

# **EFFICIENCY REPORT FOR THE GLENCOE PARK DISTRICT**



**APPROVED BY THE GLENCOE PARK DISTRICT'S  
COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY  
ON APRIL 16, 2024**

## **I. Purpose**

The Glencoe Park District (“Park District”) formed its Committee on Local Government Efficiency on June 6, 2023 to study efficiencies and report recommendations regarding those efficiencies and increased accountability pursuant to 50 ILCS 70/1, *et seq.* (the “Committee”).

## **II. Committee Membership**

The Committee consisted of the following individuals:

- Carol Spain, Board President and Chairperson
- Stefanie Boron, Board Vice President
- Michael Covey, Board Treasurer
- Bart Schneider, Board Commissioner
- Jordan Spector, Board Commissioner
- Julia Lissner, Glencoe Resident Member
- Nicole Reifman, Glencoe Resident Member
- Bob Kimble, Glencoe Resident Member
- Lisa Sheppard, Executive Director and Board Secretary

## **III. Committee Meetings:**

### **Meeting Dates:**

Tuesday, August 1, 2023  
Wednesday, March 6, 2024  
Tuesday, April 16, 2024

### **Meeting Place and Time:**

Takiff Community Center at 7:00pm  
Takiff Community Center at 6:00pm  
Takiff Community Center at 7:00pm

### **Meeting Place:**

Takiff Center  
999 Green Bay Road  
Glencoe, IL 60022

Minutes of these meetings are available on the Park District’s website or upon request at the Park District’s administrative office.

## **IV. General Overview of Governing Statutes, Ordinances, Rules, Procedures, Powers, Jurisdiction:**

The Glencoe Park District was established by a referendum initiated and approved by the voters of the Park District in 1912, and is one of the oldest park districts in the State of Illinois. All Illinois park districts, including the Park 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 Park District is governed by a Board of five commissioners. 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 these essential facilities, programs, and services provides the community with increased access to their elected representatives and allows those elected representatives to remain focused solely on those facilities, programs, and services. 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 Park 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 Park 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 Park 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 Park District does more with much fewer funding options. Unlike other units of local government that receive direct state funding, 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 Park District share is only 7% of the local tax bill. Additionally, only 36% of the revenue earned

by the Park District is generated through property taxes. The remaining 64% is generated charges for services, interest income, and other revenue sources.

- The following shows the various taxing bodies in Glencoe and the percentage of taxes per agency for Fiscal Year 2023-2024:

Elementary School District	35.27%
High School District	24.58%
Village of Glencoe	15.16%
Glencoe Park District	6.92%
Cook County All	5.51%
Sanitary District	4.78%
Glencoe Library	3.07%
Community College	2.83%
New Trier Township	0.64%
Other	1.25%

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

- General Conduct Ordinance 700
- Board of Park Commissioners Policies and Procedures Manual
- Administrative Policies and Procedures Manual
- Finance Policies and Procedure Manual
- Personnel Policies Manual for all Staff
- Safety/Risk/Crisis Management Manual
- Volunteer Manual
- Comprehensive Master Plan and Strategic Plan
- Community Impact Report (<https://www.calameo.com/read/006911757698857f9c008>)
- Departmental, Facility, and Program Specific Manuals
  - Beach Manual and Ice Rink Manual
  - Kids Club Manual (before and after school program)
  - Early Childhood Manual (ELC and Children’s Circle)

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

The Park 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 Park 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 of Illinois, non-profit organizations, and for-profit corporations. Below is a comprehensive list of the current partnerships, agreements, and other relationships that assist the Park District's mission of delivering the best possible services at the least possible cost to our community.

### **1. Member in Northern Suburban Special Recreation Association**

The Park District is part of the Northern Suburban Special Recreation Association ("NSSRA"). Special recreation associations 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 are able to effectively and efficiently deliver more successful program opportunities to community members who have special needs. Furthermore, by participating in NSSRA, the Park District networks with thirteen 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 NSSRA's programs or in programs that are provided by the Park District.

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

- Takiff Community Center
- *Takiff Fitness Center*
- *Weinberg Family Recreation Center*
- *Weinberg Ice Rinks*
- *Glencoe Swimming and Boating Beach*

NSSRA also provides the support needed for participants with special needs who choose to register for Park District programs or inclusive programming. NSSRA collects information on the registered participant and determines what supports are needed for that participant to be successful in this inclusive setting or the Park 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 Park District program. Although success may not look the same for everyone, NSSRA works with the Park District's staff to ensure the best possible results for all the participants in the program. The Park District's cost of providing these services would be much greater without its participation and partnership with NSSRA.

