

FRANKFORT SQUARE PARK DISTRICT
PUBLIC MEETING
PROPOSED OSLAD GRANT APPLICATION
HUNTER PRAIRIE PARK REDEVELOPMENT
June 28, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.

The following are Minutes of a public meeting of the Frankfort Square Park District, held at the Administration Building, 7540 W. Braemar Lane, Frankfort, Illinois.

I. Welcome

Executive Director, Audrey Marcquenski introduced herself and welcomed all that were in attendance to learn about and share ideas on the proposed redevelopment of Hunter Prairie Park.

II. Board Member & Staff Introductions / Park History

Ms. Marcquenski introduced the following Board Members and staff that were present and are instrumental in the proposed project.

- Dave Macek, Vice President of the Park Board
- Frank Florentine, Park District Commissioner
- Phil Cherry, Park District Commissioner
- Denis Moore, Park District Commissioner
- Ed Reidy, Superintendent of Parks
- Linda Mitchell, Assistant to the Executive Director
- Darrell Garrison, President/CEO of Planning Resources, Inc.

Ms. Marcquenski reviewed the following brief history.

The Frankfort Square Park District (FSPD) was formed by residents in 1974 and land was purchased to develop parks. One of these original parcels was owned by the Hunter family, descendants of Joseph Hunter, Sr., who was one of the first settlers in Frankfort Township. In 1840, he purchased 160 acres of prairie at \$1.25 per acre.

Over the years, the property remained with the Hunter family, and they came to an agreement with the newly formed Park Board to sell 7 acres. In 1980, it was part of a successful grant project to develop it into what we know as Hunter Prairie Park.

40+ years later, the FSPD is looking to begin the park's next chapter and hopes the state continues to support our efforts with another grant opportunity.

III. Overview - Landscape Architect Firm, Planning Resources, Inc.

Ms. Marcquenski introduced Darrell Garrison, President/CEO from Planning Resources, Inc. (PRI), along with his team, Kylie Forman and Gabe Yang, Landscape Designers, that are helping the FSPD with the park planning and grant application submission.

PRI is a full-service Landscape Architecture practice founded in 1982.

PRI has deep experience in supporting their clients as they provide grant development and application services to many park districts and other agencies throughout Illinois. Their experience is demonstrated in the millions of dollars that they have secured for communities across the state.

PRI and its clients have many successful park sites in our area, and with the FSPD being a member agency of the Lincolnway Special Recreation Association, residents may be aware of the Leigh Creek South Park recently completed adjacent to the LWSRA building in New Lenox. Thanks to a successful OSLAD grant, along with the efforts of the New Lenox Park District, LWSRA member agencies, families, and donors, the dream of a universal design playground became a reality.

Darrell Garrison introduced members of his team, Kylie and Gabe, noting they assist in conveying the information from the proposed plan.

Mr. Garrison also thanked the FSPD Board for allowing PRI to collaborate with the FSPD on this project.

IV. IDNR Grant Process

PRI is skilled at identifying projects that meet the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) criteria for Open Space Land Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) grant projects. In addition to designing parks, PRI is experienced in working with agencies in the preparation and submission of grant applications.

Mr. Garrison explained the OSLAD grant program, noting it is one of many popular grant programs offered by the State of Illinois. OSLAD funds projects proposed by municipalities and recreation agencies enabling redevelopment of parks and recreation areas.

The OSLAD grant program was introduced thirty-six years ago and has funded more than \$530,000,000 recreational projects throughout Illinois. It is a competitive process that works on a point-based system, recognizing efficiencies and innovations in planning. PRI has been very instrumental in ensuring their clients benefit from OSLAD grant funding.

OSLAD is a cost sharing program that offers a 50% / 50% match. If an agency is planning for \$800,000 in project expenditures, a \$400,000 grant would be provided, with the agency funding the remaining \$400,000. In 2022, the IDNR increased funding opportunities where an agency could submit a \$1,200,000 project plan and receive \$600,000 in OSLAD grant funds.

PRI was commissioned by the FSPD to work on plans to redevelop the existing Hunter Prairie Park site and to make it an appealing application that the IDNR may approve for OSLAD grant funding.

