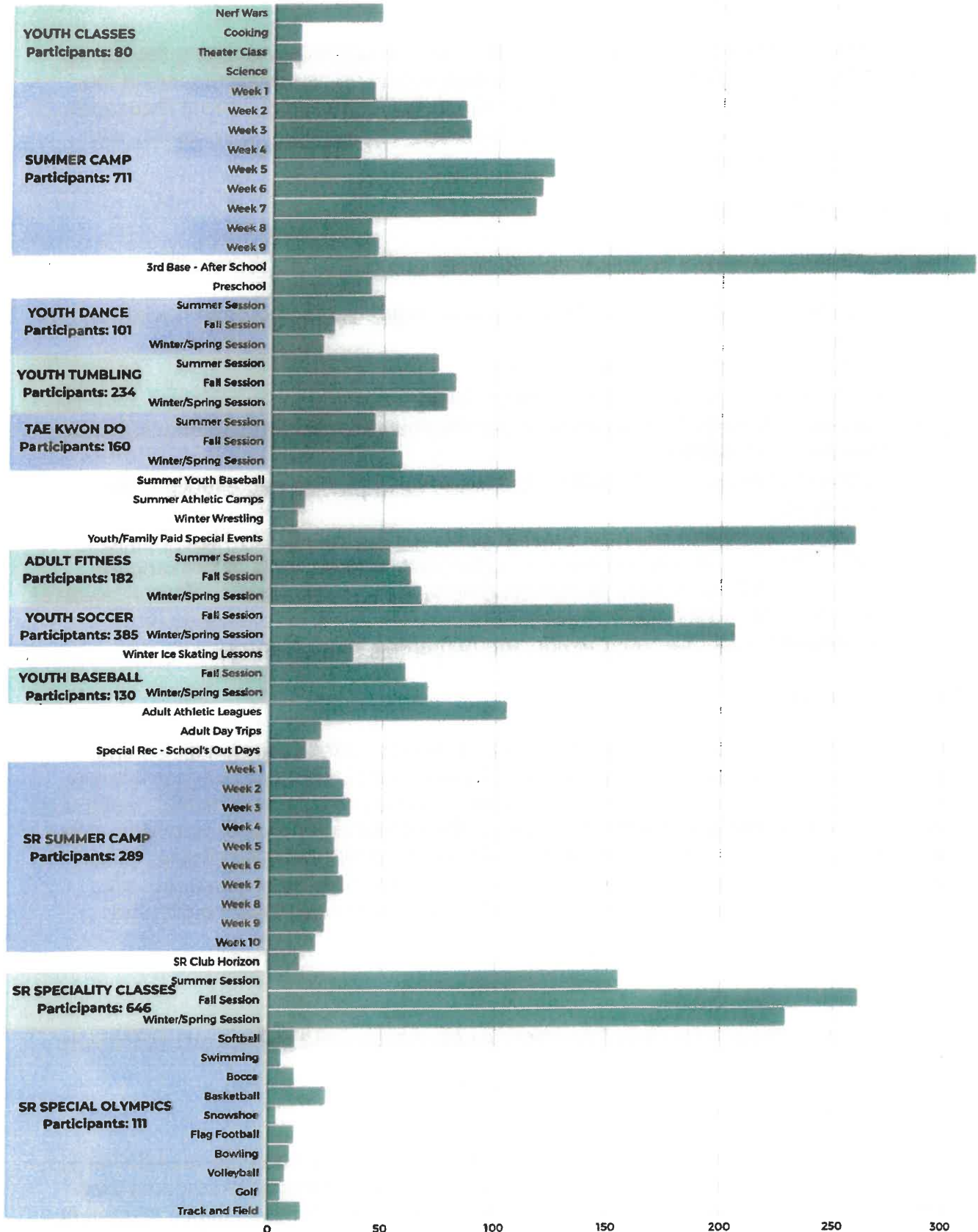


Additionally, many other programs such as fitness, martial arts, yoga, nerf nights, and art camps occur at Rivers Edge. The facility features a 35-foot indoor rock wall, full gymnasium with bleachers and two rentable multipurpose rooms. This facility is popular for birthday parties and baby/wedding showers.

