

# **BARTLETT PARK DISTRICT BOARD MEETING MINUTES TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2025**

## **Call to Order**

President Eckelberry called the Board Meeting to order at **7:00 pm**.

## **Roll Call**

President Eckelberry called for the roll. Commissioners answering present were: Stephen M. Eckelberry, Lori A. Palmer, Diana Gunsteen, Susan M. Stocks, Dale Ann Kasuba, Jody Fagan and Nathan Botkin.

Staff members present were Executive Director Kevin Romejko, Superintendent of Recreation Kimberly Dasbach, Superintendent of Parks and Planning Kelly O'Brien, Superintendent of Business Services Eric Leninger, Superintendent of Special Facilities Katie Mix, Superintendent of Villa Olivia Bobby Pierobon and Executive Assistant Maureen Carter.

Guests: Nikki Ginger and Dannie Wilson with BerryDunn, Facility Maintenance and Capital Projects Manager, Al Cannestra, and Recreation Manager, Cydnie Babicz

## **Pledge of Allegiance**

President Eckelberry led the Pledge of Allegiance.

## **Consent Agenda**

Mr. Eckelberry presented and asked for a motion to approve of the consent agenda including approval of meeting minutes from the Special Board Meeting on October 28, 2025, and Regular Board Meeting on October 28, 2025. Ms. Gunsteen motioned to approve, seconded by Ms. Stocks. Mr. Eckelberry asked for a roll call vote.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

AYES: Eckelberry, Palmer, Gunsteen, Stocks, Kasuba, Fagan, Botkin

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: None

**Motion Passed**

## **Public Comments**

None

## **Unfinished or Continuing Business**

**No Report**

## **New Business**

### **Presentation of Strategic Plan**

Mr. Romejko reminded the Board, staff have been working with Nikki Ginger and Dannie Wilson, of BerryDunn, on a new strategic plan for the District. Staff are excited to present the Strategic Plan which came from a culmination of effort from leadership team, strategic planning team, and employee input. Mr. Romejko explained the strategic planning team was made up of representatives from each department as well as the leadership team. Mr. Cannestra and Ms. Babicz, present tonight, were part of the strategic planning team, as well as Ms. Carter. Mr. Romejko thanked Ms. Ginger and Ms. Wilson for their guidance through this process and the presentation to the Board.

Ms. Ginger stated over the past 6 to 8 months her and Ms. Wilson have been working with staff as well as conducting staff and community input sessions. Ms. Wilson explained the District is currently working on two plans, the Comprehensive Master Plan and Strategic Plan. The Comprehensive Master Plan focuses on external facing, while the Strategic Plan is focused on internal facing. Ms. Wilson reviewed the process of creating the strategic plan, including review and update of Mission, Vision, and Values, establishing strategic themes and objectives, and formulating strategic initiatives. Ms. Ginger explained the balanced scored card tool that was used to guide the process of creating Themes, Objectives, and Initiatives. The final stage of the balanced score card is tactics, which are not included in the Strategic Plan. There are four themes focused on customer, financial, internal business support, and employee learning and growth. Ms. Ginger explained how these themes relate to each other and establish areas for internal growth and improvement. The strategic planning team used feedback and focus group input from staff and community members to come up with three objectives related to each theme and then two to three more specific initiatives for each objective. Ms. Ginger commended staff's work on these objectives and initiatives as they can be long and confusing processes, which staff understood quickly. Ms. Ginger explained her and Ms. Wilson's role in this process is to guide staff and provide input, while allowing staff to work together to come up with areas of focus for strategic goals. Once the initiatives were established, leadership team prioritized all the initiatives as short-term, mid-term, and long-term goals. Ms. Ginger explained once the Strategic Plan is approved, staff will use the plan to come up with tactics for achieving these goals. Mr. Romejko explained that staff will create tactics for achieving each initiative, that will be presented to the Board annually similar to annual Goals & Objectives. Mr. Romejko thanked Ms. Ginger and Ms. Wilson for their support in this process and presentation to the Board. Each Commissioner was provided with a hard copy of the Strategic Plan for review. Mr. Eckelberry shared his experience with many Strategic Planning processes and stated he was very impressed with the plan and the work that went into it. Ms. Palmer agreed, stating she could tell a lot of work went into this. Commissioners thanked Ms. Ginger and Ms. Wilson and posed for pictures with the Leadership and Strategic Planning Team.