V. Concept Plan Elements

A preliminary master plan and enlargement detail boards were displayed, and Mr. Garrison provided an overview of the plan elements.

Hunter Prairie Park is a 7-acre neighborhood park that is bordered by homes on the north and west side, parking lot on the south end, and Summit Hill Junior High School on the east side.

PRI studied the park site to develop an overall master concept, recommending improvements to the park that will appeal to IDNR grant administrators by focusing on key areas where most of the recreational activities are taking place as follows:

- The existing parking lot will remain.
- The tennis courts will be revitalized with new surfacing, color coding, fencing with two access points, and a spectator seating/waiting area that provides an accessible plaza space.
- Green roof added to existing picnic shelter.
- ADA accessible walkway to picnic shelter.
- Installation of a creative play area for ages 2-12 with an accessible path/route that will be located closer to the shelter/pavilion, enabling caregivers to observe their children from a comfortable/shaded area.
- The composite play structure will be placed on an accessible, safe, and resilient play surfacing of engineered wood fiber.
- Exit points for swings and slides will include poured in place resilient rubber, adding a colorful play experience.
- A concrete surface will surround the play area, enabling users to traverse the entire route.
- The native planting area will be removed. Prior to removal, the plants will be studied, and natural plantings of good quality can be transplanted to the swale area on the east side of the park site that helps with stormwater detention. This area will be turned into a rain garden, requiring less maintenance and providing a more aesthetic quality, with a wildlife enhanced/pollinating area.
- Community gardens with raised planters and a covered pavilion/storage area with a green roof will be installed on an ADA accessible paved surface.
- A native woodland area, including native Illinois trees will be installed.
- New fencing, inclusive of a 10' backstop with 6' side wing fencing will be installed. The dugout will be enhanced, along with new spectator seating on concrete, providing accessibility.
- An accessible looped path will encircle the entire park with connections to the north and west sides of the park site (resident home access) and to the west side (Summit Hill Junior High School access).
- A screened port-a-potty, providing a more aesthetic appeal will be added.

Mr. Garrison further noted that PRI wishes to develop a welcoming appeal, providing an experience for park visitors from the time they arrive at this play/recreation site.

VI. Public Input

Mr. Garrison opened the meeting to resident questions and comments (*see Q&A detailed below*) and invited those in attendance to come forward and take a closer look at the displayed plans.

Q: Will the large green container box remain in the parking lot?

A: Ed Reidy, Superintendent of Parks, stated that he spoke with a representative of the Frankfort Square Baseball League (FSBL), and that their storage container will be removed in exchange for a storage unit that will be shared between the FSBL and community gardeners.

Q: The work that has gone into the proposal is much appreciated, but the homeowner on the north end of the park site is concerned that the planned path may require removal of existing trees that provide a home to birds and squirrels. The resident further noted that the FSPD has done a great job in caring for this grove of 6-8 mature trees, and he asked if the trees will remain.

A: Mr. Garrison noted that good quality trees will remain, as residents love having the trees that create a nice ecosystem. The current display is conceptual only, and existing trees will be shown on a construction plan. Mr. Garrison and his design team will walk the park site with Audrey and Ed to identify and mark the trees, and PRI will contract for a land survey prior to developing a construction document. Mr. Garrison further noted that an amended plan will include changes per comments provided today and will be detailed in the second public meeting.

Q: Will you cut down the tree that is near the path? It is a family favorite where we often take photos.

A: Mr. Garrison assured the resident that they will design around viable healthy trees.

Q: Will the community garden area include raised beds similar to those at Community Park? Will the gardens be covered, and can residents plant in the garden beds?

A: Only the storage area will include a shade covering, and it will be the same basic design as Community Park. It was further noted that community gardens were the 3rd most requested park amenity on recent community-wide surveys.

Q: Will the basketball hoop remain?

A: Ms. Marcquenski responded that it will be removed from the parking lot. If residents wish to have a basketball net installed, a concrete slab can be included in another area within the park site to provide a safer place to play.

Q: Will the port-a-potty remain year-round? As a school bus driver, fellow drivers appreciate having these facilities available.

