MINUTES
The City of Crystal Lake
PROCEEDINGS OF THE YOUTH COMMISSION AND CITY COUNCIL
February 13, 2025 Special Meeting
Aaron T. Shepley City Hall, 100 W. Woodstock Street, Crystal Lake, IL

1. Call to Order

Commissioner Cioper called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. Thursday, February 13, 2025.

2. Roll Call/Attendance

Commissioners Lauren Wolfe, Charlie Ann Benton, Sunny Tomberlin, Jackson Lisle, Leo Camasta, and Andrew Cioper were present.

City Councilmember Denise Smith, Executive Assistant Melanie Gray, and Deputy City Manager Nick Hammonds were also present.

3. Approval of Minutes from the January 9, 2025 Meeting

Commissioner Camasta moved to approve the minutes of the January 9, 2025 meeting. Commissioner Benton seconded. Upon voice vote, motion passed.

4. Public Presentation

Commissioner Cioper asked if there was anyone in the public who wished to speak on an item not found on the agenda. No one wished to speak. Commissioner Cioper closed public presentation.

5. Crystal Lake Park District Discussion

Commissioner Cioper introduced the agenda item for discussion: The Crystal Lake Park District. Executive Director Jason Herbster introduced himself to the Commission. He stated that he has served in the Park District for 15 years and worked at a few other Park Districts in the Chicagoland area. He stated that the Park District is the fun government, meaning that they are providing services to people to enhance their lives with leisure and recreation opportunities.

Mr. Herbster provided an overview of the Crystal Lake Park District's operations. He stated that the Park District serves over 50,000 people in Crystal Lake, Lakewood, parts of Lake in the Hills, and the unincorporated Crystal Lake areas. He stated that the Park District serves a wide array of people, regardless of race, gender, or religion. A main priority of the Park District is to provide equitable services to the community. Mr. Herbster discussed the organization of the Park District as its own distinct taxing body. The State of Illinois allows separate Park Districts to collect their own money, which is not allowed in all states. The Crystal Lake Park District performs park maintenance and upgrade services, recreation and facility services, business services, and marketing.

The relationship between the Park District and the Crystal Lake municipal government was discussed. Mr. Herbster discussed the main sources of revenue for the Park District coming from property taxes and user fees. He stated that the Park District is one of the largest employers in the community, especially for teens. He also discussed the wide array of programs offered by the Park District, and within the total 1,500 acres owned and operated by the Park District, there are 45 parks, 22 playgrounds, and two splash pads.

Mr. Herbster discussed the trail network for the Park District. He stated that trails are one of the top amenities as reported by park users. The Park District is working on completing trail connections in the community. In addition, performing natural areas ecological maintenance is a priority of the Park District. This includes maintain and preserving the watershed leading through Lippold Park and into Crystal Lake, lake ecology efforts, controlled burns, and removing invasive species.

Mr. Herbster discussed the importance of teen activities. He stated that the Park District has continued to focus more attention each year on this area. He stated that the Park District offers many employment opportunities for teens. They are also working to address the recreational needs of teens in the community.

Councilmember Smith asked about the relationship between the Park District and the City of Crystal Lake. Mr. Herbster stated that the Park District has a great working relationship with the City. He discussed the lake safety program and improvements to the boat decal process. In addition, Ms. Smith and Mr. Herbster discussed the collaboration that lead to the agreement where the Park District will oversee the park as part of the Immanuel Lutheran property development.

Ms. Smith asked for Mr. Herbster to provide a brief background of his experiences and how he came to be the Executive Director of the Park District. He provided his background and his decision to go for a degree in recreation at college. He discussed his previous roles at various park districts in the area and how that lead him to join the Crystal Lake Park District.

Commissioner Lisle inquired about the history of the Racket Club. Mr. Herbster stated that the Park District acquired the Racket Club from a private owner in the late 1980s or early 1990s. The Park District took over operations with the requirement that user fees paid for the costs to operate the facility.

Commissioner Cioper stated that his friends are always looking for opportunities to play basketball at local facilities. Specifically, finding an indoor facility in the winter is difficult. Mr. Herbster stated that the Park District has developed intergovernmental agreements with local schools to utilize the gymnasiums at schools.

Mr. Herbster discussed upcoming infrastructure projects and park enhancements in the near future. His reviewed the recent trends towards pickle ball and the subsequent upgrades the Park District is undertaking at tennis courts. He discussed Fetzner Park improvements to protect the watershed and remove invasive species. Mr. Herbster stated that the Park District provides annual and quarterly reports to residents. He stated that many residents still prefer the printed brochures.

Commissioner Lisle stated that the programming at Main Beach has been well received. He asked Mr. Herbster to describe his favorite part of his job. Mr. Herbster stated that senior programming has been a rewarding part of his job. In general, he enjoys the programs offered by the Park District that bring the community together.

Ms. Smith thanked Mr. Herbster for his time. She discussed the amount of programming and services offered by the Crystal Lake Park District and the positive impact on the community.

6. School Surveys and Announcement

Commissioner Cioper introduced a topic for discussion, surveys and announcements at schools to share information. Mr. Hammonds stated that the brochure created by Commissioner Johnston includes a space for a QR code to link to a survey. The Commission provided feedback regarding

potential questions for the youth survey. Commissioners Camasta and Benton suggested questions asking for feedback regarding areas for the City to improve, any areas where the City is lacking in happiness, and places for youth to go. Commissioner Cioper stated that the survey should include a question asking about retention of youth. How likely are youth to stay in Crystal Lake? How likely are they to return as an adult? What forms of housing are youth interested in?

Commissioner Benton discussed the potential for the Youth Commission to host an assembly at each District 155 school. The Mayor would be invited to attend the assemblies and the Commission could discuss their efforts and accomplishments. Commissioner Cioper suggested to hold the assembly in May before finals. Commissioner Wolfe agreed and stated that finals are around May 21st and 22nd. Seniors would be gone for the year by that time.

7. Open Discussion

Commissioner Benton discussed potential activities for the Commission. She suggested trash pickup events, a luncheon, and volunteering opportunities at the Library or local nursing homes. Mr. Hammonds stated that the Chamber of Commerce and the Crystal Lake Park District host a community clean up event each year around the Earth Day holiday. The clean-up event is scheduled for Saturday, April 26th at 8:00 a.m. The Youth Commission is invited to join the event. Commissioner Benton discussed the Library's meeting space in the basement. Mr. Hammonds stated that he will reach out to Teen Librarian Angie Baughers at the Library.

8. Adjourn

There being no further business, Commissioner Camasta moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:32 p.m. Commissioner Benton seconded the motion. On voice vote, all present voted yes. Motion passed.