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(FORM UPDATED: 08/11/2010)

WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE ... PUBLIC HEARING - COMMITTEE RECORDS

2007-08

(session year)

Senate

(Assembly, Senate or Joint)

Committee on ... Environment and Natural Resources (SC-ENR)

COMMITTEE NOTICES ...

- Committee Reports ... **CR**
- Executive Sessions ... **ES**
- Public Hearings ... **PH**

INFORMATION COLLECTED BY COMMITTEE FOR AND AGAINST PROPOSAL

- Appointments ... **Appt** (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
- Clearinghouse Rules ... **CRule** (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
- Hearing Records ... **HR** ... **bills and resolutions** (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
 - (**ab** = Assembly Bill) (**ar** = Assembly Resolution) (**ajr** = Assembly Joint Resolution)
 - (**sb** = Senate Bill) (**sr** = Senate Resolution) (**sjr** = Senate Joint Resolution)
- Miscellaneous ... **Misc**

* Contents organized for archiving by: Mike Barman (LRB) (August 2012)

June-2014

Senate

Record of Committee Proceedings

Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Senate Bill 248

Relating to: authorizing the creation of local park districts, authorizing a local park district to levy a property tax, authorizing a local park district to apply for funding from certain programs administered by the Department of Natural Resources, and authorizing a local park district to impose impact fees and issue debt.

By Senators Darling, Wirch and Erpenbach; cosponsored by Representatives J. Ott, Sinicki, Jeskewitz, A. Ott and Townsend.

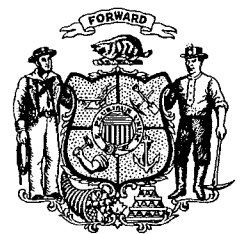
July 31, 2007 Referred to Committee on Environment and Natural Resources.

March 13, 2008 Failed to pass pursuant to Senate Joint Resolution 1.

Elizabeth Bier
Committee Clerk



WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE



SB 248
File

MILWAUKEE COUNTY

Consider a parks district

With the system imperiled financially and with limited support for a sales tax increase, it's time to consider creating an independent parks district.

RESLER Staff Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Published: July 28, 2007

While most green things benefit and even thrive from regular pruning, the same thing can't be said about parks. Perennial budget cuts have taken a terrible toll on Milwaukee County's once-prized parks system. More than \$4 million in cuts loom next year. "Everyone wants me to pull a rabbit out of a hat, and I can't," Parks Director Sue Black laments. That's why elected leaders need to step in and try to find a financial or organizational solution quickly.

We still believe that with the property tax so overburdened, the best remedy would be to raise the county sales tax and earmark that revenue for parks. The County Board this week backed an advisory referendum Feb. 19 for a 1-cent hike in the sales tax to help pay for parks and other services.

Unfortunately, a sales tax hike has not enjoyed strong support. County Executive Scott Walker is again vowing a veto, and the board doesn't have the votes now to override him. That being the case, it's time for county officials to seriously consider what we believe and have previously stated is the next best option: a parks district.

First, state law must be changed to permit county officials to establish a district. Sen. Alberta Darling (R-River Hills) and other legislators are putting the final touches on a bill. It would allow any county in the state to create a parks district, run by up to a nine-member, elected, non-partisan, non-paid board of commissioners. There would be no new tax; the district rather than the county would simply levy for parks and would be subject to levy limits.

The decision to create a district would be left, as it should be, to voters, supervisors and the county executive. Walker supports the idea, unlike many supervisors who support the sales tax. But the decision to create a district should be carefully deliberated because the problem isn't governance but finance. It's not that county elected officials, past or present, have willfully shortchanged the parks. Rather, increasing demands on the property tax levy to finance other operations have cut the share of money available for parks.

A parks district wouldn't necessarily solve that problem, but supporters point out that it would assure that a given amount of the levy would go to parks each year and would also provide more operational flexibility to parks administrators. As Darling points out, independent parks districts have worked very well in Illinois and Minnesota, and experience seems to show that they attract more private donations and facilitate more private partnerships.

In order to advance the debate, the Legislature should pass the enabling measure.

