

**EFFICIENCY REPORT FOR THE  
CHANNAHON PARK DISTRICT**



**APPROVED BY THE PARK DISTRICT'S  
COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY  
ON DECEMBER 12, 2023**



## I. Purpose

The Channahon Park District ("Park District") formed its Committee on Local Government Efficiency on May 15, 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:

Christopher Caldwell	Chair of Committee, President of the Board
Dennis Clower	Commissioner
Robert Babich	Commissioner
Ron Lehman	Commissioner
Art Scaccia	Commissioner
Patricia Perinar	Resident Member
Michael Petrick	Resident Member
Michael Leonard	Executive Director

### III. Committee Meetings

The Committee met as follows:

<u>Meeting Date</u>	<u>Meeting Time and Place</u>
Tuesday, October 17, 2023	3 pm Arrowhead Community Center
Tuesday, November 14, 2023	3 pm Arrowhead Community Center
Tuesday, December 12, 2023	3 pm Arrowhead Community Center

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 Park District was established by a referendum initiated and approved by the voters of the Park District in 1971. All Illinois park districts, including the Channahon 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 contrasts with general purpose governments where elected representatives are responsible for oversight on many 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 with larger, multi-purpose governments with many 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, and 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 4% of the local tax bill.

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

- **Operations Manual**
- **Board Policies and Procedures Manual**
- **Administrative Policies and Procedures Manual**
- **General Conduct Ordinances**
- **Personnel Policies/Employee Manual or Handbook**
- **Safety and Risk Management Policies**
- **Strategic Plan**

## 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, 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. Membership in SRA

The Park District is part of the Special Recreation Joliet Channahon (SRJC) Special Recreation Association ("SRA"). Special recreation associations are a form of intergovernmental cooperation among local government units 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 can effectively deliver more successful program opportunities to community members with special needs. Furthermore, by participating in the SRA, the Park District networks with 3 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 SRA's programs or in programs that are provided by the Park District.

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

Joliet Park District

Channahon Jr. High

Channahon Township

The SRA also provides the support needed for participants with special needs who choose to register for the Park District programs or inclusive programming. The SRA collects information on the registered participant and determines what support is 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, the SRA 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 in the SRA.



The Park District is immensely proud of the ongoing collaboration with SRJC. By working cooperatively with other local governments, we can collectively serve all citizens within our communities, including persons with disabilities, and do so in the most efficient and effective manner possible.

2. Other intergovernmental agreements with other park districts, forest preserve districts, conservation districts, or municipal agencies.
  - Park District Risk Management Association Membership
  - Forest Protection District of Will County – Joint Programming IGA

3. Intergovernmental agreements with other units of local government.

Channahon School District 17:

- Heritage Crossing Field House Joint Use Agreement.
- Outdoor sports fields – soccer and softball/baseball
- Security support for buildings i.e., alarms, security camera system.
- Community Park for school cross-county meets

Village of Channahon:

- Police & Emergency Management Agency support for races and special events
- Combined funding of fireworks
- Combined usage of large equipment i.e., Large Dump Truck
- Bike Path Maintenance Agreement

Channahon Township:

- Inclusive Playground IGA

Three Rivers Public Library District:

- Playground Agreement

Channahon Fire Protection District

- Information Technology IGA

4. **Partnerships or agreements with athletics or similar affiliate organizations that operate sports or other leagues.**
  - Shared ballfields with Channahon Jr High and Channahon Pony Baseball
  - Channahon Jr High, multiple High Schools use our Cross-Country Course in Community Park
  - Youth basketball programs held in Channahon Jr High Gymnasium
  - Minooka High School rents District theater space at a discounted rate

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

- Three Rivers Festival Host Location
- Rotary, Lions Club, Kiwanis all volunteer at events
- Ascension Saint Joseph
- Morris Hospital & Healthcare Centers

**6. Partnerships with for profit organizations**

- Channahon Lanes
- Comfort First Heating & Cooling
- D’Orazio Ford
- D’Arcy Automobiles
- Davidson Farms
- Forte Arts Center
- Grand Dental
- Harbor Contractors
- KW Infinity
- Manor Motel
- Mechanical & Industrial Steel Services
- Meentz Law
- Minooka Grain, Lumber & Supply
- Minor Chiropractic
- Northern Illinois Steel
- Ozinga
- Raising Cane’s
- RE/MAX Hometown Properties
- Strand Associates
- Tezak Funeral Home

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

- Cooperative Special Events with Village of Channahon and Three Rivers Library District, Potato Fest and Channaholidays. Village of Channahon and Three Rivers Library District, Potato Fest and Channaholidays.
- Shared equipment:
  - Channahon Township: Graders, dump trucks, snowplows, etc.
  - Village of Channahon: safety equipment, power lift trucks, air compressors, etc.