- **Special Recreation, 6581 Revlon Drive, Belvidere** | This facility houses all the Special Recreation programs, excluding sports, associated with the SRA. The property features three program rooms, an Oasis Room (sensory friendly area). The full kitchen is used for Special Recreation programming and for general recreation cooking programming. The building is fully accessible.
- **Sundstrand Park, 2100 Newburg Road, Belvidere** | This park features 3 shelters, two baseball fields, four volleyball courts and bathrooms spread across nearly 16 acres.
- **Tot Lot Park, 1022 East Avenue, Belvidere** | A small neighborhood playground geared towards ages 2-5, along with a grassy area to play.
- **Winterroth Park, 2143 East 6th Street, Belvidere** | This park features 6.7 Acres with 0.4-mile walking path and playground.

### 3. Programs

■ Participants



The District prides itself in offering quality active recreation programming to its residents and beyond. They offered the following programs last year. The following graph depicts participants in each program:

The District hosts birthday parties and offers room and shelter rentals to the public. Additionally, the District hosts/co-host multiple events on its properties and in the community that are free for the public to attend that cumulatively attract thousands of people. Some examples include hydrant parties, Unplug Day, Up in the Air, and IOU's Easter Egg Hunt.

#### **4. Additional Services**

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

- Open public skate, figure skating, specialty skate events and open hockey shoot times
- Host the Hometown Christmas Parade
- Assist in the annual planning of Build-A-Bike
- Actively participate in other local governmental strategic plans to help structure community consistency
- Participate/partner with multiple organizations to provide free events to the community
- In 2023, the District secured funding to roll out the Park & Play Rec Mobile in 2024. The Rec Mobile is a party on a bus with athletic, craft, STEM and art activities. This bus is geared at taking recreation on the road to different areas of the community that may have less access or resources to participate in recreational activities and provide pop up parties free of charge.

#### **5. Other Benefits**

While the District is a special purpose district, its impact on the community is multi-faceted and far reaching. For example, the District's parks, recreational programming, and other opportunities improve the community's overall physical and mental health and wellness, thereby reducing health care costs. After school and summer programs offer safe, convenient, and affordable childcare options for working families during critical times when school is not in session. These opportunities also help reduce juvenile crime. The District's open space and trees help improve air and water quality and mitigate flooding.

## **IX. Recommendations for Increased Accountability and Efficiency**

### **Intergovernmental Fees and Charges**

One opportunity for efficiency would be the elimination or reduction of fees and charges assessed by other units of government. By way of example, below are amounts that other units of local government charge the District even though the District's taxpayers



are also taxpayers of these other units of local government. Such fees and charges, and the bureaucracy that accompanies them, inhibit the park district's ability to deliver programs, facilities, and services at the least possible cost. The District wishes to work with other countywide government agencies to reduce the profit margin between the entities which results in a burden to taxpayers.

- City of Belvidere | Pool demolition permit \$630
- City of Belvidere | Shelter building permit \$398
- City of Belvidere | Administrative building permit \$204
- City of Belvidere | Administrative parking lot permit \$1,525
- Boone County Health Department | Water testing \$152
- Boone County Health Department | Health certificate \$22
- Illinois Fire Marshal | Elevator inspections \$409
- Environmental Protection Agency | Pool demolition permit \$250

Other units of local government should recognize that intergovernmental fees often lead to inefficiency in the expenditure of taxpayer dollars through extra bureaucracy and administrative costs. In many cases, the unit of government assessing the fee ultimately benefits from the project or event, meaning it can recoup its costs through the extra sales tax or other revenue that will be generated. Where such fees are necessary, general-purpose units of government should offset the fee by crediting the district for all benefits they will receive from a project, event, or property. For example, open space that is protected and maintained by the District helps mitigate stormwater management costs, so assessing stormwater management fees on the District not only leads to inefficiency, but it is also shortsighted.