36%

Percentage of Milwaukee County tax levy designated for parks in 1981

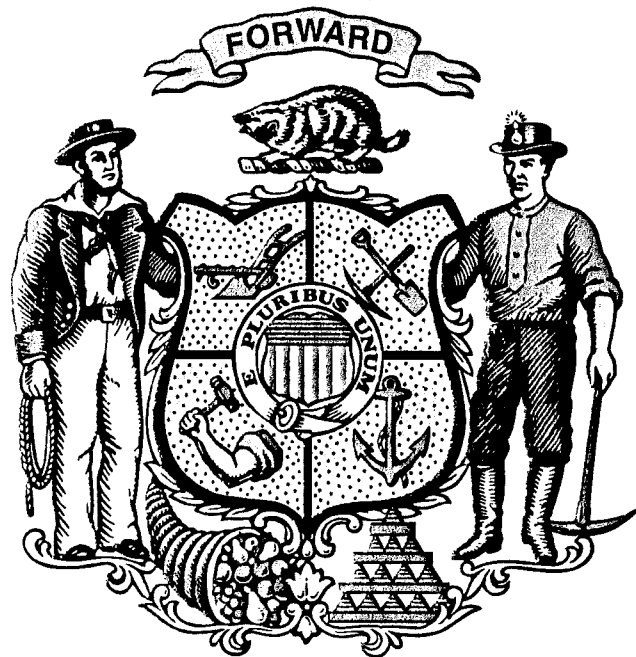
Less than 8%

Percentage of county tax levy designated for parks in 2006

Source: Milwaukee County Parks Department and Public Policy Forum

What should be done to save Milwaukee County parks? Should a parks district be created or should the county increase the sales tax by 1 cent to help fund services such as parks and transit? E-mail jsedit@journal sentinel.com

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The Park People
Friends of Milwaukee County Parks

1845 N. Farwell Avenue, Suite 100
Milwaukee, WI 53202
414-273-7275
www.parkpeoplemke.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: July 30, 2007

Contact: Jim Goulee, Executive Director
Office: 414-273-7275
Cell 414-881-8413
jim@parkpeoplemke.org

The Park People of Milwaukee County fully endorses Senate Bill 248 which, if passed into law, would enable the creation of park districts in Wisconsin. Our organization believes that the citizens of Wisconsin and especially those that live in Milwaukee County would greatly benefit from this legislation.

Milwaukee County once had perhaps the premier park system in the nation. For 70 formative years, it was served by a Park Commission that governed the parks without interference from the county's political process. The Park Commission was, for most of its illustrious history, composed of leading citizens who were passionate about recreation, open spaces, the curative effect of nature and, most of all, the physical and economic health and well-being of their community.

Unfortunately, 25 years ago, the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors and the County Executive dissolved the body that had made Milwaukee County Parks an award-winning system. From that day forth, critical jobs have been lost, public programming has all but disappeared, and maintenance has fallen years behind schedule.

Meanwhile, elsewhere in the nation, communities have grasped the notion that citizen-governed Park Districts allow more control, more expertise, and more accountability for local park systems to flow from the taxpayers to the parks' management and staff. Most notably, Illinois and Minnesota park districts have delivered outstanding park systems that enhance quality of life, attracting new residents and businesses. An inordinate number of parks departments that are winning national awards now are those governed by dedicated Park Districts that are separated from county and municipal governments, but still accountable to taxpayers.

As our state competes with Illinois and Minnesota to attract residents and businesses, it is important that we give Wisconsin the same ability to enhance the attractiveness of its communities as is available in those states. Clearly, quality park systems are an integral part of the quality of life landscape. This enabling legislation will simply allow Wisconsin communities the option of creating park districts, on par with opportunities that exist in neighboring states.

Milwaukee County Parks can and should be considered the poster child for this critically needed legislation. Over the last twenty years there has been a significant and consistent decline in financial support by Milwaukee County for our parks:

- The operating budget for the parks in 1986 was 45.14 million dollars. The 2006 operating budget for the Parks Department was 37.7 million. Not only had the parks budget been cut by nearly 7.5 million dollars over these twenty years, but when factored for inflation over this same period the reduction in support is absolutely staggering.

