

**EFFICIENCY REPORT FOR
HARRISBURG TOWNSHIP PARK DISTRICT**

**APPROVED BY THE PARK DISTRICT'S
COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY
ON JANUARY 19, 2024**



I. Purpose

The Harrisburg Township Park District (“Park District”) formed its Committee on Local Government Efficiency on May 19, 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:

- Michael Williams [PARK BOARD PRESIDENT]
- Doug Emery [PARK BOARD VICE PRESIDENT]
- Ron Emery [PARK BOARD SECRETARY/TREASURER]
- Martin Rowe [RESIDENT MEMBER]
- Becky Williams [RESIDENT MEMBER]
- Blake Emery [PARK DISTRICT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR]

III. Committee Meetings

The Committee met as follows:

Meeting Date	Meeting Time and Place
October 20, 2023	Harrisburg Township Park District Community Room – 9:00 AM
December 15, 2023	Harrisburg Township Park District Community Room – 9:30 AM
January 19, 2024	Harrisburg Township Park District Community Room – 9:30 AM

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 1934. 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 three 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, 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 6.8% 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 also adopted the following ordinances, rules, policies, and procedures:

- **General Conduct Ordinances**
- **Employee Handbook**
- **Risk Management & Loss Control Manual**
- **Ordinance Establishing Regulation for Public Participation During Park Board Meetings**
- **Ordinance Establishing Limitations on Smoking and Tobacco Products within Parks and Other Property**
- **Ordinance Establishing Regulations for Commissioner's Electronic Attendance at Park Board Meetings**
- **Ordinance Establishing Regulations for Fishing**
- **Resolution Establishing Board Member Responsibilities**
- **Resolution Establishing Freedom of Information Officers**
- **Resolution Designating Persons to Receive Illinois Open Meetings Act Training**
- **Resolution Establishing Affiliate Association Agreement**
- **Resolution Establishing Salary Schedule**
- **Resolution Establishing Intergovernmental Purchasing Agreements**
- **Resolution Establishing Authorization for OSLAD Bank Account**

- **Resolution Establishing System for Award Management (SAM) Entity Administrator**
- **Abused and Neglected Children Policy**
- **Apparent Conformity and Lottery System Policy**
- **Athletic Field Policy**
- **Background Investigation Policy**
- **Community Affiliate Intergovernmental Agreement Policy**
- **Drug Free Workplace Policy**
- **Harassment Policy**
- **Homemade Items Policy**
- **Identity Protection Policy**
- **Information Security Policy**
- **Injured Wildlife Policy**
- **Investment Policy**
- **Motor Vehicle Operators Policy**
- **Movable Soccer Goal Policy**
- **Other Power Driven Mobility Device Policy**
- **Personal Information Privacy Policy**
- **Personal Transportation Device Policy**
- **Purchasing Policy**
- **Reasonable Accommodation Policy**
- **Sponsorship Policy**
- **Use of Technology Policy**
- **Video Surveillance Policy**

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. Other intergovernmental agreements with other park districts, forest preserve districts, conservation districts, or municipal recreation agencies

- *The Park District utilizes Illinois Parks Association Risk Services (IPARKS) which is a local government risk-sharing pool comprised solely of park, recreation and conservation districts, river conservancy districts, forest preserves and special recreation agencies throughout the State of Illinois.*

2. Intergovernmental agreements with other units of local government

- *The Park District has a Facility Use Agreement in place with Harrisburg Community Unit School District #3 (HCUSD#3) for use of Park District Softball and Baseball fields by the school teams. The Park District maintains and prepares the facilities for games and practices of the school teams.*

3. Intergovernmental Purchasing Agreements

- *The Park District has Resolution Establishing Intergovernmental Purchasing Agreements to have the ability to enter into intergovernmental cooperative purchasing agreements as it deems necessary for the public good and convenience to achieve efficiency and save taxpayer funds.*

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

- *The Park District has an Affiliate Association Agreement with Harrisburg Youth Association (HYA) and Saline County Youth Soccer Association (SYSA) which save resources for the community. For example, most of these organizations would be unable to construct and maintain their own sports fields. Oftentimes, sports complexes are multipurpose, which is an efficient way to satisfy the demands for numerous different sports and recreational activities.*

5. Partnerships or other interrelationships with non-profits

- *The Park District enters into usage agreement with the BullFish Swim Team each season on the use of the Bill Trees Memorial Park Pool.*

6. Partnerships with for profit organizations

- *The Park District enters into usage agreement with Ultra Soccer Academy and Power Alley each season on the use of athletic fields and facilities. The District has sponsorship opportunities for local businesses to advertise at the park facilities.*

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

- *The Park District provides the location of the Harrisburg District Library StoryWalk®. The StoryWalk® Project is a popular collaboration between libraries and parks to bring together the love of reading and being outside. For a StoryWalk®, a book is laminated, mounted, and placed along a walking path. Families can stroll down the path, reading the book as they move along. The StoryWalk® Project was created by Anne Ferguson of Montpelier, VT and developed in collaboration with the Kellogg-Hubbard Library. StoryWalk® is a registered service mark owned by Ms. Ferguson.*

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. Volunteering can be for a day or year-round and on your own or with family and friends.

Youth employment. The Park District is a key employer of youth in the community. 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 (if not listed above). 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.

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 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 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.