A: Audrey noted that the port-a-potty can remain year-round. Mr. Garrison noted that the planned screened facility will be larger than the average port-a-potty and will be an accessible amenity installed on an 8' x 10' concrete pad where users will have pathway access from the east and west yet have privacy when entering and exiting the facility.

Q: I like the rain garden concept. Do you have areas that will drain into the garden, and do you have a long-term maintenance plan to care for this amenity?

A: Mr. Garrison noted the rain garden is planned for a low area that is already designed to capture runoff and is a water source. It will include native plants that can withstand dry and wet areas. Ms. Marcquenski further noted that the Park District would add this site to the contract it has with Stantec.

Q: Do you have a species list that the public can comment on?

A: Mr. Garrison noted that prior to developing a species list, it will be necessary to look at a hydro period to see how long water is detained in the area.

Q: Will you have plans available online for public review?

A: Ms. Marcquenski noted that the Stantec management plan is on the FSPD's website and that updates will be made available, as needed.

Q: Will you provide a tree list?

A: Mr. Garrison will develop a tree list of native species that will be provided to the FSPD for consideration.

Q: The natural areas budget has been cut. The Island Prairie Interpretive Gardens were an awarding winning amenity. They are now being cared for but had previously been neglected. How do you propose to care for additional natural areas when what is currently owned is not well-maintained?

A: Ms. Marcquenski noted that Stantec provided FSPD with a plan that will be followed.

Q: There is only so much money in the budget. How do you allocate funds to keep these areas up?

A: Ms. Marcquenski noted that this will be part of the conversation with the management team.

Q: Will you do any work on the existing infield? It is currently only good for practice and games cannot be played at this athletic field. The resident cited the weeds on the infield, a large depression that holds rainwater, and the crushed limestone that needs to be excavated out.

A: Mr. Garrison stated that the infield is not designated to receive improvements. Mr. Reidy stated that when completing value engineering, it was determined that it would be more advantageous for FSPD staff to manage infield improvement in-house.

Q: The current soil amendments are not draining well, and water is running into his yard as well as into his neighbor's yards to the north and south of his home.

A: Mr. Reidy noted that he cannot promise compensatory water storage, but that the FSPD would work on the full scope. The resident asked that the diamond also be improved.

Q: What is the overall timeline for this project?

A: Mr. Garrison stated that since the project manual has not yet been released, he is going planning per what has been historically provided. The application is expected to begin on July 1, and the grant application must be submitted within 45 days, or by August 30. Following application submission, the IDNR completes a cursory review of all submittals, and some applicants are invited to Springfield to present a 3-minute overview of their plans. The IDNR is already aware of the concepts, but they wish to see the level of commitment from agencies. They will also ask questions based on their cursory review.

Following the presentations, the IDNR will decide on grant awards and the governor makes an announcement at the IPRA convention at the end of January/early February, however, last year, OSLAD grant awards were announced in March. It is hoped the FSPD will receive a notification of funding letter by March 2024.

Once notifications are received, the IDNR must prepare an agreement/contract between agencies and the State of Illinois, a process that generally takes two months. The document would then be reviewed by the FSPD's attorney. The FSPD may then elect to contract with PRI, at which time their team would begin working on construction documents and engineered drawings that involves a 10–12-week process, barring civil engineering issues. Any elements included in the plans cannot be started, or the IDNR would not fund the project. Since work on the baseball infield is not part of the grant, work can begin prior to project execution.

When the FSPD signs off on construction drawings and the Park Board authorizes PRI to go to bid, the project must be publicly bid for a minimum of fourteen days, however depending on the scope and complexity of the project, PRI may provide three weeks, giving bidders the opportunity to provide quality bids.

Mr. Garrison further noted that regardless of bid numbers, grant documents include a DOC-4 that reflects all costs associated with the plan. Bidders only see project elements, so if submitting bids higher than what the State of Illinois will allow, PRI will meet with Ed Reidy to complete value engineering that would reduce the scope, but not the project elements. In other words, if the project plan reflects ten elements, ten elements must be completed.

PRI also checks bidders' references, ensuring the contractor has done this type of work before, vetting them to ensure they have the capacity and experience to satisfactorily complete the project, a process that takes a week or so.

With the proposed project elements, and depending on the time of year, actual construction should take, on average, 8-10 weeks.