- In 1986, park expenditures comprised 29% (or \$31.1million) of the overall County property tax levy. In 2006, less than 8% (or \$18.48 million) of the overall levy was devoted to the parks.
- In 1986 there were 760 full-time employees. Today there are fewer than 260. **(500 fewer full-time employees)**
- This reduction in funding and staff translates to significant cuts in services and maintenance (\$150,000,000 in deferred maintenance)
- In its 2002 report "Public Spaces, Public Priorities," the Public Policy Forum reported that when factored for inflation, tax support for the parks in 2000 was one-third the amount of tax support provided in 1975.
- In 2002, two audits of County Government -- one conducted by the County, itself, and another by State Legislative Audit Bureau -- highlighted the benefits that would result from transferring the parks to a park district

According to The Trust for Public Lands a national non-profit land conservation organization:

Milwaukee County provides \$47 per resident in total park-related expenditures (including capital expenditures). This ranks Milwaukee County 43 out of the 54 metro areas polled. The average for all areas is \$86 (for year 2004).

Milwaukee County provides \$40 per resident in park related operating expenditures (not including capital expenditures). This ranks Milwaukee County 39 out of 54 metro areas polled. The average for all areas is \$63 (for year 2004).

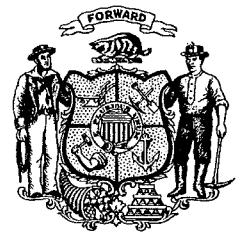
Milwaukee County provides 0.28 full-time park employees per 1,000 residents. This ranks Milwaukee County 60 out of the 66 metro areas polled. The average for all metro areas is 0.70 (for year 2004).

The Park People, Inc., Friends of the Milwaukee County Parks is a 501(C)(3) not-for-profit organization which is dedicated to the citizen stewardship of our parks

* * *



WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE




Alberta Darling
Wisconsin State Senator
Member, Joint Committee on Finance

August 1, 2007

Senator Mark Miller - Chairman
Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Room 409 South
State Capitol
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882

Dear Senator Miller,

I am writing to request a hearing on Senate Bill 248 at your earliest possible convenience. Senate Bill 248 has just been referred to the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources.

Senate Bill 248 is enabling legislation that would allow counties and municipalities to create a local park district via resolution or referendum.

The Milwaukee County parks system may be cut by another \$4 million under a current budget proposal. Some propose that the sales tax be raised to stabilize funding for the parks. This bill would allow local governments a different alternative to fund their parks through a park district.

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel editorial board endorsed the idea of allowing the creation of a park district. Milwaukee County Executive Scott Walker, The Park People, Greater Milwaukee Association of Realtors, Gathering Waters, the Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters, Wisconsin Audubon Council, and Preserve Our Parks support park district enabling legislation.

Thank you for considering my request to hold a hearing on Senate Bill 248 at your earliest possible convenience.

Sincerely,


Alberta Darling
State Senator

AD/jwh

Capitol Office:

P.O. Box 7882
Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7882
Phone: 608-266-5830
Fax: 608-267-0588

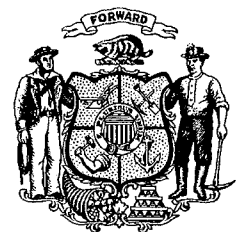
Toll-free: 1-800-863-1113
Email: sen.darling@legis.wisconsin.gov
Web page: www.legis.wisconsin.gov/senate/sen08/news/

District Office:

N88 W16621 Appleton Avenue, Suite 200
Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin 53051
Phone: 262-250-9440
Fax: 262-250-8510



WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE



Wisconsin Park & Recreation Association
6601-C Northway Greendale WI 53129 414-423-1210



"In Wisconsin our Seasons Never End - Life's So Good"



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Mary Riffel

October 22, 2007

Senator Mark Miller - Chairman
Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Room 409 South
State Capitol
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882

Dear Senator Miller:

Senate Bill 248 has been referred to the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources. On behalf of the 2400 members of the Wisconsin Park and Recreation Association (WPRPA), we urge you to request a hearing on Senate Bill 248 as soon as feasibly possible.

Senate Bill 248 is enabling legislation that would allow counties and municipalities to create a local park district via resolution or referendum. As an Association whose business is Parks and Recreation, we believe this legislation provides alternatives for any community struggling with their current situation and who may be willing to switch their tax base to a park district.

This enabling legislation would provide that avenue and we need your help in moving a hearing on this issue forward.

