

Town Hall Meeting: Thursday January 18th - 7:30 P.M.

Call to Order: President, Ken Blackburn

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call

Town Hall Meeting / Public Input

Town Hall Meeting Presentation: Executive Director, Jim Randall



On behalf of Park Board Members and staff, I wish to extend our sincere appreciation for all that took time to attend, listen, and contribute during this evening's Town Hall Meeting.

The Park District has a process of gathering information from residents to ensure they have a voice in all Park District actions.

It conducts community wide surveys by independent third parties, most recently through the University of Illinois.

The process that began in 1995 with the University of St. Francis was so well-received that it has become an ongoing action to ensure the direction of the Park District remains defined by the residents we serve.

Upon completion, all information is available to residents, and as with past surveys, all results are posted on the Park District's website, www.fspd.org

Please take time to visit the website to view the District's efforts to provide a clear, transparent reflection of all aspects of Park District operation. The website includes Park Board Meeting minutes, financial reports, audits surveys, master plans, Park District brochures, a park and facility matrix and much more relevant information. All information is provided to enable full awareness of Park District actions, programs, administration, finance, and parks and facilities. As always, if ever there are questions or concerns, we encourage direct communication via phone, email, office visits, and Board Meeting attendance. If questions are not answered adequately this evening, please give me a call.

The most recent community survey provides an overview of ideas, input, and accounting of all areas of operation. Consistent with past survey instruments, we have an exceptionally supportive community that appreciates the benefits the park district provides. That's not everyone, we absolutely accept criticism offered, but the vast majority of respondents, over 90%, reflects residents as being supportive of all departments.

A variety of wants were reflected and summarized in the report, and based on the input from survey respondents, the Park Board authorized a referendum question, providing \$1.5 million in funding for a variety of needed improvements throughout the District.

Page 38 of the community survey report includes this question:

Would you support a park referendum for the renovation of existing parks, acquisition of property near populations with limited access to current district properties, and increased landscaping throughout our community if...?

A. At \$1.5 million if it did not raise Park District taxes. Y / N

Respondents approved this referendum question by 82%, understanding that the District has the ability to fund the \$1.5 million for capital improvements without raising taxes.

This accounts approximately 3% of annual tax revenue and less than 2% of the Park District's annual budget.

The better news is that the Park District is within 4 years of retiring its 2002 referendum debt (in 2022) that accounts for \$650,000.00 annually, equating to 21% of its annual tax revenue, or \$71 of the average tax bill based on a home value of \$250,000.

Respondents to FSPD surveys are typically the residents that most frequently utilize District programs and services. That does not always translate to residents that show up and vote.

Most importantly, we want the wishes of Park District residents to be represented at the General Primary Election on Tuesday, March 20th.

The projects and actions do not represent unproven concepts, but are reflective of the building blocks of the Park District that are most important to our everyday users. Bike path repairs and expansion, playground equipment, dance studio, athletic field improvements, public restrooms, pond enhancements, tree planting, and a variety of cost efficiency measures that will benefit the District in lower utilities. The proposed improvements are not focused in one primary location, but reflect a plan for District-wide renovation that can continue, due to added debt retirement, even after referendum proceeds are spent, due to the improved financial position of the district without added tax dollars.

We last offered a referendum at the General Primary Election in March of 2016. It was unsuccessful, defeated by some 160 votes in one of the best attended elections in the history of the district. I was frequently asked the question "How disappointed are you with the results?" I always responded "Not at all." Of course I would have liked to complete the improvements and projects included in that referendum, but not at the cost of community support. A resounding "yes" or a resounding "no" is always preferable to a simple majority.

The FSPD has provided every home within the District the opportunity to complete the survey and have their opinions represented. To ensure this was an unbiased report, it was created, measured, and completed by the University of Illinois, an independent third party.

All information is free and accessible to all Park District residents in hard copy, if requested, at the Park office, or online on the Park District's website www.fspd.org.

All resident households received the winter/spring brochure that included the referendum insert, summarizing referendum information and encouraging attendance at this Town Hall Meeting.

Displays with referendum information, currently set up in the Community Center Board Room, will travel throughout the community with hand-out literature.

Press releases have been submitted to local publications, and articles have appeared in both the *Daily Southtown Star* and *Frankfort Station* publications, and on social media sites.

Referendum information will be provided to Park District program participants and on marquees throughout the district as Election Day gets closer.

In 2002, \$5 million dollars of much needed improvements took place in literally two years. The Park District made every effort to maximize tax dollars with grant funding, having received \$4,300,000+ in additional grant dollars to subsidize the hard earned tax dollars residents contribute.

If successful, repairs and improvements will occur over the next four years, and at the conclusion, the Park District will be well-positioned to move forward, having retired debt and completing much needed repairs and replacement of well used facilities.

Equally important, the Park District will be well-positioned with the retirement of debt over the next four years, highlighted by the retirement of 2002 referendum costs in 2022, to lower taxes permanently, while retaining the ability to keep all parks and facilities in the condition residents have come to expect.

If not successful, we will simply do our best with the resources available, as we have always done.

Again, on behalf of the Board and staff of the Frankfort Square Park District, thank you for your attendance, and we welcome any questions that you might have.

Jim Randall
Executive Director
Frankfort Square Park District