



Pekin Park District Moving Forward

A strategies blueprint for 2018-2021



Adopted November 29, 2018 Pekin Park District Park Board of Commissioners

Introduction & Acknowledgements

The Pekin Park District's strategic plan, "Moving Forward – A Strategic Blueprint for 2018-2021" are policies and direction set forth by the Park Board of Commissioners:

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The Park Board of Commissioners would like to thank the Pekin Park District Administrative Staff,

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Pekin Park District Moving Forward

A strategies blueprint for 2018-2021

How the Strategic Plan process began and took shape

A kick-off meeting of the Pekin Park District Board of Commissioners was held on September 16, 2017 to discuss the need of developing a strategic plan. The discussion revolved around the 2017 Community-Wide Recreation Interests Survey, the Fiscal Year 2017/2018 budget, the state of the Park District's finances, and condition of its facilities, infrastructure and resources.

At the kick-off meeting, the following planning meeting dates were scheduled to address the key elements of a strategic plan:

- October 21, 2017 – Vision and Values
- November 11, 2017 – Goals
- December 2, 2017 - Objectives

Prior to the first planning meeting on October 21, 2017, the following information was distributed to the Park Board of Commissioners to be utilized as an aid in their thought process about what they, as



Top Row Left to Right: Scott Price, Greg Maloney, Gary Gillis, Marv Brown. Bottom Row Left to Right: Kristen Walraven, Kyle Cain, Paula Helm

Commissioners, would like to see in the Pekin Park District Strategic Plan.

- Meeting Minutes from February 20, 2016 Special Meeting/Board Retreat (Appendix A)
- The Final Draft – 2017 Community-Wide Recreation Interests Study; Office of Recreation & Park Resources, University of Illinois (Appendix B – Executive Summary from Study)
- Examples of other Park District Strategic Plans

Included also was information to increase their understanding of what a strategic plan is, as well as a questionnaire for them to begin putting their thoughts down on paper and to aid in the discussion process during the meetings.

What is a Strategic Plan?

A Strategic Plan should emphasize developing a vision of a future condition the Pekin Park District wants to achieve and determining specific strategies to achieve this envisioned future. The plan should be less quantitative, more focused and action oriented, and have shorter time horizons. A Strategic Plan should enable the Pekin Park Board of Commissioners and Park District staff to work together to achieve the same goals and manage for results. It should be outcome focused.

The parts of a Strategic Plan

1. Mission – A mission statement should be a concise statement of the Pekin Park District's reason for being.
2. Vision – This is what the Park District seeks to become. It should be inspirational and paint an image of what success will look like.
3. Values – These are the guiding principles of the Park District.

4. Goals – These are the conditions or attributes to be obtained by the Park District.
5. Objectives – These are the measurable/attainable strategies to accomplish the goals.

Goals and objectives should reflect how the Pekin Park District is going to carry out its mission to achieve its vision, and based on the values. They are the connection between the mission and vision, should link back to them, and show how the Pekin Park District intends to organize work in advancing toward the preferred future.

Questionnaire

Question #1

What do you see as the Pekin Park District's vision, as a whole, for the next three (3) to five (5) years?

Question #2

Based on your vision, as well as the Park District's current mission statement, what do you feel are the values of the Pekin Park District?

Question #3

What goals do you see the Pekin Park District striving for in order to achieve the vision and values you listed above?

Question #4

How do you see the Pekin Park District meeting the goals you listed above in order to reach the vision and values? What are the objectives for each goal you listed above?

Question #5

What do you see as the Pekin Park District's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats?

Through the above processes, the Pekin Park Board of Commissioners and Executive Director completed the following steps in order to achieve developing the strategic plan.

- Established and reviewed the mission, vision, and goals;

- Performed SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis as part of a data collection process (Appendix C);
- Met with Administrative staff and Department staff to obtain their feedback;
- Made recommendations and created alternatives;
- Created action plans;
- Approved the plan for implementation; and set up a means to evaluate and make plan revisions



The Strategic Plan

The Pekin Park District's mission statement is like most other districts missions being general in nature. But, it is the Park District's reason for being and is a good starting point of developing the vision of the Strategic Plan.

The Park District's mission statement is:

“To improve the quality of life for the district’s residents by providing both active and passive recreational opportunities in recreational facilities, parks and areas.”



The Vision

“To progressively meet the changing needs and desires of the community, while embracing cherished traditions.”

Believed Values

Responsible – The Park District believes it has a duty to be responsible to its constituents in regards to being accountable and transparent in all facets of its operations.

Adaptable – The Park District believes it needs to be adaptable to the changing needs and wants of its constituents by being creative, proactive, innovative and evolving.

Empowerment – The Park District believes in empowerment which includes employees taking ownership in their duties and responsibilities based on their knowledge, collaborative efforts, comprehensiveness, passion, dedication, and developed partnerships.

Integrity – The Park District believes in integrity in regards to being respectful, honest, and having a positive image.

Preservation – The Park District believes in preservation in regards to retaining the culture created, conservation efforts established, significance of our history, and the importance of stewardship.

Accommodate – The Park District believes it should accommodate its constituents by listening, being responsive, and providing customer service that is appreciated and valued.



The Goals & Associated Values

The goals developed took into account the Community-Wide Recreation Interests Survey, current state of the Park District, strategic planning meeting discussions, and departmental staff input.

Hire and maintain dedicated and innovative staff.

(Associated Values - Adaptable, Empowerment, Integrity)



Planning of the budget should be strategic.

(Associated Values - Responsible, Adaptable, Integrity)



Public relations should be consistent, both externally and internally.

(Associated Values - Responsible, Adaptable)



Update and maintain infrastructure and facilities (Reinvest in our infrastructure, take care of what we currently have to improve, make sure functional).

(Associated Values - Responsible, Empowerment, Preservation, Integrity)



Develop new programs

(Associated Values - Adaptable, Empowerment, Accommodate)



Increase revenues of Special Use Facilities in order to operate, maintain and make improvements.

(Associated Values - Responsible, Adaptable, Empowerment, Accommodate)



Improve existing programs

(Associated Values - Adaptable, Empowerment, Accommodate)



Increase revenue of recreation programs while still providing for entire community.