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel editorial board endorsed the idea of allowing the creation of a park district. Milwaukee County Executive Scott Walker, The Park People, Greater Milwaukee Association of Realtors, Gathering Waters, the Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters, Wisconsin Audubon Council, the Wisconsin Park and Recreation Association and Preserve Our Parks support park district enabling legislation.

Please consider this hearing request as soon as possible so that Parks and Recreation Departments across the State have an opportunity to speak with your Committee on this important matter.

Thank you for your consideration,

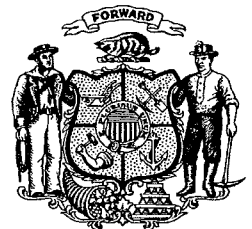
Roger

Roger Kist, CPRP
President, Wisconsin Park and Recreation Association

- A State Affiliate of the National Recreation and Park Association -



WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE



PARK DISTRICT ENABLING LEGISLATION FOR WISCONSIN

SB 248
File

Community benefits from quality parks.

The Trust for Public Land, a national leader in the support of public lands, recently reported the benefits accruing from high quality local park systems:

“[P]arks and open space improve our physical and psychological health, strengthen our communities, and make our cities and neighborhoods more attractive places to live and work...

Numerous studies have shown that parks and open space increase the value of neighboring residential property. Growing evidence points to a similar benefit on commercial property value. The availability of park and recreation facilities is an important quality-of-life factor for corporations choosing where to locate facilities and for well-educated individuals choosing a place to live. City parks such as San Antonio’s Riverwalk Park often become important tourism draws, contributing heavily to local businesses.

Green space in urban areas provides substantial environmental benefits. Trees reduce air pollution and water pollution, they help keep cities cooler, and they are a more effective and less expensive way to manage stormwater runoff than building systems of concrete sewers and drainage ditches.

City parks also produce important social and community development benefits. They make inner-city neighborhoods more livable; they offer recreational opportunities for at-risk youth, low-income children, and low-income families; and they provided places in low-income neighborhoods where people can feel a sense of community. Access to public parks and recreational facilities has been strongly linked to reductions in crime and in particular to reduced juvenile delinquency.”

Sherer, Paul M., “The Benefits of Parks: Why America Needs More City Parks and Open Space,” The Trust for Public Land (2006),
http://www.tpl.org/tier3_cd.cfm?content_item_id=13843&folder_id=175

Park Districts: a proven model for quality park systems.

Communities in Illinois, Minnesota, and other states have long known that the citizen-led park district form of governance is an effective, efficient, and accountable means of realizing the above-described societal and economic benefits afforded by quality park systems.

Park districts regularly win about 40% of the Gold Medal awards annually given by the National Recreation and Parks Association for excellence in parks administration. In fact, due to park districts, Illinois park systems have won more Gold Medal awards than any other state. The Illinois experience has shown that:

“Park districts provide the most defined, direct-purpose park and recreation services in the most cost effective manner. This kind of simple, efficient government is good government...Unlike ‘big’ consolidated governments, park districts have only two overriding objectives: to do well at what they were formed to do (parks and recreation), and to give the public its money’s worth through cost effectiveness and operational efficiency. ***Park districts are local government at its best and truly represents the tax limitations the public wants and deserves. They are modest and careful with public moneys.*** With only one service to perform, they inform the public of their services and keep money issues simple and specific.” (Emphasis added).

Flickinger, Dr. Ted, “The Park District Advantage,” *Illinois Parks & Recreation*, (Nov./Dec. 1992), reprinted at <http://www.lib.niu.edu/ipo/1992/ip921106.html>.

In Wisconsin, the Legislative Audit Bureau’s September, 2002, report on Milwaukee County government recognized the benefits that would result from transferring Milwaukee County parks to a park district. Bills for park district enabling legislation were introduced previously in the 2001 (A.B. 601) and 2003 (S.B. 556) sessions.

As our state competes with Illinois and Minnesota to attract residents and businesses, it is important that we give Wisconsin the same ability to enhance the attractiveness of its communities as is available in those states. Clearly, quality park systems are an integral part of the quality of life landscape. This enabling legislation will simply allow Wisconsin communities the option of creating park districts, on par with opportunities that exist in neighboring states.