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 (website, administrative offices, county clerk, state website, etc.)
• Annual Tax Levy	Website, Park Office, County Clerk
• Annual Budget and Appropriation Ordinance	Website, Park Office, County Clerk
• Agenda and Minutes	Website, Park Office
• Comptroller's Annual Finance Report (AFR)	Website, Park Office, County Clerk
• Annual Audit	Website, Park Office, County Clerk
• Statement of Receipts and Disbursements	Website, Park Office, County Clerk
• Conduct Ordinances	Website, Park Office
• Total Compensation Report	Website, Park Office
• Freedom of Information Act Documents	Website, Park Office
• Project Bidding Notices	Website, Park Office

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

- The board of commissioners meets once each month. Residents may provide public comment at every meeting.
- 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. 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 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 prior to the adoption of this annual tax levy.
- Residents may contact or request information from the Park District by phone at 618-252-2111 or email at office@harrisburgpark.net
- Public Hearings are held to discuss input on projects to be completed with General Obligation Bond Funds, IDNR OSLAD Grants, and DCEO Grants.

VII. District Awards and Recognition

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

- ***IPARKS 30 Year Membership and Exemplary Member***
- ***Illinois Parks and Recreation Magazine***
 - *September/October 2004 Issue* – Article on Paul Emery and his impact to Harrisburg Township Park District through his longevity of serving on the Park Board of Commissioners.
- ***Certified Park and Recreation Professional (CPRP) Certification***
 - *Blake Emery, Executive Director* - The Certified Park and Recreation Professional (CPRP) certification is the national standard for all parks and recreation professionals who want to be at the forefront of their profession. Attaining the CPRP designation shows that you have met education and experience qualifications, and illustrates your commitment to the profession as well as your knowledge and understanding of key concepts within parks and recreation.

VIII. 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.

1. Facilities

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

	Size (Acres)	Pool	Picnic Shelters	Playgrounds	Baseball Fields	Batting Cages	Soccer Fields	Tennis Courts	Basketball Courts	Pickleball Courts	Skatepark	Volleyball	Outdoor Fitness	Walking Path	Fishing Area
Location - Community Parks															
1. Paul Emery Park	44	1	10	4	5	4	0	2	3	2	1	2	1	1	1
2. Bill Rice Memorial Soccer Complex	12	0	1	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
3. Gaskins City Complex	11	0	1	2	5	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	67	1	12	6	10	7	8	2	4	2	1	2	1	2	1

2. Programs

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

Programs	Registrations
HYA Baseball/Softball	350
HYA Flag Football	130
SYSA Soccer	390
Karate	10
Pool Swim Lessons	95
Pool Water Aerobics	25
Pool Early Morning Swim	15
Bullfish Swim Team	60
Shaker Fitness Class	10
Total	1085

3. Additional Services

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

- *StoryWalk - StoryWalk is an innovative and delightful way for children and adults to enjoy reading and the outdoors at the same time. Laminated pages from a children's book are attached to boards, which are installed along the outdoor walking path. As you stroll down the trail, you're directed to the next page in the story.*
- *Easter Egg Hunt and Kite Fly Event – Around 4,000 candy filled easter eggs are hidden at the Bill Rice Memorial Soccer Complex for kids of all ages to come and enjoy an Easter Egg Hunt. The Easter Bunny makes an appearance at the event as well. At the conclusion of the egg hunt, the facility is opened up for people to fly kites in the open area.*
- *Candy Cane Hunt – In December of each year at the Kiwanis Shelter, there are thousands of candy canes hidden throughout the adjacent park area for kids of all ages to come and seek similar to an easter egg hunt. Santa Claus makes an appearance at the event as well.*
- *Fishing Tournament – Starting Father's Day Weekend each year, the annual Fishing Tournament begins. The park lagoon is stocked with fish and there are a certain number of tagged fish that win a prize if caught. The Fishing Tournament is during the same time as the annual Illinois Free Fishing Days celebration where anglers can fish without purchasing a fishing license.*

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. These opportunities also help reduce juvenile crime. The Park District's open space and trees help improve air and water quality and mitigate flooding.

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 units of government on each other. The Park District's taxpayers are also taxpayers of these other units of local government and vice versa. 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.

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.

- *Grant Reimbursements can be slow and the Park District has to transfer/loan money from other funds to make payments prior to being reimbursed.*
- *County Tax Collection and Payments happen after the Fiscal Year has started and surplus funds must be used to cover expenses for the first 4 to 5 months of the Fiscal Year prior to receiving property taxes from the county.*

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.

- a) Non-resident 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.

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). 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, 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.

4. Opportunities for Increased Transparency

As illustrated above, the Park District is very transparent in its operations. The following are opportunities for increased transparency:

- Board Meeting Materials – Board Meeting Agendas are posted to the website, but all handouts and meeting materials provided to the Board Members are not.
- Better Use of Technology Tools – Use of technology to enhance transparency of the Park District to provide access to services and share performance data.
- Development of a *Friends of the Park* Organization to help with marketing and fundraising needs for activities and events of the Park District.

5. Opportunities for Other Intergovernmental Agreements

- Loaning of Equipment between local governments to complete a project.

6. Opportunities for Savings such as Energy Efficiency Projects

- Illinois House Bill 2192 Amended the Park District Code and provides that a Park District may enter into a lease, contract, or other agreement related to the acquisition of solar energy, including the installation, maintenance, and service of solar panels, equipment, or similar technology related to solar energy, for a period not to exceed 2.5 times the term of years provided for in other provisions authorizing a lease for equipment and machinery (currently, up to 8 years) when authorized by the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the governing board of the park district.
- Gather more information regarding the advantages of the Park District pursuing solar energy options.

SIGNED THIS day of January 19, 2024.

Michael Williams

Michael Williams, Park Board President

Doug Emery

Doug Emery, Park Board Vice President

Absent

Martin Rowe, Resident Member

Becky Williams

Becky Williams, Resident Member

Blake Emery

Blake Emery, Park Executive Director

ATTEST:

Ron Emery

Ron Emery, Park Board Sec./Treas.