(Associated Values - Responsible, Adaptable, Empowerment, Accommodate, Integrity)



Increase efforts to improve historical and natural areas for preservation, and leisure recreational opportunities.

(Associated Values - Responsible, Preservation, Accommodate, Integrity)



Provide parks and facilities for the community and employees that are well maintained.

(Associated Values - Responsible, Adaptable, Empowerment, Preservation, Accommodate, Integrity)





Goals, Objectives & Strategies

2018-2019

Goal

Hire and maintain dedicated and innovative staff.

Objectives

Evaluate employees on a regular basis.

Provide opportunities for staff to take on project leadership roles.

Strategies

Develop a recognition program that encourages staff to take ownership of their duties and responsibilities.

Compensate employees fairly and justly.

Current hourly and salary wages, as well as benefits, should be comparable to industry standards.

Provide potential advancement for current employees.

Evaluate, and adjust where appropriate, current wages so there is consistency within the Park District and so are comparable to state and national levels.

Review and modify the organizational structure for areas of advancement.

Be prepared for when the “what if” opportunity arises; consider hiring a Human Resources position.

Figure position into organizational structure.

Goal

Planning of the budget should be strategic.

Objectives

Address the financial issues of the District.

Draft “what if plans”; get out in front of the issues; create a sustainable business model.

Strategies

Work with consultant on developing, implementing and evaluating a “Smart Approach to Cost Recovery and Resource Allocation.”

Consider other potential revenue streams providing more of a return on investment.

Investigate feasibility and potential location to allow hunting, and constructing a shooting range in the “Outer Parks.”

Determine costs and feasibility of rebuilding the concession trailer for use at events.

Investigate improving the dehumidifier system in the Arena with the Tazewell County Veteran’s Memorial Fair Association Board in order to utilize the Arena during the summer months for recreation programs and to rent the facility more to outside groups.

Evaluate services obtained by consultants/providers to make sure getting the best value.

Coincide budget planning with the strategic plan and community interest survey focusing on priorities, cost recovery and savings, and approving in a timely fashion.

Develop annual goals and objectives.

All Departments will develop this mindset, and goals, objectives, strategies and timelines will parallel with the fiscal year budget process and strategic plan.

Continually obtain feedback from the community, and make adjustments where feasible.

Consistently survey program users and facility pass holders/members.

Goal
Public relations should be consistent, both externally and internally.

Objectives (External Customer Service/Marketing)

Focus on customer retention; keep customers returning.

Give back to the community through customer appreciation days, expos, open houses, free clinics.

Strategies

Each department/facility will offer at least one such event per fiscal year.

Investigate, whether feasible and cost effective, to bundle services and opportunities to our patrons providing more of a benefit to them.

Continually garner input from customers; particularly those with season passes and annual memberships.

Consistently survey program users and facility pass holders/members.

Continually distribute information to our patrons.

Make social media postings more intriguing.

Each department/facility should know their competition.

A committee will identify the Park District "brand" and message to be conveyed.

Improve the Pekin Park District website.

Investigate options and costs to update the website so it is more interactive, easier to navigate for information, is a site people want to visit, and easy to update.

Develop a Request for Proposal (RFP) for website development scope of services and costs.

Obtain RFP's and budget for new website.

Be prepared for when the "what if" opportunity arises; consider hiring a Marketing/Public Relations position.

Figure position into organizational structure.

Improve transparency to the public.

Publicize Park Board meetings better.

Start advertising meetings on the marquees/ Facebook.

Better inform the community where the Park District is at, where it wants to be and why; get buy in regarding short and long range plans and changes.

Better inform the community where the Park District is at financially, and regarding the levy/budget process.

Educate the community regarding our aging equipment, facilities and infrastructure and how the Park District has gotten to this point.

These objectives will be standard procedure and policy moving forward; "A pledge to our customers."

Distributed materials need to be consistent.

The Pekin Park District logo needs to be on all materials, along with the created branded message.

All facilities are under the Pekin Park District umbrella and will use the Park District logo and branded message in all publications and social media.

Look at re-branding departments and facilities.

Each department will base this on what their niche is, what the value is of their programs/services, and will have a connection to the Pekin Park District new branded message.

Objectives (Internal Communications)

Fully utilize and inspire the most important asset, the Park District employees, to develop a work ethic and environment that makes employees want to strive for excellence in order to be the pre-eminent Park District of Central Illinois.

Strategies

A committee will improve staff relations and communications utilizing the organizational chart to educate all employees of who others are and what their roles are.

A committee will develop an internal newsletter to recognize employees and new hires, encourage input, inform of upcoming events and programs, inform of policy changes, provide health/wellness/safety information.



Goal

Update and maintain infrastructure and facilities (Reinvest in our infrastructure, take care of what we currently have to improve, make sure functional).

Objectives

Complete a capital asset inventory/ replacement cost plan to aid in future budget planning of Mineral Springs Park.

Work with consultant on scope and cost of services for future budgeting and completion.

Develop a Pekin Park District wide sponsorship program.

A committee will review current sponsorships and determine where to combine current sponsorship efforts into one so there is a bigger benefit to the sponsor and more revenue to the Park District.



Goal

Develop new programs

Objectives

Develop programs through collaboration and partnerships.

Strategies

Each department will develop and foster one new relationship at a minimum annually.

Utilize Community-Wide Recreation Interests Survey.

Survey program participants, and conduct special interest focus groups for continual feedback.

Consistently survey program users and facility pass holders and members.

Goal **Improve existing programs**

Objectives

Utilize Community-Wide Recreation Interests Survey.

Strategies

Survey program participants, and conduct special interest focus groups for continual feedback.

Consistently survey program users and facility pass holders and members.



Evaluate programs that scored low on the survey through further staff and participant input.

A program's strengths, weaknesses, expenses and revenues will be continually evaluated to determine the program's fate.

Work with consultant on developing, implementing, and evaluating a "Smart Approach to Cost Recovery and Resource Allocation."

Restructure programs that are not successful.

Utilize survey to make sure what is currently offered is age appropriate and a good mix of programs.