#### **Approval of Resolution 25-04 Estimate of Taxes to be Levied**

Mr. Leninger presented the Estimate of Taxes to be Levied for 2025. The estimate is less than 105% of last year's tax levy so the District is not required to have a public hearing for the levy this year. Ms. Gunsteen asked about the two funds that are decreasing for next year, the Audit Fund and the IMRF Fund. Mr. Leninger explained there have been savings in the Audit Fund, which is why less funds are being levied. The IMRF employer contribution rate has decreased every year for the last 7 years and this is why less funds are being levied. Ms. Palmer motioned to approve of Resolution 25-04 Estimate of Taxes to be Levied, seconded by Ms. Gunsteen. Mr. Eckelberry asked for a roll call vote.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

AYES: Eckelberry, Palmer, Gunsteen, Stocks, Kasuba, Fagan, Botkin

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: None

**Motion Passed**

#### **Approval of IAPD Credentials Certificate**

Mr. Eckelberry spoke briefly about the Credentials Certificate that lists the District's representative at the IAPD Annual Meeting during the IAPD/IPRA Annual Conference in January. Ms. Palmer will represent the District with Mr. Eckelberry and Ms. Gunsteen as alternates. Ms. Kasuba motioned to approve, seconded by Ms. Stocks. **Motion carried.**

## **Department Updates**

### **Business Services**

Mr. Leninger shared the current focus of the Business Service Department is the new budget season and the upcoming tax levy. The tax levy will be presented for approval in December.

### **Parks & Planning**

Ms. O'Brien stated Facility Maintenance and Capital Projects Manager, Al Cannestra, is joining the Board meeting to give a presentation on the new rooftop unit (RTU) at Bartlett Community Center. Mr. Cannestra thanked the Board for allowing him to present the software system that controls the new RTU and the future benefits and uses of this system. Mr. Cannestra also thanked the Board and leadership for their commitment to this much needed upgrade. Mr. Cannestra explained how the system works and how staff can utilize it to monitor the HVAC system at Bartlett Community Center as well as diagnose any issues that arise. The software offers tons of information on how the HVAC system operates, temperature controls and schedules, and detailed graphics and layouts of the building. Mr. Eckelberry asked about how the system can be accessed by staff. Mr. Cannestra explained that the system has safeguards and currently can only be accessed onsite, but staff can remote in if needed. Mr. Cannestra shared he views this system as a tool and stresses with his team the importance of checking the system onsite, but it does reduce the need for staff to access the roof to see what is going on with the system. Ms. Fagan asked how the temperatures in the Community Center are decided. Ms. O'Brien stated there is a policy for standard temperatures for buildings. Mr. Cannestra discussed how the new system is functioning in the **LIFECENTER**, Mr. Eckelberry took advantage of the opportunity to mention the new assless Big Ass Fans and Mr. Cannestra confirmed they are a great addition that are helping to keep the fitness center much cooler. Mr. Cannestra explained as additional RTUs are upgraded at BCC, they can be added to this control system as well as other equipment such as the dehumidifier in Splash Central and generator. Commissioners thanked Mr. Cannestra for walking them through the system and showcasing the value of this investment. Mr. Romejko commended Mr. Cannestra on his management of this project and his efforts to make it a smooth process for customers and staff.

### **Recreation**

Mr. Romejko joked Recreation Manager, Cydnie Babicz, who oversees youth and adult theater programs, would be performing a song for the Board. Mr. Eckelberry motioned to approve of the proposed performance, seconded by Mr. Botkin. Ms. Babicz was relieved the motion failed. Mr. Romejko stated Ms. Babicz was a part of the Strategic Planning Team and attended the Board Meeting for the Strategic Plan presentation. Ms. Dasbach discussed upcoming events and programs offered by the Recreation Department including the Family Puzzle Palooza. The custom puzzle for this event features pictures of the District's mascot, Navi Gator. Holiday events coming up include Santa Calling, where children can receive a call from Santa himself and submit their letters to Santa in the special mailbox in the Community Center lobby, and the Bartlett Nature Center Wishmas Tree, which contains gift tags for items that can be donated to support animal care at Bartlett Nature Center. Ms. Dasbach made it a point to share upcoming Archery Night Outs, which have been increasing in popularity as well as other Archery classes. This year, Out & About Travel Camp is taking advantage of school days off to explore other District nature centers including The Grove, Hickory Knolls, and Knoch Knolls. Ms. Dasbach also provided updates on upcoming girls & boys basketball leagues.