Governmental units should be discouraged or prohibited from charging more than their out-of-pocket costs associated with the activities covered by a fee that is assessed to another unit of local government with the same taxpayers. Put another way, one unit of local government should not profit by taxing another. Eliminating local permit fees is a way to reduce administrative costs without impacting overall public revenue. Local government best serves the people when it cooperates and works together. Some communities recognize this and do not charge fees to other units. All communities should be encouraged to follow that model to receive the best results for local taxpayers and to promote governmental efficiency.

### **Unfunded Mandates**

Unfunded state mandates are another cost driver. While the District recognizes that there are benefits to some of these mandates, modifications could help alleviate some of the burden to the park district.

- a) **Criminal Background Checks.** All park districts are statutorily required to conduct criminal background checks on all employees pursuant to Section 8-23 of the Park District Code. The District also conducts background checks on long-term volunteers and those interacting with children. The background checks must be done through the Illinois State Police (ISP). Last year, the District spent \$3,850 on criminal background checks. The District does not recommend eliminating this mandate because it is necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of children

and other patrons. However, the State should explore ways in which it could improve the current system and make it less costly for park districts to comply with the law.

The mandate also raises the fundamental question as to why one layer of government is forced to charge its taxpayers to comply with a State mandate when the State made the determination to impose the mandate. Put another way, if the State has determined that criminal background checks are necessary for public safety, the State should assist with compliance.

The District recommends studying whether there can be a more efficient background check process implemented through the ISP to reduce the time and expense it takes for background checks. Another suggestion is for ISP to waive the fee for checks on minors or waive all fees for name checks. If there is a "hit" from a name check, the fee could be charged for the more costly fingerprint check. Since it is a state mandate, perhaps the fee structure for park districts should also be reviewed to determine whether the fee being charged exceeds the actual cost of doing the check and, if so, perhaps the ISP could consider reducing its cost to local governments.

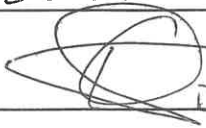
- b) Prevailing Wage.** One way to reduce the burden on local government staff is to limit the prevailing wage requirement to larger capital contracts. This would free up tracking of the paperwork on small repairs and projects. One reason for creating a threshold requirement is the cost of the administrative burden relative to the cost of the actual project. For example, eliminating prevailing wage on smaller projects, e.g., those less than \$50,000, will result in more local bids and decrease the overall cost for these smaller public works projects.
- c) Newspaper Publication.** The newspaper is no longer the most effective way to provide notice. Websites are cheaper and reach more people. Permitting the District to post the information on its website in lieu of newspaper publications would reduce costs.

## X. Committee & Staff Recommendations

- Create a youth recreation scholarship to support participation for all in athletic and specialty programs, sponsored by for-profit businesses, organizations and/or private donors, to offer a sliding scale opportunity for residents to participate in District programs. The program shall be designed for ease of use for residents.
- Seek additional state and federal grants to support capital improvements and/or capital projects.
- Continue diversification of funds to alleviate the burden on taxpayers through state and federal grants/funds, sponsorships, local grants, and private donations.

- Formalize shared services or partnerships with other local entities through Intergovernmental Agreements, Memorandums of Understanding or similar contracts.
- Quarterly, audit District recreation programs for effectiveness, efficiency, and community impact by reviewing participation numbers, feedback, and comparison to similar (if any) programs serving the community and make appropriate changes.
- Increase awareness of and further utilize the Parks & Conservation Foundation as the not-for-profit arm of the District to gain more pass-through funds to serve the mission of the District.
- Formalize bid procedure for existing contractors/vendors to ensure competitive pricing for the District.
- Review joint purchasing opportunities.
- Where appropriate, utilize volunteers to a greater capacity.
- Leverage relationships with civic organizations to increase efficiency and reduce staff wages by asking them to assist, volunteer and/or organize recreation activities throughout the District.
- Complete an annual report for the community to further increase transparency.
- Continue to look at new ways to take recreation beyond the walls or properties of the District into underserved areas such as use of the Rec Mobile being rolled out in 2024.
- Upload complete board packets on District website prior to the board meeting for public viewing.
- Video record board meetings and upload them online for public viewing.

Dated: 25 JUN 2024

Signed:  DANIEL CANALE PRESIDENT BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