Make sure programs are effective and cover costs.



Continue momentum of successful offerings.

Consider adding age progression to programs that are successful.

Review current offerings to determine adjusting at least one program annually.



Goal

Increase efforts to improve historical and natural areas for preservation, and leisure recreational opportunities.

Objectives

Utilize the Pekin Park Foundation better.

Strategies

Encourage the Pekin Park Foundation to update its website and tri-fold brochure to increase efforts of promoting unrestricted funding opportunities.

Hire consultant to update website and tri-fold brochure so completed prior to starting a Capital Improvement Campaign.

Encourage the Pekin Park Foundation to run Capital Improvement Campaigns and to start their first campaign in 2019/2020.

Continue collaboration/partnership efforts.

Collaborate with two of the following groups per year to review/update their agreements: Archers Club, Radio Control Airfield Club, Disc Golf Groups, Peoria Area Mountain Bikers Association and the Horse Stables Concessionaire.

Hire qualified staff, when the opportunity arises, to help manage the natural areas in the outer parks.

Figure position into organizational structure, and create job description and salary range for full-time position.

Goal

Increase revenues of Special Use Facilities in order to operate, maintain and make improvements.

Objectives

Look at ways of restructuring department facilities.

Strategies

Evaluate and determine new focus of Parkside Athletics.

Evaluate and look at ways of utilizing underused facilities (i.e. the Arena in the summer).

Look at ways of developing other means of revenue opportunities.

Pass ordinance allowing alcohol at certain rental facilities and special events.

Operate tournaments at the Pekin Park Sports Complex and Mineral Springs Park. Plan for at least one softball or baseball tournament in 2019.



Goal

Increase revenue of recreation programs while still providing for entire community.

Objectives

Look at creating other revenue streams besides fees.

Strategies

Coincide better one day events with other event happenings.

Departments should evaluate their competition to understand it better.

Utilize the Pekin Park Foundation better.

Promote the scholarship offerings for Recreation and Junior Golf.

Evaluate existing programs.

Reevaluate fee structures and increase fees where appropriate while still keeping affordable.

Reevaluate programs that are losing money.

Reevaluate program quality to make sure offering good value for the fee participants pay.

Consider quality versus quantity, and downsize the number of offerings.

Reevaluate promotional efforts; more is better.

Goal

Provide parks and facilities for the community and employees that are well maintained.

Objectives

Improve Department efficiencies.

Strategies

Investigate alternatives to maintaining neighborhood parks.



Goals, Objectives & Strategies

2019-2020

Goal

Hire and maintain dedicated and innovative staff.

Objectives

Be prepared for when the “what if” opportunity arises; consider hiring a Human Resources position.

Strategies

Create job description and salary range for full-time position.

Goal
Planning of the budget should be strategic.

Objectives

Address the financial issues of the District.

Investigate changing fiscal year to the calendar year.

Consider other potential revenue streams providing a return on investment.

Strategies

Study potential costs of creating an indoor/outdoor banquet facility at Lick Creek tennis courts and improving the old clubhouse for golf events.

Investigate the feasibility/potential of franchising/leasing concessions.

Consider allowing charity events which a percentage of the revenue is collected, or assess a fee to allow.

Consider allowing outside groups to fundraise, for a fee, as part of the special use permit.

Utilize Parkside for tournaments other than tennis and pickle ball.

Utilize mini-golf for special events, tournaments and leagues, and possibly as part of junior golf lessons.

Determine costs/feasibility of holding a 5K run.

To control expenses, evaluate facilities that are not serving their intended purpose, cannot be re-purposed, are too costly to maintain or do not serve a need anymore, and determine a course of action.

Goal
Public relations should be consistent, both externally and internally.

Objectives (External Customer Service/Marketing)

Continually distribute information to our patrons.

Be prepared for when the “what if” opportunity arises; consider hiring a Marketing/Public Relations position.

Strategies

Create two job descriptions and salary ranges; a year round part-time position, and a full-time salaried position.

Objectives (Internal Communications)

Develop a committee to improve staff relations and communications.

Strategies

Create a historical/factual document to educate new and current employees about the Pekin Park District, and an employee orientation and tour for new employees and Park Board of Commissioners.



Goal
Update and maintain infrastructure and facilities (Reinvest in our infrastructure, take care of what we currently have to improve, make sure functional).

Objectives

Complete capital asset replacement plan.

Strategies

Contract consultant to inventory assets and determine improvement/replacement costs of Mineral Springs Park's assets.

Inventory assets and determine improvement/replacement costs of assets for all neighborhood parks, outer parks, and Pekin Park Sports Complex.

Work with the City of Pekin to inventory assets and determine improvement/replacement costs for Riverfront Park.

Look at other means to fund improvements throughout the Pekin Park District (i.e. cell tower leases, solar farm leases, farming).



Consider naming rights of a facility if a sponsor's mission meets the Pekin Park District's mission and vision (except at the Pekin Park Sports Complex).

Currently, sponsors are not pursued for naming rights but the Pekin Park District will listen and have discussions if approached. Investigate potential in the business community and what facilities would be a good fit.

Goal Develop new programs.

Objectives

Develop programs with progression in mind.

Be consistent, not random, when developing programs.

Strategies

Departments will review current offerings and surveys when considering new programs to make sure of consistency, progression, sustainability, need and demand.





Goal **Improve existing programs.**

Objectives

Continue momentum of successful programs and offerings.

Strategies

Have the Illinois River Valley Special Recreation Association (IIRVSRA) investigate expanding the partnership with Pekin Community High School.

Add a more structured school program to camps or independent of camps.



Goal **Increase efforts to improve historical and natural areas for preservation, and leisure recreational opportunities.**

Objectives

Continue collaboration/partnership efforts.

Determine management costs of Land and Water Reserve sites to plan accordingly.

Strategies

Review plans and get cost estimates from contractors to complete some of the work.



Goal
Increase revenues of Special Use Facilities in order to operate, maintain and make improvements.

Objectives

Look at ways of restructuring department facilities.

Strategies

Evaluate and determine new focus of the following facilities: Miniature Golf, Boats, and Aquatic Facility.