### **Special Facilities**

Ms. Mix informed the Board, Apple Orchard Golf Course is still open due to continuing favorable weather. Typically, the course is closed at the end of October, but over 300 rounds have been played so far in November. The course will be open this weekend and close for the season on Sunday.

**Villa Olivia**

Mr. Pierobon shared there are currently 476 reservations for Thanksgiving Brunch. The back 9 holes have been closed and preparations for winter sports are underway. Mr. Pierobon is hoping for colder weather so that staff can start to make snow.

**Executive Director Updates**

Mr. Romejko provided an update on the Sunrise Park OSLAD Grant project. The Pump Track has been completed, and staff are working on appropriate signage and rules for the Pump Track. The basketball court and playground are now open and all construction fencing has been removed. Disc Golf tee box signage is still being completed as well as the outcrop fishing areas on the pond. Mr. Romejko stated with a few items to still be completed, current plans are to hold off a on a ribbon cutting ceremony until the spring.

Mr. Romejko informed the Board of an ongoing issue with DCFS and licensing for the District's Preschool program. Mr. Romejko provided historical information on when the District's Preschool program became DCFS licensed in 2012 as well as updated legislation on what facilities are required to be licensed. In 2012 DCFS insisted the District was required to be licensed by DCFS. The District, with support from District attorney and IAPD, informed DCFS the Preschool program offered by Bartlett Park District did not meet the daycare standards that require licensing and as a Park District program, it was exempt from licensing requirements. DCFS continued to insist the District was required to be licensed and threatened to shut down the Preschool program. To avoid the program being shut down and the significant legal costs associated with defending the District's exemption from licensing requirements, the District agreed to become DCFS licensed. Since then, the District has renewed the license every three years as required by DCFS. In 2023, new legislation was passed that better clarified the exemption for Park District programs. In March 2024, Superintendent of Recreation, Ms. Dasbach, reached out to DCFS to let them know the District would not be renewing their DCFS license, which did not expire until December of 2025, because it was not a requirement for our Preschool program. DCFS did not respond to Ms. Dasbach or further attempts made to discuss the expiration of our license. Recently, when the District did not submit required renewal paperwork, DCFS reached out to staff insisting the District is required to renew our license. DCFS has threatened to launch an investigation and report the District to the Illinois Attorney General when the license expires. Mr. Romejko explained that the District's Preschool program follows all DCFS standards and has had zero violations since becoming licensed in 2012, but there are strict requirements for staff education and certifications that limit the District's ability to hire Preschool teachers. Therefore, it doesn't benefit the District to be DCFS licensed and Mr. Romejko and District Attorney Adams are committed to establishing the District's exemption from licensing. Mr. Romejko and District Attorney Adams have been trying to work with DCFS to resolve this, but with our license set to expire and the threats from DCFS, District Attorney Adams advised submitting the renewal paperwork with a letter explaining the District does not wish to renew our license. Mr. Romejko will continue to work with the District's attorney to establish the District's exemption from continued licensing and will update the Board on further developments. Commissioners discussed recent discussion of DCFS licensing at the IAPD legal symposium and misinformation that is being provided by DCFS to Park Districts regarding requirements.

Mr. Romejko discussed a recent meeting with U-46 School District staff regarding the proposed fence at Centennial School playground. Mr. Romejko and Ms. O'Brien met with U46 staff at the playground and discussed where they would like the fence installed and Parks staff concerns regarding access for mowing and trimming. The proposed fence would be a 4-foot chain link fence along the east and north side of the playground. While discussing at the playground, U-46 staff changed plans to place the fence only on the east side of the playground. Commissioners discussed the idea of a split rail fence instead of the proposed chain link fence, to not close the playground off to the neighborhood. Further discussion of the history of the playground, school agreement, and the initial goal of keeping the playground accessible as a neighborhood

playground ensued. Commissioners discussed requesting the school to perform trimming around the fence to avoid access issues or liability for damage to the fence. Further discussion ensued regarding the school's reasoning for adding the fence. Mr. Romejko agreed to discuss fencing options and trimming with U-46 staff and report back to the Board.

**Commissioner Comments**

None

**Adjournment**

There being no further business, Ms. Stocks moved to adjourn the Board Meeting, seconded by Ms. Palmer. **Motion carried at 8:28 pm.**

Minutes Approved by the Board on November 25, 2025.

By:   
Kevin Romejko, Board Secretary