Provisions of Park District Bill.

****Created only by community consent.*** A park district is created by resolution of the sponsoring municipal or county governments or by public referendum, triggered by citizen petition. Upon creation, the sponsoring municipal or county governments transfer their parkland, facilities, and park employees to the newly created park district.

**** Direct elections create accountability.*** Unlike appointed boards or commissions, a park district is overseen by an elected, non-partisan and non-paid board of park commissioners, directly accountable to taxpayers. The park board includes 5 to 9 commissioners, depending upon population served.

* ***Continuity of park policy.*** Park commissioners are elected to three-year staggered terms to ensure that, at most, only one-third of the board would change with any election. This would help insure that longer term public interest drives park policies.

* ***More responsiveness to parks issues.*** Directly elected, non-paid, volunteer park commissioners are answerable to the electorate only on park matters. Research suggests that elected park commissioners place a higher priority on the provision of park services than appointed park board members.

* ***Parkland acquired not sold.*** Park districts have authority to acquire land through purchase, exchange or donation but do not have authority to sell parkland.

* ***Managed by a park professional.*** While the elected park commission sets overall policy and budget, it hires a professionally qualified parks director to be responsible for day-to-day operations. This insures that park management will reflect professional expertise, and research indicates that elected park commissioners give more autonomy to their parks directors.

* ***Greater citizen involvement in parks management.*** Being a single mission volunteer board, a park district board of commissioners has a special focus to serve the public in the provision of park services and to encourage citizen involvement through input, volunteerism, and donations. Illinois park districts have been particularly successful in leveraging public revenue with private and corporate donations.

* ***Opportunities for open space protection.*** As has been demonstrated elsewhere in the country, special purpose authorities such as park districts are capable of receiving sufficient public support for the acquisition of important natural areas threatened with development. Healthy local park systems can provide important front line protection of open space as well as provide many valued outdoor recreation opportunities.

* ***No new tax is created.*** The existing authority to impose property taxes for park purposes is transferred from the municipality or county to the newly created park district.

* ***Initial levy frozen.*** After its creation, a park district's initial tax levy is set by law at the same amount as the previous year's operating levy imposed for parks by the transferring municipality or county governments.

* ***Cap on future levies.*** After the initial year, the park district's discretionary taxing authority would be subject to any state-wide tax freeze applicable to municipalities and counties. Additionally, the levy rate may not exceed 1 mill per dollar of valuation, unless approved by public referendum.

* ***Dollar-for-dollar reduction in tax levy.*** The tax levy of the transferring municipal or county governments that created the park district must be correspondingly reduced by the same amount of the park district's initial levy during the year of the first levy of the park

district. The result is no net increase in the overall property tax burden as a result of the park district's formation.

***Clear responsibility to the taxpayer.** Citizens, through their elected park commissioners, decide how much should be spent on parks and can directly account for such expenditures, as park districts have a separate tax levy line on the property tax bill.

***Efficiencies in service.** Park district boundaries can encompass several municipalities or counties. As a result, a park district can apply economies of scale to the operations of the former municipal or county parks as well as manage the parks in recognition of regional use and ecological interdependence such as watersheds or environmental corridors.

***Protect existing employee rights.** For existing municipal or county employees transferred to the park district, the park commission must recognize existing union representation and honor existing collective bargaining agreements ("CBA's"), to the extent allowed by law. Upon expiration of the existing CBA's the park district would negotiate new CBA's with the existing union representatives.

***Wisconsin Retirement System.** Like other units of government, park districts will provide retirement benefits through the Wisconsin Retirement System.

***Funding for long term park improvements.** Like other units of local government, park districts may issue bonds to cover debt for capital expenditures. (Debt service on bonds previously issued by the transferring units of government, prior to the park district's existence, would remain obligations of that transferring unit of government.)

***Expansion of boundaries only with consent.** The boundaries of a park district can expand to include neighboring communities, only when those communities consent via resolution or referendum.

***Controlling park use.** Park districts may prescribe user restrictions as well as charge disparate park user fees, as applied to non-resident versus resident park users.

***Judicial review available.** Decisions of a park district are subject to judicial review, under a deferential standard similar to that applicable to municipal and county decisions. This affords citizens a check against unlawful park district actions.



WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE



ACROSS THE BOARD

SB 248
File



BOARDMANSHIP . . .

The Park District Advantage

By Dr. Ted Flickinger, CAE
IAPD Executive Director and Managing Editor

Throughout the 20th century, Illinois, with its system of independent special park districts, has remained on the cutting edge of offering top-notch, innovative park and recreation services. Illinois is recognized as the number one state for the local delivery of such services and leads the nation in winning the most coveted award for parks and recreation—*The Gold Medal Award*. The award was developed in 1965 by the National Sporting Goods Foundation and is presented annually to outstanding agencies throughout North America at the National Recreation and Park Association's Conference. Illinois park districts have won *The Gold Medal Award* twice as many times as any other state.

The success of the Illinois Park District System is the direct result of having an individual unit of local government responsible for managing all park, recreation and open spaces within a particular community or within a combination of communities. Park districts are created through a referendum initiated locally by citizens of a defined geographical area. State statutory authority creating park districts as corporate entities recognizes them as separate distinct units of local government.

Whether soaring up to the sky on a swing, playing soccer, swimming or just relaxing, the human need for recreation activities and renewal is as important as eating or refueling our cars. Our greatest asset is our people, and there is no better way to recharge our individual and collective batteries than through recreation. Illinois park districts offer the best in local parks and recreation services, areas and facilities. A cornucopia of parks, greenways, swimming pools, lakes and reservoirs, tennis courts, golf courses, and recreation centers dot the landscape throughout Illinois. The lives of residents from Chicago to Granite City, from Carbondale to Highland Park, from Quincy to Kankakee, are enriched because of the park district system.

The charge of Illinois park districts is to preserve and manage natural resources and open spaces, as well as to provide opportunities for the public to participate in recreation programs and sports activities. Park and recreation professionals manage facilities and activities such as swimming pools, field houses, gymnasiums, beaches, skating rinks, conservatories, museums, aquariums, arts and crafts centers, ball diamonds, ski areas, trails for hiking and hiking, zoos, botanical gardens, pre-school

and senior citizen programs and a host of fine arts and performing arts activities. Recreation programs are as broad as human interests. The list is endless and ever-evolving as park district officials look to new and creative opportunities to meet the public's growing needs.

Park districts make a community a better place in which to live. The public defines recreation opportunities as a vitally important consideration in their decision as to where they want to live. It's recognized that government services are indeed essential for our existence, but park district services also give us opportunities to live and grow—not just exist.

Park districts provide the most defined, direct-purpose park and recreation services in the most cost effective manner. This kind of simple, efficient government is good government.

~~Park districts significantly contribute to the quality of life of all residents and have a tremendous impact on the economics of a community and the state.~~

Facts about Illinois Park Districts

General Information

- Park districts represent an average of only 5% of local property taxes. Illinois leads the nation in the number of special districts but does not lead the nation in local property taxes. As a matter of fact, Illinois is the fifth largest state but eleventh in local property taxes (Taxpayer's Federation of Illinois).
- Park districts have existed in Illinois since 1869. There are 357 park districts in Illinois, governed by 2,100 citizen park board members and 42,300 employees.
- The historical sites, zoos, museums, botanical gardens, golf courses and unique recreational sites operated by park districts annually bring millions of tourists' dollars to Illinois. Tourism IS a form of recreation and now the fourth leading industry in Illinois. Eighteen of the top 25 travel attractions in Illinois, ranked by attendance for 1989, were areas and facilities operated by park, forest preserve and conservation agencies.
- Out of every tax dollar park districts receive from a community in property taxes, at least \$3 is returned to that community in jobs, retail business, tourism and increased real estate values. This does not take into account the quality-of-life benefits park districts contribute to the residents of Illinois.
- In an effort to reduce local property taxes, most park districts derive at least 50% of their annual revenue from fees and charges, foundations, and corporate and private sector contributions.