Unforeseen issues, i.e., shipping delays of 6-month lead times, can cause setbacks. PRI, therefore, recommends that FSPD staff purchase equipment ahead of time, which also would save 10% on administration fees.

Q: What is the length of the path?

A: Mr. Garrison believes it is a quarter of a mile looped path system.

Q: Is the trail considered part of the grant?

A: Mr. Garrison noted the southern portion of the trail, from the access point by the ballfield to the tennis courts will be submitted as part of the OSLAD grant and the FSPD is committed to installing the remaining portion of the looped trail that will not be funded by the State.

Q: There are houses to the west of the ballpark that have a sidewalk that does not currently connect to anything. Will it connect to the proposed trail?

A: Mr. Garrison noted that there will be neighborhood connections to the path.

Q: Will the FSPD put in the rest of the looped path whether or not the grant application is successful?

A: Although the looped path is not part of the application, the FSPD is committed to installing the path.

Q: Will the FSPD remove snow from the path?

A: Mr. Reidy answered affirmatively, noting that all FSPD paths are plowed. A resident expressed appreciation for this FSPD action that ensures paths are useful recreational activities 365 days a year.

Q: When will the specifics of the play area be determined?

A: Mr. Garrison noted it is in concept form only at this time, as the manufacturer has yet to provide a graphic of the composite structure. It is hoped an updated image will be available for the next public meeting.

Ms. Marcquenski noted that the structure will be similar in scope to the equipment at Woodlawn Park.

Q: We have some favorite parks but are looking for equipment that provides a challenging experience that encourages gross motor activities and would help eliminate aging out and enable young children and teens to play together. Will you consider this type of playground equipment?

A: Mr. Garrison noted the image on the concept drawing does not represent the planned apparatus, and that in addition to providing challenges, the equipment needs to eliminate risk to the users.

Q: A resident was happy to learn that the tennis courts will remain, since Lincoln-Way North recently closed their courts. The high school does not offer pickleball teams/activities. She also does not like the existing plastic surface and asked if it will be redone with proper surface materials.

A: Mr. Garrison believes it will be necessary to resurface the courts as we do not know what currently exists underneath the current surface. A soil boring test will be conducted to and depending on what the core samples reveal, a new binder and traditional surfacing, as opposed to simply stripping cracks, will be completed.

Q: Do you plan to mark off soccer fields at Hunter Prairie Park.

A: Although Hunter Prairie Park was used in the past for soccer, at this time, there are no plans to provide soccer fields at this location.

VII. Announcement of Second Public Meeting Date/Time

Ms. Marcquenski thanked everyone for attending this evening's meeting to share their thoughts and ideas. There are additional opportunities for residents to provide input via phone, in-person, and through an email dedicated to this proposed project hunterprairiepark@fspd.org.

The plans will also be on display in the Community Center lobby.

Ms. Marcquenski noted that the Park District has been successful thanks to the support of its residents which can be demonstrated in the receipt of over \$4 million in grant awards over the years.

The public meeting concluded at 8:04 p.m., and Ms. Marcquenski announced that a second public meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 12 at 7:00 p.m. at the Community Center. The July 12 meeting will be a duplicate of tonight's meeting, to ensure those that were not in attendance on June 28 will learn about the full scope of the planned grant application and proposed redevelopment project.

Respectfully submitted:
Linda Mitchell

FRANKFORT SQUARE PARK DISTRICT
PUBLIC MEETING
PROPOSED OSLAD GRANT APPLICATION
HUNTER PRAIRIE PARK REDEVELOPMENT
July 12, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.

The following are Minutes of a public meeting of the Frankfort Square Park District, held at the Administration Building, 7540 W. Braemar Lane, Frankfort, Illinois.

I. Welcome

Executive Director, Audrey Marcquenski introduced herself and welcomed all that were in attendance to learn and share ideas about the proposed redevelopment of Hunter Prairie Park. This is the second of two planned public meetings and resident input from the June 28 meeting has been incorporated into the design that is on display.

II. Board Member & Staff Introductions / Park History

Ms. Marcquenski introduced the following Board Members, staff, and PRI representative that were present and are instrumental in the proposed project.