In 2022, NSSRA provided 338 programs for people with disabilities in its thirteen partner communities. Twenty-seven Glencoe Park District residents were served through these program offerings. Additionally, NSSRA supported six Glencoe Park District participants with 1182.79 hours of inclusive services in programs that were provided by the Park District.

The Park District is very proud of the ongoing collaboration with NSSRA. 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. Intergovernmental agreements with other park districts, forest preserve districts, conservation districts, or municipal recreation agencies**

- Northbrook Park District Reciprocal Agreement for aquatic center/beach passes
- Northbrook Park District Reciprocal Agreement for dog park
- Winnetka Park District Reciprocal Agreement for paddle tennis

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

- *Village of Glencoe (VOG)*
  - *Police Protection*
  - *Shared Services Agreement: GPD mowing / VOG mechanic work*
  - *Agreement for Joint Bluff Restoration Project*
  - *Inside Glencoe: joint publication with School District 35, Glencoe Library, and VOG*
- *School District 35*
  - *Agreement that allows for use of school facility in exchange for athletic field maintenance*
  - *Camp use*
  - *General recreation use*
  - *Joint purchase and shared use of the playground at West School*
  - *Reciprocal field and facility use*
  - *Inside Glencoe: joint publication with School District 35, Glencoe Library, and VOG*
- *Cook County Forest Preserve: Chicago Botanic Garden*
- *Glencoe Library: joint special events/programming*

- *New Trier High School Transition Program*

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

- Illinois Department of Central Management Services – Federal Surplus Property Program

**5. Partnerships or agreements with athletic or similar affiliate organizations that operate sports or other leagues**

- Glencoe Youth Baseball and Softball
- AYSO Soccer
- KW Baseball Association
- New Trier Travel Basketball
- Glencoe tennis groups
- Variety of relationships with recreation independent contractors

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

- Family Service of Glencoe
- Glencoe Youth Services
- Glencoe Junior High Project
- Glencoe Junior Kindergarten
- Glencoe Historical Society (park space for historical structure owned by GHS)
- Glencoe Rotary
- Glencoe/Winnetka/Northfield Chamber of Commerce
- Glencoe Community Garden
- Friends of the Green Bay Trail
- American Red Cross

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

- New Trier Township: cooperation with the Park District by offering fee assistance for childcare programs such as camp, daycare, and before and after care programming

- Village of Glencoe: shared equipment use, works cooperatively on National Night Out, training opportunities at Glencoe Beach for rescue trainings, joint program for Independence Day community event

## **VI. Other Examples of Efficient Operations**

**Use of volunteers.** One way in which the Park District reduces the burden on taxpayers is through the use of volunteers. Last year, residents volunteered as basketball coaches, in early childhood classrooms, community cleanup days, and a variety of special events totaling over 2,000 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 122 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. These include:

- Sourcewell: vehicle/equipment, playgrounds, picnic shelters, staples office supplies
- State of Illinois Joint Purchase Program
- The Cooperative Purchasing Network Agreement

**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 Park District is not permitted to access these types of taxes. Additionally, although the Park 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 Park 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 Park District did not receive any such direct federal aid. Our Park 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 Park District provides all of the 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 Park District has been very successful receiving grant awards, including Development (OSLAD) Grants, Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) Grants, and a Park and Recreation Facilities Construction (PARC) Grant. The grants supplement the Park District's capital project fund and without the funds, the Park District would not be able to improve the parks and facilities at the accelerated time frame. The project, fiscal year award, and grant/donation amounts received include:



2023	Citizen Donations: Weinberg Family Recreation Center	\$750,000
2022	USDA/IDNR UCF (Tree inventory and tree care management plan)	\$7,250
	Child Care Restoration Grant	\$64,395
2021	PARC Grant for Watts Recreation Center	\$2,500,000
	IDNR BAAD Grant (Bluff Stabilization, in progress)	\$80,000
	Child Care Restoration Grant	\$213,615
2020	OSLAD Grant for Duke Park	\$400,000
	Child Care Restoration Grant	\$193,811
2019	CMAP Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP-L) Grant	\$667,150
	IDNR Bicycle Path Grant Program Recipient	\$200,000
	Citizen Donation: Duke Park	\$300,000
2016	Citizen Donation: Berlin Park	\$1,000,000

## VII. Transparency to the Community

The following information about the Park District may be obtained by citizens in the location listed.