Goal
Provide parks and facilities for the community and employees that are well maintained.

Objectives

Improve communication with patrons.

Strategies

Develop "Friends of the Parks" volunteer opportunities.

Improve department efficiencies.

Investigate alternatives to maintaining park sites outside of the Pekin Park District boundaries (i.e. with other governmental agencies, volunteers, outsourcing, and developing more natural areas).



Goals, Objectives & Strategies

2020-2021

Goal

Planning of the budget should be strategic.

Objectives

Address the financial issues of the District.

Consider other potential revenue streams providing a return on investment.

Strategies

Investigate costs/feasibility of developing a campground.

Investigate utilizing the Tazewell County Veteran's Memorial Fair Association buildings throughout summer for markets or shows.

Utilize the dog park for events/shows with vendor booths and partnering with local animal shelters.

Goal

Public relations should be consistent, both externally and internally.

Objectives (Internal Communications)

Develop a committee to improve staff relations and communications.

Strategies

Consider developing a shadow program encouraging Administrators and the Pekin Park Board to gain a better understanding of a department's day to day operations.

Goal

Increase efforts to improve historical and natural areas for preservation, and leisure recreational opportunities.

Objectives

Continue collaboration/partnership efforts.

Continue developing work days with special interest groups, service clubs, businesses and volunteers to assist staff in management.

Strategies

Reach out to other agencies throughout the state and across the country on developing stewardship and volunteer programs.



Goal

Increase revenues of Special Use Facilities in order to operate, maintain and make improvements.

Objectives

Look at ways to restructure concession facilities.

Strategies

Investigate outsourcing concessions to outside business concessionaires/the youth sports associations.

Look at creating other means of revenue opportunities.

Look at incorporating a dog memorial location at Happy Tails Dog Park to offset costs of maintaining.

Goals, Objectives & Strategies

Current/On-Going

In addition to the goals, objectives and strategies for years 2018 through 2021, the Pekin Park District also has many goals, objectives and strategies they currently are fulfilling. These are items staff address on a day to day, week to week, month to month and annual basis. The Park Board of Commissioners and staff do not see these changing, but instead, see them continuing as part of staff's roles and responsibilities to keep the Park District operating and functioning properly. The following is a summary of these current/on-going goals, objectives and strategies.

Goal

Hire and maintain dedicated and innovative staff.

Hiring and maintaining dedicated and innovative staff is always a top goal. When someone is considered for a position, it is expected they meet or exceed job description requirements and responsibilities. New employees should have valuable skill sets and be diversified in the parks and recreation field. The Park District always updates job descriptions so they are current and include technology/social media understanding, and when applicable, also include accreditation or certification in the described field.

The Park District also invests in employees personal and professional development providing opportunities to stay current with field trends. The Park District, when possible or appropriate, budgets to send staff to conferences, classes, seminars, webinars and workshops. The Park District takes advantage of free training of different types and variety through IPARKS and IPRF, as well as free programs, seminars, webinars and workshops that other professional organizations conduct such as the Chamber of Commerce, law firms and insurance companies. The Park District, when possible, applies for scholarships from professional organizations that provide funding for career development and improvement.



Lastly, employees are now evaluated on a regular basis for not only job performance but to obtain feedback. This is actually fairly new to the Park District having begun evaluations on an annual basis in 2015. Previously, employees were typically not evaluated. Today, as part of the evaluation process, the employee and their immediate supervisor develop goals, objectives, strategies and timelines that are obtainable in order to better evaluate the employee throughout the year. The goals, objectives, strategies and timelines will also now parallel with the budget and strategic plan.

Goal

Planning of the budget should be strategic.

The financial issues of the Park District need to be and are being addressed by both staff and the Park Board of Commissioners. This should be done strategically, making sure while planning the allotted annual budget, it applies to/ties into the strategic plan and Community-Wide Recreation Interests Survey.

One way the Park District is addressing its financial issues is establishing new revenue streams providing more of a return on investment. An example would be Parkview and Lick Creek golf courses:

- developing new junior, adult and women golf programs and clinics.



- hosting more of our own outings such as one-day golf outings and couple's events, and hosting outside events with service clubs.
- focusing on increasing golf sales and demo days to make the pro-shops higher profit centers.



Other ways the Park District is addressing its financial issues is implementing cost saving measures such as:

- continually evaluating and updating the purchasing policy.
- improving/replacing, when the budget allows, equipment, resources and technology to

improve efficiency of operations (i.e. cash register systems, golf and park equipment, phone systems, business software, on-line registration software and the website).

- developing/updating policies to improve efficiencies and safety/security of staff and patrons through the Safety and Loss Control Committee.
- improving energy efficiencies (i.e. lighting/windows/HVAC) and recycling/sustainable efforts when opportunities arise, it's feasible and the budget allows.
- continuing to look at ways to work more with other organizations and businesses throughout the community.
- limiting growth by directing finances towards maintaining and replacing existing facilities and amenities.
- evaluating and requesting proposals for health insurance plans to keep costs and coverage as sustainable as possible.

The Park District also believes that continual communication with other agencies and organizations is vital in keeping its financial situation in check, and in order to accomplish this, current agreements are reviewed to make sure they are up to date in meeting the needs of all parties involved.

Goal

Public relations should be consistent, both externally and internally.

(External Customer Service/Marketing)

The Park District believes our patrons are priority number one. The Park District continually strives to improve upon customer service. Ways in which the Park District accomplishes this, or will improve upon, includes providing training to existing and new employees on a regular basis utilizing free training available through IPARKS and IPRF or budgeting for it when feasible.

The Park District believes the customer should always be treated with respect and employees should be courteous and polite to them. Employees should talk to customers with a smile. Employees should be responsive to customers, either answering their question or letting them know they will get the answer and get back to them in a prompt manner. Employees should try to resolve issues/problems in a timely fashion, and handle dissatisfied/unhappy

customers with calmness and by listening. If employees cannot resolve the issue, they need to find someone who can.

All of these objectives will continue to be standard procedure and policy moving forward. It will be the Pekin Park District's pledge to our customers.