## VI. Other Examples of Efficient Operations

**Use of volunteers.** One way the Park District reduces the burden on taxpayers is through volunteers. Last year, 185 individuals volunteered for 2,800 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 100 youth that were 18 or younger. 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-used for joint purchase pricing of fitness equipment.

**People for Channahon Parks Foundation.** Last year, the Foundation raised \$75,000 in private donations, which help alleviate the burden on taxpayers.

**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.

Channahon Park District belongs to the Park District Risk Management Agency (PDRMA) PDRMA provides coverage tailored to the unique needs of Illinois park districts, forest preserve and conservation districts and special recreation associations with over 150 agency members. PDRMA is a shared liability pool that helps keep insurance coverages affordable by spreading the risk out among all the member agencies.

**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 assess 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 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.

## VII. Transparency to the Community

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

Document	Location(s) Available
• Annual tax levy	Website
• Annual budget and appropriation ordinance	Administrative Offices
• Agenda and minutes	Website
• Annual audit	Website
• Statement of Receipts and Disbursements	Administrative Offices
• Conduct Ordinances	Website
• Strategic plans	Website
• ADA transition plan	Website

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

- a) The board of commissioners meets on the third Monday of each month. Residents may provide public comment at every meeting.
- b) The Park District's annual Budget and Appropriation Ordinance is available in tentative form at least 30 days prior to its adoption at an open meeting of the Park District board. Also, 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 before.
- c) The Park District's annual property tax levy is approved at an open meeting of the Park District board in accordance with the Open Meetings Act. The Park District follows all public notice and hearing requirements under the Truth in Taxation Law before adopting this annual tax levy. The Park District's annual levy is also subject to the limitations of the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law.
- d) Residents may contact or request information from the Park District by phone at 815-467-7275 or email at [questions@channahonpark.org](mailto:questions@channahonpark.org)
- e) Committees, boards, etc. that have community representation.
  - a. Citizen Task Force
  - b. Citizen Advisory Meetings held bi-annually: athletics, early childhood/youth programming, golf, & aquatics
- f) Community surveys and other resident surveys in the past 5 years; include program surveys and any other surveys that sought community input no matter how complex or simple.
  - a. 2022 Community Survey
- g) Public hearings or similar meetings where community input was obtained in the past 5 years.
  - a. Bluff Park Resident Input
  - b. Henneberry Park Resident Input
  - c. Strategic Plan

## VIII. District Awards and Recognition

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

IAPD (Illinois Association of Park Districts) Distinguished Accredited Agency

- 2014-2019
- 2021-2026

PDRMA Accredited Agency

NRPA (National Recreation and Park Association) – Gold Medal winner (1997)

### Staff credentials

Michael Leonard, MS, CPRE (Certified Park and Recreation Executive)

Angela Brown, MS, CPRP (Certified Park and Recreation Professional), Food Protection Manager,  
American Red Cross Lifeguard Manager

Kristin Knutson, CPRP

Christine Martinez, CTRS

Patrick Fox, CPO

Brian McCarthy, CPO

Kurt Cowger, CPO

### Staff training

Michael Leonard

- IPRA (Illinois Park and Recreation Association) Professional Development School
- NRPA School of Sports Management
- NRPA Directors School

Kristin Knutson

- Indiana University Executive Development Program

Angela Brown

- Indiana University Executive Development Program

American Red Cross Lifeguard Instructors

American Red Cross Water Safety Instructors

35 American Red Cross Lifeguards

Most staff are American Heart Association CPR/AED certified.

Extensive PDRMA Safety training for full-time staff.

## IX. 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.

### Facilities

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

- <https://www.channahonpark.org/interactive-map/>

### Programs

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

- Number of Participants: 2,010 (Unique Individuals)
- Number of Registrations: 6,091
- Number of Programs offered: 200.
- Number of classes/sessions offered: 752.

Kids Connection Preschool

After School Care

General youth programs – Spanish classes, music classes, cooking classes, etc.

Youth Sports Programs – Soccer, Flag Football, Basketball Leagues and Instructional

Karate

Camps – Day camps, theater camps, sports camps

Arts and Craft programs

Swim Lessons

Special Events & Community Events– 5K races, 4<sup>th</sup> of July, Three Rivers Festival

Dance, Tumbling and Ballet

Rentals and birthday parties

Open gyms

Golf – General play, lessons, outings

Pickleball

Racquetball

Basketball Lessons

Tennis Lessons

Senior programming – Bingo, day van trips, cards & dice games

Group Fitness

Disc Golf Course

Community Center

Fitness Center

Aquatic Center

Golf Course

## **Other Benefits**

While the Park District is a special purpose district, its impact on 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. Before and after school 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 & miles of walking trails.