The documents listed below are available at [www.glencoeParkDistrict.com](http://www.glencoeParkDistrict.com) unless otherwise noted:

- Annual Tax Levy Website, Administrative Office
- Annual Budget and Appropriation Ordinance Website, Administrative Office
- Agenda and minutes Website, Administrative Office
- Comptroller's Annual Finance Report (AFR) : <https://illinoiscomptroller.gov/constituent-services/local-government/local-government-warehouse/searchform?SearchType=AFRSearch>
- Annual Comprehensive Financial Report Website, Administrative Office
- Bids, proposals, and legal notices Website
- Treasurer's Report Administrative Office
- IMRF Employer Coast/Participant Information Administrative Office
- Statement of Receipts and Disbursements Administrative Office
- Conduct Ordinance Website, Administrative Office
- Master Plans Website, Administrative Office
- Strategic Plans Website, Administrative Office
- Capital Improvement Plan Website, Administrative Office
- ADA Transition Plan Administrative Office
- Capital replacement schedule Website, Administrative Office
- FOIA information Website, Administrative Office
- MBE, WBE, VBE status for vendors Website, Administrative Office
- Environmental Policy Website
- Scholarship Information and Application Website

The Park District offers residents many opportunities to provide feedback. These include:

- The Park District's practice is to hold a truth and taxation meeting regardless of whether or not it was required under the truth and taxation law.

- The Board of Park Commissioners meet twice each month. Residents may provide public comment at every meeting.
- The Park District's annual Budget and Appropriations Ordinance is available in tentative form at least 30 days prior to its adoption at an open meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners. 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 Park District's annual property tax levy is approved at an open meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners in accordance with the Open Meetings Act. The Park District follows all public notice and hearing requirements under the Truth in Taxation Law prior to the adoption of this annual tax levy. (The Park 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 Park District by phone at 847-835-3030 or email at [info@glencoe park district.com](mailto:info@glencoe park district.com).
- The Park District has representation on community organizations and boards including:
  - Glencoe Beach and Lakefront Advisory Group
  - Weinberg Family Recreation Center Advisory Group
  - Early Childhood Advisory Group
  - Short Term Task Forces (e.g.: Dog Park Feasibility Group, Berlin Park Design Group, other playground design groups)
  - Northern Suburban Special Recreation Association
  - Glencoe Rotary
  - Glencoe/Northfield/Winnetka Chamber of Commerce
  - Illinois Park and Recreation Association
- The following surveys have been sent to residents in the past five years:
  - 2023 Community Wide Comprehensive Park District Needs Assessment
  - 2019-2023 Annual Camp Survey
  - 2019-2023 Annual Kids Club Survey
  - 2019-2023 Annual Beach Survey
  - 2019-2023 Annual Ice Rink Survey
  - 2019-2023 Annual Variety of General Recreation Survey

The Park District offered the following parks improvements since 2016 that included public hearings and opportunity for public comments on the following projects and initiatives:

- 2023-2024 Pickleball court discussion
- 2023 Lakefront playground and tennis court renovation
- 2022 Historically accurate renovation of Halfway House and exterior of Safran Beach House input  
Glencoe Pier replacement input
- 2022-2019 Watts/Weinberg Family Recreation Center input
- 2021-2019 West Park OSLAD Grant  
Master Plan community input
- 2021 Connect Glencoe trail development input  
Veterans Memorial Park input  
Duke Park input  
Kalk Park input
- 2019 Takiff Center early childhood playground input  
Dog Park Task Force and community meeting  
Agreement with Glencoe Historical Society to move the historic Frank Lloyd Wright house to Ravine Bluffs Park
- 2018 Old Elm Park input  
Takiff parking lot and walking path improvements input  
Vernon playground input  
Woodlawn Park input
- 2017 Astor Park input  
Glencoe Fitness input  
West Park input
- 2016 Berlin Park and Baseball Field Task Force input  
Shelton Park input

### **VIII. District Awards and Recognition**

The District's achievements have been recognized in numerous ways.