- Ken Blackburn, President, Park Board of Commissioners.
- Phil Cherry, Park District Commissioner
- Ed Reidy, Superintendent of Parks
- Linda Mitchell, Assistant to the Executive Director
- Gabe Yang, Landscape Designer, Planning Resources, Inc.

Ms. Marcquenski provided the following brief history of the Park District and Hunter Prairie Park.

The Frankfort Square Park District (FSPD) was formed by residents in 1974 and land was purchased to develop parks. One of these original parcels was owned by the Hunter family, descendants of Joseph Hunter, Sr., who was one of the first settlers in Frankfort Township. In 1840, he purchased 160 acres of prairie at \$1.25 per acre.

Over the years, the property remained with the Hunter family, and they came to an agreement with the newly formed Park Board to sell 7 acres. In 1980, it was part of a successful grant project to develop the parcel into what we know as Hunter Prairie Park.

40+ years later, the FSPD is looking to begin the park's next chapter and hopes the state will continue to support our efforts with another grant opportunity.

III. Overview

Ms. Marcquenski introduced Gabe Yang, Landscape Designer from Planning Resources, Inc. (PRI), who will review the project, updates based on public input, and provide detail on how he and the PRI team are helping the FSPD with the park planning and grant application submission.

PRI is a full-service Landscape Architecture practice founded in 1982.

PRI has deep experience in supporting their clients as they provide grant development and application services to many park districts and other agencies throughout Illinois. Their experience is demonstrated in the millions of dollars that they have secured for communities across the state.

PRI and its clients have many successful park sites in our area, and with the FSPD being a member agency of the Lincolnway Special Recreation Association, residents may be aware of the Leigh Creek South Park recently completed adjacent to the LWSRA building in New Lenox. Thanks to a successful OSLAD grant, along with the efforts of the New Lenox Park District, LWSRA member agencies, families, and donors, the dream of a universal design playground became a reality.

IV. IDNR Grant Process

Mr. Yang reported that working in conjunction with Park District staff, PRI will submit an Open Space Land Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) grant application to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) on or before the August 31, 2023 deadline date.

The IDNR will fund up to \$1.2 million for development projects, or \$600,000 which equates to 50% of a project, with applicants providing \$600,000 of the matching fund grant. A budget will be developed based on the final design to determine the grant amount that the Park District will request.

The OSLAD grant program is a highly competitive process, and the IDNR recognizes projects that include several plan elements, both recreational and environmentally conscious.

V. Concept Plan Elements

An updated preliminary design plan and enlargement detail boards were displayed, and Mr. Yang provided an overview of the plan elements.

The proposed Hunter Prairie Park Redevelopment includes a series of existing features that will be improved/renovated, and the IDNR will allocate points per the following features:

- Baseball Field – Improvements to seating area, fencing, and infield.
- Basketball Hoop – A safer and more accessible basketball point and shoot area.
- Picnic Shelter – A green roof and shallow planters will be added to the existing picnic shelter.
- Creative Play Area – Ed worked with the District's playground equipment vendor and developed a design for ages 2-12, with input from young residents at the June 28 meeting, with all fitting perfectly into the site.

- Community Gardens – A series of planters, duplicating the gardens at Community Park, along with a storage space for gardeners' access.
- Tennis Courts – The current courts have a variety of issues requiring full renovation. The surface area underneath will be removed, and asphalt and paint will be added, along with new fencing and a spectator/seating area.
- Woodland Area – Expansion of native Illinois landscape features between the playground and parking lot, accessible by pathways.
- Swale – Existing swale will be populated with prairie plants that are native to Illinois, providing a natural/educational aspect.
- Path – A full ¼ mile perimeter bike/walking path. The path will be 8' wide to enable Park District staff to plow, enabling recreational activities year-round. The path will also include connections to the neighborhood on the west and north side, as well as to the school site on the east side.
- Native Illinois Shade Trees – Existing healthy trees will remain and additional trees native to the State of Illinois will be added which is another feature that the IDNR looks favorably upon.

VI. Public Input

Mr. Yang opened the meeting to resident questions and comments (*see Q&A detailed below*) and invited those in attendance to come forward and take a closer look at the displayed plans.