The Park District's other focus regarding our patrons is customer retention. In order to accomplish this maintaining our parks on a regular basis needs to continue. Also, the Park District needs to maintain the cleanliness and functionality of facilities, both inside and outside. Creating inspection checklists, if they are not in place already, will help to develop a routine and improve efficiencies.

The Park District should be continually marketing what they have to offer and promoting themselves. One way the Park District does this is being involved with as many community functions as possible, when time allows.

The Park District needs to be distributing the word of what is happening continually to their constituents. All departments need to work together sharing information with each other the last week of the month to help spread the word and cross promote their offerings. All departments should be getting information to the Recreation Department the last week of the month to be placed on the marquees.

Social media postings should be more intriguing. Posts should be more balanced with upcoming, current, diverse and fun images and messages.

All departments should use outlets to promote activities that are free or not too costly, yet efficient and get the return on marketing. Information is sent to the schools, city and library. Press releases and calendar of events are utilized in newspaper publications. The Pekin Area Chamber of Commerce e-newsletter needs to be used more. Utilization of the City of Pekin and Peoria Convention and Visitors Bureau tourism websites need to be taken advantage of more.

Internal Communications

The Park District believes the employees are a first priority as well because they are a valuable asset. Internal communication is just as important as external communication because a happy/satisfied

employee will provide better external customer service to Park District patrons.

A committee will be formed to improve staff relations and communications. The purpose of this committee will be to fully utilize and inspire our most important asset, the employees, and to let them know that in order to be the pre-eminent Park District of Central Illinois it is because of their work ethic and striving for excellence in all areas. To support this initiative, the Executive Director is encouraged to meet with all staff, not just Department Administrators, for their feedback on trends and to listen to their ideas.

The approach of all Park District departments should be unified, having buy in and being on the same path for not only the good of the Pekin Park District but its constituents as well. All departments will work together for a common goal sharing information with each other the last week of the month to help spread the word and cross promote offerings. Staff should always treat co-workers like they would a customer, with respect and being courteous and polite. Staff should be responsive to each other by either answering the question or getting the answer and getting back to the co-worker in a timely manner. Issues/problems should be resolved in a timely fashion with calmness and by listening. These above objectives will be standard operating procedure and policy moving forward; a pledge to our fellow co-workers.

Goal Update and maintain infrastructure and facilities (Reinvest in our infrastructure, take care of what we currently have to improve, make sure functional).

The Park District currently looks at improvements to be completed through collaboration and partnerships. An example of this is the Park District's partnership with the Tazewell County Veteran's Memorial Fair Association to improve the county fair facilities.

Current agreements with the various non-profits, service organizations, special interests groups and government agencies should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis. At a minimum two should be completed per year.

Currently, sponsors are not pursued for naming rights by the Pekin Park District but the District will

listen and have discussions if approached. The Park District should consider naming rights of a facility if a sponsor's mission meets the Pekin Park District's mission and vision (except at the Pekin Park Sports Complex). The Park District should investigate the potential in the business community and what facilities would be a good fit.

The Park District, when feasible, tries to take advantage of grant opportunities. Currently, most grants applied for do not require matching funds in terms of dollars, but in-kind contributions instead.

Lastly, the Park District should investigate whether or not a referendum should be considered, but prior to consideration of this objective, the other strategies need to be completed first.

Goal **Develop new programs.**

The Park District looks to develop new programs, as well as stay current and ahead of trends. Staff and the Park Board utilizes the Illinois Park and Recreation Association Open Forum Digest and the National Recreation and Park Association Connect to communicate/learn from other professionals throughout the state/nation. Administrators are given the flexibility to utilize their expertise when determining change is now and trying new ideas with their staff as long as it is within budget and consistent with the strategic plan and Community-Wide Recreation Interests Survey. The Park District also, when feasible, tries to develop sustainable programs so there is continual growth from youth age to teens to adult.

The Park District does look to develop programs through collaboration/partnerships, and should continue to expand and improve upon current relationships.

The Park District has been improving its marketing of new/changed and one-time special event programs. They have been trying to make people more aware, keeping programs front and center, and not being afraid to over market. They are now utilizing all avenues of marketing from social media, the Pekin Park Play Guide, website, the marques, and flyers/posters at facilities and throughout the community. In order to better meet these objectives, staff should set a weekly/monthly schedule to constantly market the information they want to

disseminate to the public including the Pekin Park District brand and message once developed.

Goal **Increase efforts to improve historical and natural areas for preservation, and leisure recreational opportunities.**

The Park District needs to utilize the Pekin Park Foundation better, and has been encouraging the Foundation to have a presence on social media to promote itself better. But, prior to consideration/moving forward of this objective, the other strategies of the Foundation need to be addressed first.

The Park District continues its collaboration/partnership efforts by meeting with the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission staff quarterly to bi-annually to discuss, review and update where needed the management plans for the Land and Water Reserve sites in the Outer Parks.



The Park District also needs to continue applying for grants to assist in funding the management plans. They do apply for grants when the opportunity arises

but only for those that allow in-kind contributions as a match in lieu of requiring only matching dollars. The Park District is always considering new and current collaborations/partnerships that can help meet the goal. They review and update, when necessary, the Pekin Bike Trail Study with the City of Pekin so when the opportunity arises financially, grant funding applications and construction of the trail extension can occur.

The Park District also will consider applying for Illinois Department of Natural Resource's Open Space Development and Land Acquisition Grant when the opportunity presents itself and matching dollar funds are available.

The Park District should continue to apply for City of Pekin Tourism funds when the opportunity presents itself. And lastly, the Park District should continue requiring 10% of proceeds for special events that occur in the Outer Parks.

Goal
Increase revenues of Special Use Facilities in order to operate, maintain and make improvements.



The Park District needs to continue looking at ways to restructure their concession facilities by knowing its competition, and evaluating the food and beverage offerings to determine changes.

The Park District is always looking at ways to restructure department facilities to make them the best they can be. One example of this is the evaluation and determination of a new focus of the pro shops, concessions and programs at the golf courses.

Lastly, the Park District is always looking at ways of developing other means of revenue opportunities. One example of this is exploring naming rights of facilities (except the Pekin Park Sports Complex) if a sponsor's mission meets the Pekin Park District's mission and vision.