- 2023 Chair of the IPRA Board of Directors: Executive Director Sheppard  
Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) Certificate of Excellence
- 2022 Frank Lloyd Wright Spirit Award Winner

- 2019 NRPA National Gold Medal for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management Winner  
IAPD/IPRA Distinguished Accreditation  
IPRA Program of the Year for Beach S.A.F.E.
- 2018 NRPA National Gold Medal Finalist  
AAA Bond Rating from Moody's Investor Services  
IPRA Exceptional Workplace Award
- 2017 IPRA Professional of the Year: Executive Director Sheppard  
NRPA National Gold Medal Finalist  
NSSRA Shining Star Partner Agency of the Year

**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 as follows.

**1. Facilities (See Appendix A for a District Map)**

The Park District offered the following facilities to the community last year:

- Takiff Center - 80,000 sq. ft. of indoor recreation space
- Weinberg Family Recreation Center and refrigerated ice rinks
- Safran Beach House
- Perlman Boating Beach
- Holmes Warming House/Glencoe Youth Services Center
- Park maintenance buildings
- 86.26 acres of land with 12 parks and playgrounds and two natural areas
- Other passive parks and open space

**2. Programs**

The Park District offered the following programs last year. Registration numbers are also provided.

In 2023, the Park District offered:

- 577 general program unique activity types with an enrollment of 5,724 participants
- The District provided a wide range of camp programming to 860 participants
- Provided year-round full-day preschool to 93 children
- Provide half-day preschool to 55 children
- Proved before and after school care to 67 children

Daily facility attendance:

- Beach and Boating Beach: 20,000+

- Fitness: 7,000+
- Ice Rink: 5,592

Program types include:

#### Athletics

- Baseball
- Basketball
- Dodgeball
- Figure Skating
- Flag Football
- Floor Hockey
- Hockey
- Lacrosse
- Martial Arts
- Multisport
- Pickleball
- Rowing
- Sailing
- Soccer
- Tennis
- Volleyball
- Yoga

#### Camps

- Preschool Camps
- Youth
- Specialty Camps
- Counselor in Training

#### Childcare

- Kids Club Before and After School Care
- ELC Preschool Half-Day Preschool
- Children's Circle Full-Day Preschool
- School Days Off Programs

#### Preschool Enrichment Programs

- Cooking
- Dance
- Art
- STEAM
- Crafting
- Tot Skating
- Parent Tot

- Music
- Sports
- Ceramics
- Reading
- Soccer
- Yoga

#### Cultural Arts and Enrichments

- Cooking
- Dance
- Fine Arts
- Crafting
- Coding
- Magic
- Chess
- Mixed media
- STEAM
- Ceramics
- Theatre

#### Exercise and Fitness

- Paddleboard Yoga
- Yoga
- Pilates
- Tai Chi
- Rowing
- Barre
- Pickleball
- Tennis
- Open Gym

#### Adult

- Ceramics
- Improv
- Art
- Tennis
- Pickleball
- Scrub Hockey
- Dek Hockey
- Karate
- Mahjong

Provide the following free or low-cost special events

- Messy Morning

- Sweetheart Dance
- Subzero Shenanigans
- Disney Skate
- Leprechaun Hunt
- Fire and Ice
- Good Friday
- Spring Egg Hunt/Dog Treat Hunt
- Weinberg Family Recreation Center Groundbreaking
- Spring Art Show
- Earth Day Cleanup
- Mother's Day Gift Making
- Takiff Express Train Day
- Sauna Club
- Beach Music
- Kickback at Kalk
- GJHP Beach Bash
- Tots-n-Tunes
- Glencoe .500
- Fourth of July Party in the Park & Fireworks
- Fun Run
- Family Games
- Unplug Illinois Day
- Beach Campout
- Beach S.A.F.E.
- Green Bay Trail Day
- Trellis Table
- Outdoor Movies
- Bier on the Pier
- Doggie Dip
- Great Mud Run
- ELC Harvest Festival
- Kids Night Out
- Boo Bash
- Preschool Spooktacular
- Adult Art Show
- If Kids Ran Thanksgiving
- Weinberg Ice Rink Season Opening
- ELC Book Fair
- Weinberg Family Recreation Center Grand Opening
- Hallmark Holiday
- Visit with Santa
- Skate and Create
- Winter Solstice
- Itty Bitty New Year