Q: The plan shows a restroom, is this permanent structure or a porta potty?

A: Ed Reidy responded that it will be the standard porta potty that is used throughout the District, however it will include a screened surrounding for privacy and aesthetics.

Q: Kirk Savary, President of the Frankfort Square Baseball League (FSBL) reported that FSBL is hoping the baseball field improvements would integrate 70'-80' baselines to enable older players (Pony League) to make Hunter Prairie Park their primary ballfield. They also would request a batting cage to warm up and an outfield fence, if possible.

A: Audrey Marcquenski noted that she and Ed Reidy discussed these improvements, and although the District is currently over budget on the project, these ballfield amenities will be included. Ms. Marcquenski also stated that a storage space will be included with the intention that it be shared by gardeners and the FSBL. Mr. Reidy further noted that the storage facility will look similar to a traditional red barn and will complement the garden area.

Mr. Savary stated that FSBL will not require much storage space, however they may utilize it to park a Gator. In addition, they will move the container that is currently located at the Hunter Prairie parking lot to the Union Creek Park #5 field.

Q: The path is a great addition, but would it be possible to install bag stations for dog walkers?

A: Mr. Reidy noted that pet waste stations will be installed.

Q: The tennis courts are a popular amenity at Hunter Prairie Park. Will the improvements include a concrete surface and/or will it allow for pickleball play?
Mr. Reidy stated the District has a sufficient number of pickleball courts at other park sites and Hunter Prairie's facility will be dedicated to tennis only.

Q: Is the existing basketball hoop coming out?

A: Mr. Reidy stated the hoop in the parking lot will be removed and a single hoop will be installed further into the park site, allowing patrons to shoot hoops, and it is not intended to be a game court.

Q: Who maintains the native areas?

A: Mr. Reidy stated that Park District staff maintain some of these areas and contracts with Stantec to assist with larger jobs.

Q: Can water fountains with bottle fillers be included in the plan?

A: Mr. Reidy answered affirmatively, noting that since water will be brought in to service the gardens, fountains with bottle fillers will be a simple addition.

Q: Are there any plans to include soccer fields?

A: Ms. Marcquenski stated there has not been a need for adding soccer fields as the sport is not as popular as it had been in the past, however, Maintenance staff are currently doing work at Champions Park, removing fencing and arborvitaes, to provide multi-use at this location.

Phil Cherry also noted that there are soccer fields available within the District.

Q: Do you envision that the proposed improvements would result in a higher traffic area, and if so, could additional stop signs be installed on North Avenue?

A: Mr. Reidy noted that the Park District does not have jurisdiction over installation of stop signs, and that initially, traffic may increase, but overall, it will experience the normal usage.

Q: It was stated in the June 28 meeting and again this evening that the existing trees around the path perimeter would remain. Could you please confirm that is the plan?

A: Mr. Yang stated that it is always the intention to keep trees. The design PRI is proposing will include existing healthy trees and also add new trees. All existing species will be inspected, located via GPS, and the path will be designed around the trees. Ms. Marcquenski further noted that the resident's concerns were heard during the June 28 public meeting, and that Gabe Yang's design reflect the inclusion of the existing trees.

Q: Older ballplayers can be an issue with hitting long balls. Can an outfield fence be added?

A: Ed Reidy noted a flexible, breakaway design outfield fence can be installed.

Q: If approved, what is the timeframe from start to completion?

A: Mr. Yang stated that the grant application must be submitted by August 31, 2023. Award notification is anticipated in the spring of 2024. Following approval, PRI will complete construction documents within 30-45 days. The public bid process normally takes a month, and construction may begin in the spring of 2025.

Mr. Reidy further noted that the process from beginning to end will take two years.

VII. Closing

Ms. Marcquenski thanked Mr. Yang for this evening's presentation and also thanked those in attendance for sharing their thoughts and ideas. There are additional opportunities for residents to provide input via phone, in-person, and through an email dedicated to this proposed project hunterprairiepark@fspd.org.

Ms. Marcquenski appreciated that people took the time to participate in the meeting and noted that the Park District is successful because of supportive residents, which has been demonstrated in over \$4 million in grant awards over the years.

Respectfully submitted:
Linda Mitchell