Goal
Increase revenue of recreation programs while still providing for entire community.

The Park District relies a lot on fees in order to generate revenue, but also looks at ways to create other means of revenue opportunities. They seek program sponsors and grant opportunities to offset costs. They promote the ease of on-line registration and being able to sign up for multiple opportunities at one time. They look at ways to reduce the number of employees hired to run programs. When possible, programs are run through independent contractors, or volunteers are utilized to run programs. Another avenue the Park District has considered and plans to look into more, is developing an internship program.



Goal
Provide parks and facilities for the community and employees that are well maintained.

The Park District is continually trying to improve its communication with its constituents and is always looking for ways to provide better opportunities for users to communicate to them.

The Park District is also always looking to improve department efficiencies by hiring quality staff and upgrading resources, when possible, to improve performance.

Conclusion/ What Now?

So, what does the Park District plan to do with this Strategies Blueprint for 2018-2021. They plan to implement it. The Strategic Plan is called “Moving Forward” for a reason, and it is not to just approve it and let it sit on a shelf. Throughout the entire process of developing this plan, the Park Board of Commissioners and staff have been on the same page of thinking. In fact, many of the goals, objectives and strategies are already in process.

When the Pekin Park District completed the Community-Wide Recreation Interests Survey, they immediately began studying the information to get a better understanding of its outcomes and to start utilizing the information. The survey results have been used in the Park District’s daily operations as well as the layout to set the Strategic Plan’s course of action.

To make sure the blueprint of strategies are being implemented and the Park District continues “Moving Forward,” a matrix has been developed outlining the goals, objectives and strategies. The matrix will be a way to monitor who is responsible to implement the strategies in order to complete the goals and objectives. It also provides a timeframe to review progress and when to accomplish the strategies by.

The Pekin Park District Board of Commissioners is looking forward to “Moving Forward” and seeing this “Strategies Blueprint” come to fruition over the next three years. It is the Park District’s vision to “progressively meet the changing needs and desires of the community, while embracing cherished traditions.” It’s a challenge the Pekin Park District Board of Commissioners and staff is embracing and plan to meet.

APPENDIX A

PEKIN PARK DISTRICT
MINUTES OF THE
SPECIAL BOARD MEETING OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
8:00 a.m. February 20, 2016
Soldwedel Program Center, McNaughton Park
217 McNaughton Park Road, Pekin, IL 61554

1. Call to order:

President Cain called the meeting to order at 8:14 a.m.

2. Roll Call:

The following Commissioners were present: Dennis Barron, Jr., Kyle Cain, Paula Helm, Gary Gillis and Scott Price. Absent were Commissioners Marv Brown and Greg Maloney. Also in attendance were: Cameron Bettin, Executive Director and Dori Smith, Board Secretary/Executive Director's Asst. There was no one from the press in attendance.

3. Board Retreat for discussion on future planning of the park district –

The Executive Director (ED) began the meeting with questions from the ED search application noting that he felt it was good discussion to lead into the following topics listed on the Agenda.

The first question reviewed was "State and discuss your philosophy of parks and recreation". He reviewed his answer and noted that in order to provide the essential service of parks and recreation, an organization need to:

1. Have good communication both internally and externally.

The ED noted that he felt it was good but could be better. He noted that technology and software is part of the problem that is improving.

2. Be diversified, reaching out to all facets of the community.

The ED noted that he felt the park was good at being diversified but could be better and that there are many other organizations out there that fill the void which limits the parks ability to be diversified. He noted that he felt the park was good at reaching out.

3. Be collaborative, building and retaining, partnerships throughout the community.

The ED noted that the park district is and that he stressing this all the time.

4. Be visionary when it pertains to long range planning.

The ED stated that a Needs Assessment, Strategic Plan and Master Plan all need to be done to accomplish long range planning.

5. Be innovative and creative, not stagnant.

The ED noted that he felt the park district was innovative and creative but could be better.

6. Be sustainable in all its facets and functions at a level that will not affect providing the essential service of parks and recreation now and into the future.

The ED felt the park district could improve upon and is working on. He noted that the Safety Committee is back together and that a policy is in place for a purchase order system, use of credit cards and store charge accounts. He noted he is working on a personnel policy update, fixed assets inventory, updating of Ordinances, software updates and updated websites for the Park District and Park Foundation.

The second question reviewed was "There are many resources of an organization such as, but not limited to, funding, staffing, programming, public relations, marketing, customer service, maintenance, management, planning, facilities, and capital assets that need to be maintained at a level that will not affect providing the essential service of parks and recreation".

The ED stated that all departments of their own public relations and marketing and felt that there should be more consistency between the departments. He also noted that a Human Resource and IT Department would be beneficial.

The third question reviewed was "If given the opportunity to be the Executive Director, how will you attempt to resolve these issues"?

The ED's reply was as follows:

"I would attempt to resolve the issue of whether or not we are being sustainable in providing the essential service of parks and recreation by asking staff and the Park Board to evaluate themselves and pursue answers, but not limited to the following questions:

1. Where do we have deficiencies and how can we improve upon them?
2. Where are we fragmented and need to come together?
3. Where are we intact, doing well and what can we learn from this?
4. Are we comprehensive enough regarding what we provide/
5. Are there other alternative resources and enterprise development we could be seeking?
6. Are the policies in place static, needing and update to work today and into the future?
7. Are short and long range plans followed, reviewed, and updates as needed?
8. Is staff placed in the appropriate situation where they will succeed for not only themselves but the district as a whole?
9. Are monitoring and evaluation techniques in place to determine if service delivery methods and procedures are efficient and effective?
10. Are diverse interests and inclusiveness being met?
11. Are alternative approaches considered?
12. Are challenges and changes approached strategically, creatively and with innovation?
13. Are all forms of data and information utilized to analyze and present viable choices and alternatives that meet the vision and mission of the district?