- Areas and facilities operated by park districts in Illinois include: 498 ice rinks (indoor/outdoor); 313 areas for boating on river/streams; 432 swimming pools; 235 areas for boating on lakes/ponds; 394 fishing areas; 461 recreation centers; 205 bicycle trails (302 miles); 156 nature trails (251 miles); 81 beaches; 36 horseback trails (56 miles); 42 campgrounds (2,300 sites); 3,110 tennis courts; 120 golf courses; 26 boat marinas; three ski slopes; and five airports. Park districts also operate museums, zoos, natural areas, nature centers, gardens, stadiums, theaters, thousands of playgrounds, and a variety of other recreation facilities.

Illinois Citizen/Taxpayer Volunteer Boards

- Park districts are governed by locally elected citizens, selected in non-partisan elections, to serve on the park board without compensation.

- More than 2,100 Illinois citizens serve as elected park district board members. Board members volunteer service and expertise to their communities in an effort to improve the quality of life for all residents. The average board member contributes nearly 240 hours of service each year. In the aggregate, these board members annually volunteer more than 504,000 hours in serving their park district constituents. No other state has board members volunteering this much time to park and recreation services.

- Park districts are decentralized and represent neighborhood government in action. They give citizens control over the quality and quantity of park and recreation services, as well as the costs of these services.

- Park district boards provide better representation and stability. Park districts differ significantly from city agencies in their method of selecting board members. Park district boards are elected whereas city recreation boards are appointed by a wide variety of appointment methods. Some city recreation departments don't have citizen boards. Many times city recreation boards are affected by political appointments. It is clear that the park district system is structured to permit greater citizen control of the park and recreation function than the systems used by city governments.

- Park district board members are responsive to citizens, not politicians. Bankers, businessmen, doctors, homemakers, lawyers and people from all walks of life volunteer their time to be of service to their communities by serving on park district policy-making boards.

- Citizen support for park districts is strong because the citizens elect the board and have immediate access to these members and the park district staff. A board member not responsive to the taxpayers is often not reelected. The park district staff and the board go directly to the public for support, rather than through mayors, city administrators, city councils or other governmental officials.

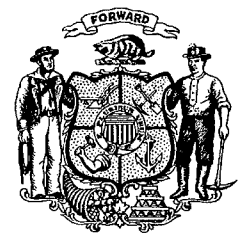
- In addition to board members, more than 200,000 people annually volunteer their services to Illinois park districts.
- All segments of the population, including senior citizens, minorities and special populations, are represented by park district board members. Policy-making park district boards generally meet for two to four hours once or twice a month, with an average attendance ranging from 10 to 50 citizens at regular board meetings. In addition to board meetings, park district board members meet with citizens and civic groups throughout the year to discuss district policies and services. City recreation boards, where they exist, are usually advisory.

Results of Research

- Findings from research conducted by Western Illinois University and the University of Illinois reveal that the vast majority of Illinois residents are extremely satisfied with the manner in which Illinois park districts are accomplishing their goals of providing recreational opportunities and preserving open space. Illinoisans value their park districts.
- In research conducted by the University of Illinois (White Paper) it was determined that more than 80% of the public believes that park districts are serving essential community needs. Citizens feel that park districts provide the greatest opportunities for citizen involvement. The public has more contact with park districts than with city and county governments combined. They are much more satisfied with the performance of park district employees than they are with city and county employees.
- A study by Western Illinois University showed that park districts, used by 69% of the adult Illinois population in 1989, generated more than 94 million visits by 5.6 billion visitors. In the aggregate, park districts contributed \$1.6 billion to the Illinois economy and created, beyond the 42,000 plus agency personnel, an additional 7,000 Illinois jobs.
- Unlike "big" consolidated governments, park districts have only two overriding objectives: to do well at what they were formed to do (parks and recreation), and to give the public its money's worth through cost effectiveness and operational efficiency. Park districts are local government at its best and truly represent the tax limitations the public wants and deserves. They are modest and careful with public monies. With only one service to perform, they inform the public of their services and keep money issues simple and specific.
- When Illinois residents were asked to estimate the dollar value they place on park district visitation, their total dollar values exceeded their costs by about \$91 million. When polled for their opinions, believe park districts both enhance the quality of their lives and have a positive local and state economic impact.
- Park districts provide a very unique human service to their constituencies. These services are the prime purpose of park districts, unlike county or other consolidated

governments, which concentrate on providing a wide array of social and human services, each potentially competing with others.

An investment in park districts is an investment in life.





Jim Goulee

Executive Director

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