### **3. Additional Services**



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

- Working apiary to educate on the importance of bees
- Composting locations in cooperation with the Village of Glencoe
- Spring Park Cleanup Event
- Working greenhouse to assist the Glencoe Community Garden, Glencoe Gardening Club, and Friends of the Green Bay Trail
- Local site for monthly Red Cross Blood Drives
- Various clothing, food, and supply drives to benefit local charities and food banks

#### **4. Other Benefits**

While the Park District is a special purpose district, its impact to the community is multi-faceted and far reaching. For example, the Park District's parks, recreational programming, and other opportunities improve the community's overall physical and mental health and wellness, thereby reducing health care costs. Full and half-day preschool, before and after school care, 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 Park District's open space and trees help improve air and water quality and mitigate flooding. The numerous flower beds and native planting areas beautify the Village. The District prioritizes planting native species. Native areas attract pollinators such as bees, butterflies, and birds. In 2023, the District planted 20 trees throughout its parks.

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

#### **1. Intergovernmental Fees and Charges**

One opportunity for efficiency would be the elimination 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 Park District even though the Park 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 Village does waive most permit fees to the District, unless they involve an outside contractor. The Park District reciprocates with giving the Village free use of parks and facilities for events and meetings. This is a great example of collaboration between the Village and Park District.
- Water Utility Fee
- State and local liquor license
- Background check fees (and checking minors)
- Daily beach water testing
- Elevator inspection license

- Construction permits (only for services they outsource)
- Food service permits
- Illinois Department of Public Health inspections
- Fire inspections

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 absolutely necessary, general purpose units of government should offset the fee by crediting the Park District for all benefits they will receive from a project, event, or property. For example, open space that is protected and maintained by the Park District helps mitigate stormwater management costs, so assessing stormwater management fees on the Park 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.

## **2. Inefficiency of Other Governments**

The Park District is also negatively impacted by the inefficiency of the state and other units of local government.

- State grants are often overly complicated to apply for and staff at the state level are not routinely available to answer questions or provide guidance, which causes delays for the Park District attempting to apply for grant funds. Once grant funding is obtained, cumbersome and time-consuming reports are due on a monthly or quarterly basis.
- Metropolitan Water Reclamation District’s slow review process
- Delay in Village Permit Review

## **3. Unfunded Mandates**

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

- Non-resident FOIA Requests.** In 2023, the Park District received 15 FOIA requests, some requiring hours of staff time to fulfill. Often the individuals/businesses submitting the FOIA requests are from outside of the Park District boundaries, and they appear to be serving a specific agenda, rather than assuring better local government. Only one of the 15 were from Glencoe residents.

Under current law, resident taxpayers end up footing the bill for these non-resident or commercial requests. In order to help alleviate the burden for these non-resident requests the law could be amended to: (1) add a requirement that non-residents identify/explain the purpose of the request for information; (2) add a time limit on how far back a non-resident can request information; (3) staff time and costs could be included in the amount that is reimbursable for non-resident and commercial requests; (4) move back the deadline for non-resident requests 10 business days so that the Park District does not have to delay services to its residents in order to comply with a non-resident request.

Sunshine laws are supposed to protect taxpayers by allowing them to shed light on any issue that is not exempt from FOIA. However, local government can be burdened by having to drop everything to rearrange priorities to meet FOIA deadlines, particularly if it has limited resources. Since local residents ultimately bear the expense of complying with FOIA, treating resident and non-resident requests differently would be justified.

- b) **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 background checks must be done through the Illinois State Police (ISP). Last year, the Park District spent \$3,663 for criminal background checks. The Park District does not recommend eliminating this mandate because it is necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of children and other Park District 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 Park 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 costlier 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.

- c) **Prevailing Wage.** One way to reduce 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.
- d) **Newspaper Publication.** The newspaper is no longer the most effective way to provide notice. Websites are cheaper and reach more people. Permitting the Park District to post the information on its website in lieu of newspaper publications would reduce costs.
- e) **Minimum Wage.** The minimum wage increases have put a burden on the Park District's operating budget, and have caused the District to increase fees to taxpayers. This increased burden is

specifically for seasonal workers who are high school to college age and work seasonally during the summer months at our day camps and beach.