The ED also replied “I believe that continually evaluating oneself, individually and as a whole, is crucial in maintaining a sustainable organization. It also helps keep staff and the Park Board focused on meeting the vision and mission of the district, as well as, providing the essential service of parks and recreation.

a. Community Needs Assessment –

The ED stated that he has had discussions with Robin Hall, Director of the Office of Recreation and Park Resources, U of I Dept. of Recreation, Sport & Tourism. He reviewed the process and handout. He noted that focus group meetings with staff, park board, government agencies, special interest groups, service organizations and sports groups would all be part of the process. He noted that from this input the Needs Assessment Survey would be developed in order to get public input by mail or on-line. He also noted several public input meetings should be held during the survey process.

b. Inventory of Capital Assets and Development of a Replacement Schedule.

The ED attended a session at the state conference on “prioritizing park improvements”. He reviewed the four methods as follows:

1. Project prioritization model
2. Equity mapping and level of service
3. Facility condition index
4. Park report card

He noted that he had begun conversations with Bruce Brown, Steve Smith and Amy Wilson of Farnsworth Group. He noted that they have discussed a two phase approach. Phase I would prepare the Needs Assessment Report of Capital Assets. He reviewed an email (attached) from Bruce Brown that explained what the Phase Breakdown might look like.

c. Parks and Recreation Master Planning

The ED stated that Phase II would be the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and consist of what was outlined in Brown Brown’s email. He noted that development of the plan would be based on the focus groups, community Needs Assessment Survey, and the Capital Assets Assessment. He noted that the Land & Water Reserves have a Management Goals/Objectives and Site Management Schedule in place. He also noted that a Strategic Plan is also an option and could be combined with a Master Plan.

4. Adjourn.

Move to adjourn the meeting.

Motion: Gary Gillis 2nd: Paula Helm

Time: 11:45 pm.

APPENDIX B

Pekin Park District

Community-Wide

Recreation Interests Study

August 2017

Completed for

The Pekin Park District



Office of Recreation & Park Resources
University of Illinois

1206 S. Fourth Street, Champaign, IL 61820



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Pekin Park District contacted the Office of Recreation & Park Resources to assist with an assessment of community needs and recreation planning within the Pekin community. Focus group interviews with key stakeholders within the Pekin community were conducted to assist in the development of a community-wide recreation interest questionnaire. Researchers within the Office of Recreation & Park Resources worked alongside the staff and board of the Pekin Park District to develop a questionnaire that met the needs of all parties. Once developed, the questionnaire was mailed to 3,000 households within the Pekin Park District. The intent of the questionnaire was to gather residents' opinions, attitudes, and preferences regarding Pekin's park areas, programs, and facilities.

A mailing of approximately 3,000 questionnaires was sent to residents during the months of May & June (2017). A total of 326 usable (completed) questionnaires were returned for a response rate of 10.9% producing a precision of at least +/- 5%. The questionnaires were analyzed for the development of the report between June 2, 2017 and July 20, 2017.

Objectives for the study were established during the initial stages of the project by the Pekin Park District in cooperation with the Office of Recreation & Park Resources. Questions in the survey were developed to meet the following objectives:

- The residents' satisfaction with current parks, programs, and facilities.
- The residents' current patterns of participation with existing parks, programs, and facilities.
- The residents' attitudes and preferences with the District's marketing and publicity methods.
- Obtain feedback from residents on the future recreation needs (i.e., expansion or development of new parks, programs, and/or facilities) within the Pekin Park District.
- Obtain feedback on the residents' willingness to support future expansion/development of recreation parks or facilities.
- Obtain demographic characteristics of the Pekin Park District's residents.

The following is a brief overview of the results of the data analysis regarding the objectives.

RESIDENTS' CURRENT PATTERNS OF PARTICIPATION

Key findings from the study include:

- During the past year, 45.2% of the households had participated in at least one Pekin Park District recreation program.
- 48.0% of the households had visited a Pekin Park District indoor recreation facility within the last 12 months.
- 78.6% of the households had visited a Park District park area within the last 12 months.

- Neighboring park districts were the most widely utilized non-Pekin Park District service provider with 55.3% of respondents indicating they had used/visited neighboring park districts in the past year.

Consultant Notes

The recreation program participation rate for the Pekin Park District is slightly below other park and recreation agencies throughout the state. Attendance at Pekin Park District indoor facilities appears to be consistent with other community recreation providers within the state of Illinois. Visitor rates for the Pekin Park District park areas appear to be slightly higher than other agencies in the state.

RESIDENTS' PREFERENCES WITH THE PEKIN PARK DISTRICT'S MARKETING/PUBLICITY

Key findings from the study include:

- The Pekin Park District "Play Guide" (55.8%) is the most widely utilized method to learn about recreation programs and services.
- Friends and neighbors (53.7%) were also utilized by households to learn about the District's recreation programs and services.

Consultant Notes

The Play Guide is the most preferred marketing tool for the residents of Pekin. Thus, it appears the Pekin Park District should ensure any new programming or recreation services are marketed through the Play Guide. "Word of mouth" advertising from "Friends & Neighbors" is also widely utilized method for informing the community about the District's recreational opportunities. It is also worth noting that Pekin's "word of mouth" advertising from "Friends and Neighbors" (53.7%) is significantly higher than other public park and recreation agencies in Illinois who have been found to be at/below 20%.

RESIDENTS' SATISFACTION WITH EXISTING PARKS, PROGRAMS, FACILITIES MAINTENANCE, & STAFF

Key findings from the study include:

- Of those respondents who are aware or utilize the District's services, an overwhelming majority of them are satisfied with the Pekin Park District's recreation programs (82.0%), facilities (92.8%), park maintenance (92.8%), and staff & commissioners (95.0%).
- 90.0% of residents are satisfied with the days/times existing programs are offered and the convenience of registering for programs (90.1%).