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

### **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.

- Village of Channahon \$7,421.38
- Will County Health Department \$815.50
- Illinois State Police \$2,410.00
- Treasurer – State Of Illinois \$66.00
- State Fire Marshal – 3740.50
- Illinois Department of Agriculture \$205.00
- Channahon School District 17 \$1,882.00
- Minooka CCSD 201 \$1,021

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 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 necessary, general-purpose government units 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.

### **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.

#### **a) Non-resident FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) Requests**

Last year, the Park District spent staff time and legal fees to fulfill FOIA requests. 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. Example: Smart Procure

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 residents 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 \$2,030 on 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 more costly fingerprint check. Since it is a state mandate, 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, the ISP could consider reducing its cost to local governments.

c) Prevailing Wage

One way to reduce the 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.

### **Opportunities for Increased Transparency**

- a) Put the Financial Statement on the website: This creates transparency and allows residents to see how and where the money is being allocated. This, in turn, will help residents to recognize needs when or if the Channahon Park District is requesting assistance.
- b) Provide the meeting agenda on social media prior to the meeting date. This will allow residents to be aware of what is to be discussed and offer input in person or in writing if they so choose.
- c) Publish annual and proposed budgets on Park District Website
- d) Provide Livestream/recorded meetings of the Park District Board meetings online.
- e) Provide opportunity for public comment via email/letter instead of requiring live attendance at meetings.
- f) Pertinent Documents on a website

### **Opportunities for Other Intergovernmental Efficiencies**

- a) Shared costs or a new expanded for support programs
  - a. Joint I.T. support consortium
  - b. Integrated information systems and communications systems with other units of government
  - c. Joint building & infrastructure maintenance/cleaning contracts

- b) Outsource or consolidate grass/weed cutting and exterior maintenance, to realize cost savings by bundling a contract with other governmental agencies, versus each utilizing their own staff or separate outsourced contracts?
  - a. Village of Channahon
  - b. Channahon Park District
  - c. Channahon Fire Protection District
  - d. Channahon Township
  - e. Three Rivers Library District
  - f. School District 17 &
- c) Bundle any contracted projects with similar projects by other agencies to find efficiency and overall cost reduction.
- d) Communicate intended capital improvements/projects with other jurisdictions prior to the budgeting process of each jurisdiction so that efficiencies may be explored. For example, if the Fire District is planning on having a parking lot seal-coated, coordinating work schedules, and planning to do a single contract with the Fire District & Park District to seal coat multiple parking lots may bring a lower overall cost.
- e) Shared outdoor sound system between the Park District and Town Center.
- f) Work with local school districts to gain an increase in volunteerism from their various honor societies.
- g) When practical, purchase various types of used equipment from government agencies.
- h) Use of Channahon Township equipment to grade various area trails.
- i) Create Village wide composting for landscaping areas.
- j) Use Village waste treatment bio solids to fertilize green spaces.
- k) Develop an efficient web site to share ideas and projects.
- l) Create a regional Efficiency Committee to share ideas.

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

- a) Rooftop solar
- b) Solar arrays & Wind Turbines on the perimeter of open spaces.
  - a. Does using a few 10s of feet around a large open space bring an opportunity to utilize land for energy generation without limiting the enjoyment of the balance of the land?
  - b. Vertical-axis wind turbines atop ballfield lighting masts
  - c. Smaller wind or solar generation on other infrastructure/apparatus throughout the district
- c) Upgrade pool area lighting (example LED)
- d) Explore joint services of communications platforms & potential mergers of disparaging systems.
  - a. Wireless/Cellular services
  - b. Internet services
  - c. Website/hosting services
- e) Explore purchasing of multiple vehicles or large equipment from local sources other than state purchase contracts, which have become increasingly difficult to utilize for procurement. Local sources are sometimes willing to provide better pricing in support of their local community or regional area.

**Opportunities for Internal Operation Efficiencies**

- a) Consider the costs and balance efficiencies for outsourcing versus internal labor costs of ongoing activities.
- b) Combine Senior programming with various agencies, not-for-profits, and private business.
- c) Utilize the Friends of Channahon Parks Foundation to research opportunities for acquiring open spaces.
- d) District staff could reach out to their counterpart at other Districts to share efficiency ideas.
- e) Use social media to advertise and/or entice more individuals to volunteer, All the local school honor societies require service hours. These students are always looking for ways to volunteer and get the hours needed with many going way above the required amount.

**Dated:** December 12, 2023

**Signed:**  \_\_\_\_\_  
Committee Chair