- f) **COVID-19, American Rescue Plan Act.** During the pandemic, the Park District was counted on to provide services for all ages, when allowable, under the Centers for Disease Control, Illinois Department of Health regulations. While other units of governments were closed, or solely operating remotely, park districts were turned to for individuals seeking respite in our parks, for emergency day care, daycare for school age children when schools were closed, and many other recreation services. When the U.S. Senate approved the final version of the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act, park districts were left out of this funding. The Act included \$360 billion for states, territories, tribes, counties and cities and Illinois was estimated to receive approximately \$13.2 billion of this state and local funding. The plan did not include dedicated funding for special districts, which include park districts. The Act allowed funds to be used to provide government services affected by a revenue reduction during the pandemic relative to revenue collected in the most recent full fiscal year. Again, the Act left out special districts.

In addition to the thousands of unbudgeted dollars spent on COVID-19 related expenses, the Park District lost approximately a million in revenues from programs and services over the previous year. The District's ability to recover from COVID-19 in operating and capital funds has extended to date. In addition to the operating loss, the Park District was unable to transfer necessary funds to capital projects for the 2020 budget.

#### 4. Opportunities for Increased Transparency

As illustrated above, the Park District is very transparent in its operations. The following are opportunities for increased transparency. These were ideas or requests generated from the Local Government Efficiency Committee. In areas where there has been, or will be efforts for increased opportunities by the Park District, they are noted above in italics.

- Does the Committee see any opportunities for Transparency?

- Request:

Increase transparency and communication with the public on waitlist for Children's Circle, Day Camps, Kids Club, Boat Storage at Glencoe Beach.

Response:

The District will look into ways of improving the waitlist and communication process for Day Camps, Children's Circle, Kids Club, and Boat Storage at Glencoe Beach, which tend to experience waitlists quickly based on the amount of space and staff needed. Look to provide information on how many individuals were removed from the waitlist and number of spots filled.

- Request:

A lot of new and good information was shared in this report, would like this information shared with the community.

Response:

The District will look at ways to communicate the details of this report to the community

through different avenues such as in Inside Glencoe, Social Media, and Videos.

- **Request:**  
Would be nice to meet with the Executive Director and Department Heads to ask questions or learn more about the District.

**Response:**

The District will look at developing a series such as “Coffee with the Park District” where there would be published office hours either at a Park District Facility/Park or local coffee shop. Commissioners, Executive Director, and Administrative team would attend allowing for free-flowing questions and dialogue.

- **Request:**  
How can we better communicate employee’s departure from the district and the reason, especially in Children’s Circle or ELC?

**Response:**

Keeping in mind employee confidentiality, look at ways when possible, to inform parents of why and when teachers leave the employment of the District.

- **Request:**  
Better communicate Sustainability efforts of the Park District.

**Response:**

The District will look at adding a tab on the District Website that would lead to a list of all the sustainability efforts that the district is undertaking.

## 5. Opportunities for Other Intergovernmental Agreements

- Does the Committee see any opportunities for other Intergovernmental Agreements?

- **Request:**  
Continue to provide greenhouse use for adults interested in gardening and community groups and partner with community groups such as Glencoe Community Garden and Friends of the Green Bay Trail.

**Response:**

Investigate the possibility of building a new greenhouse near the community garden, working with the Village on land use. This would move greenhouse operations away from the parks yard where it can be dangerous to have the public in an area where the parks team is actively working.

- **Request**  
Is there a possibility to partner with another organization to do birthday parties?

**Response:**

Look at working with independent contractors to offer birthday parties in our Community Centers.

**6. Opportunities for Savings such as Energy Efficiency Projects, Joint Purchasing**

- Does the Committee see any opportunities for Energy Efficiency Projects?
  - Request:  
Have more EV Park District trucks and equipment.

Response:

When renovating the parks maintenance facility, look at ways that more energy efficient elements can be added. For example, for a future renovation, we should investigate the ability to include solar panels on the roof and plan for infrastructure needs so that our future fleet and equipment changes from gas to EV.

- Request:  
Look at ways to put solar panels on Park District facilities.

Response:

Now that the law has changed to allow park district the ability to enter into long term agreements with solar panel companies, investigate the ability to do so on Takiff Community Center and Weinberg Family Recreation Center.

- Request:  
Is it possible to use thermal energy to heat our facilities?

Response:

The District will look into the feasibility and cost of adding thermal energy to our facilities.

**X. OTHER**

Does the Committee have any ideas or suggestions that demonstrate ways to be a more efficient or transparent form of local government and to provide park and recreation services?

- Include Park Amenity Document into this report

**Dated:** April 16, 2024

**Signed:**  \_\_\_\_\_  
Carol Spain, Chair/ President of the Glencoe Park District Board