- With the exception of the Pekin Park District restrooms (69.0% satisfaction rating), a large majority of households are satisfied or very satisfied (+80%) with the facilities managed by the Pekin Park District. Facilities receiving the highest satisfaction levels (+95%) include the Lick Creek Golf Course (98.0%), Veterans Memorial Arena – Dance Room (97.9%), Baseball/Softball Fields (97.3%), Football Fields (97.0%), Soccer Fields (96.9%), Miller Senior Center (96.4%), Soldwedel Program Center (95.4%), and Parkview Golf Course (95.0%).
- Similar to the District’s recreation facilities, a large majority of households are satisfied or very satisfied (+90%) with the maintenance of the District’s park areas. Only two areas received satisfaction ratings below 80%: Restrooms (71.1%) and Parking Lots & Roads (72.1%).
- An overwhelming majority of households are satisfied with the park board and staff.
- When asked about the District’s effectiveness on a variety of items (involvement of community in planning efforts, partnering w/other agencies, providing a diversity of programming, etc.), a large number of residents (+30%) were unsure or “Didn’t Know”.
- Over 80% of residents feel the Pekin Park District is important to the community and their household.

Consultant Notes

While the data found a significant number of respondents who “Don’t Use” some of the District’s programs, facilities, etc., those that had used these services were generally satisfied or very satisfied with their experiences. While satisfaction levels were high among current users/visitors, a few areas with slightly lower satisfaction levels were in the (deferred) maintenance areas (restrooms, roads, parking lots, etc.).

In addition, the data found a significant number of respondents who “Didn’t Know” how to evaluate the District’s effectiveness on a variety of items. However, those residents that did provide an evaluation perceived the District to be effective or very effective in these areas. Overall, the data tends to suggest the District might benefit from additional efforts to inform the community of their services and engage them in the District’s planning activities. Nearly 70% of residents feel the Pekin Park District services are a good value for the program fees/charges and the taxes they pay. Interestingly, the data suggests the residents are not particularly supportive of selling facility naming rights to businesses/organizations as an alternative revenue source.

FUTURE RECREATION INTERESTS WITHIN THE PEKIN COMMUNITY

Key findings from the study include:

- Over 30% of residents ranked walking/biking trails (38%), indoor walking track (37%), and restrooms (30%) as their household's 1st, 2nd, 3rd, or 4th most desired facility development/renovation.
- Wildlife/Natural areas and various park amenities (shelters, small neighborhood parks, playground equipment, etc.) also received modest support (~20%) from respondents as their household's 1st, 2nd, 3rd, or 4th most desired facility development/renovation.
- 22% of the respondents identified adult fitness/wellness programs as their first, second, third, or fourth choice for an expanded/developed program for the Pekin Park District. Another 22% of respondents indicated that no additional programming was needed at this time, suggesting the District continue focusing on successfully managing their existing programs.
- 32.5% of respondents indicated a willingness to support a tax increase for the development of additional walking/biking trails.

Consultant Notes

Consistent with opinions expressed by other community park and recreation agencies in Illinois, the expansion/development of walking/biking trails and the development of indoor fitness and exercise facilities were identified as prioritized needs for Pekin residents. Other project areas receiving support centered on maintaining the amenities within the Mineral Springs Park area. This data suggests the District continue efforts to take care of their current parks and amenities. It is also worth noting that 30.9% of respondents were unwilling to support a tax increase for any projects.

RECOMMENDATIONS & OBSERVATIONS

- **Take care of what we have.** Residents appear to be satisfied with the Pekin Park District's services. In addition, the Park District serves as a strategic asset for the City of Pekin through the provision of desired amenities and services that increase the quality of life for residents. Respondents highlighted the need to "take care of what we have." We believe this to include both the maintenance and care of newly developed amenities and facilities, as well as evaluating aging facilities and parklands.
- **Prioritization of deferred maintenance projects.** We would suggest the detailed evaluation of facilities and parklands in the most need of repair, some of which were highlighted in the survey response. After gathering information from our personal observations, interviews, focus groups, meetings with staff and commissioners and the survey response, we would judge that the potential cost for investment in deferred

maintenance to be high. It will be important for the Pekin Park District to highlight and itemize their needs and develop an effective plan to slowly repair the areas of greatest need by priority.

- **Linking need interests, needs and renovation/restoration plans.** In light of the deferred maintenance needs, it is also important to consider the interests and needs of the community. The response mirrors the response of other communities: Passive recreation opportunities (i.e. biking/walking trails, park amenities) may be of the highest interest for residents. When prioritizing investments in current and future infrastructures and programming, it will be important to consider matching the financial commitment and program of work to the needs and desires of residents.
- **Review marketing efforts.** In our last ten years of surveys, the Pekin Park District is the first agency to see “Word of mouth” as being one of the top two ways that a resident hears about the Park District’s offerings (>50%). Normally, we see this response near 10%-20%. Despite a number of your respondent’s checking the “don’t know or don’t use” box often, we still believe people understand and know your work if this many people hear about your services from a friend. According to other survey results, a program guide typically reaches 75% to 85% of residents. PPD’s lower than average response in this category, coupled with a higher than average “word of mouth” response may mean this is an opportunity to explore new marketing methods. Over 46% of participants preferred the current Play Guide format and delivery. However, when compared with other park district’s response to similar questions it may be worth investigating other park district’s methods for marketing.
- **Directing Resources.** Mineral Springs Park appears to be a highly valued resource in Pekin and was one of the top amenities where residents would invest their tax dollars. Similar to other survey responses, trails and pathways was noted as the number one way to invest. On the programming side of things, adult fitness and wellness and nature/environmental programming were the top two areas of interest. Over 30% of residents did note that they were unwilling to support any tax increases at this time, which continues to feed into the narrative of taking care of current resources to build toward the future.

APPENDIX C

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Strengths

- Dedicated Board and employees
- IRVSRA
- Community support
- Variety of parks and facilities
- Variety of recreation programs
- Iconic centerpiece - Mineral Springs Park
- Dedicated supervision/manager driven
- Park safety
- Golf courses – great value

Weaknesses

- Infrastructure
- Technology
- Lack of long range plan
- Programs are outdated – reactive
- Recording of history/culture to pass on to new employees/Board
- Recycling
- Communication
- Marketing
- Separate businesses within a whole/need to come together
- Awareness of Park Foundation

Opportunities

- Marketing
- Update of amenities
- New revenue source (alcohol)
- Professional growth/new employees w/young progressive thoughts
- Capital campaign for Foundation growth
- Partnerships

Threats

- Increase poverty rate in Pekin
- Aging population
- Community apathy
- Less state tax money
- Competition-business/programs/services