



GENOA TOWNSHIP PARK DISTRICT

EFFICIENCY REPORT FOR THE GENOA TOWNSHIP PARK DISTRICT

APPROVED BY THE PARK DISTRICT'S
COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY
ON DECEMBER 4TH, 2023

I. Purpose

The Genoa Township Park District (“Park District”) formed its Committee on Local Government Efficiency on March 18th, 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:

Cori Ritchie, Board President

Kevin Seisser, Board Vice-President

James Overlin, Board Secretary

Judy Thompson, Board Treasurer

Mike Franckowiak, Board Commissioner

Antonio Amaya, Board Commissioner

Alissa Pinne, Board Commissioner

Todd Walker, Resident Member

George Meckel, Resident Member

Paul Bafia, Park District Executive Director

III. Committee Meetings

The Committee met as follows:

Meeting Date	Meeting Time and Place
___ March 18 th , 2023 _____	5:30 PM, 333 E. 1 st St _____
___ September 18 th , 2023 _____	_5:30 PM, 333 E. 1 st St. _____
___ December 4 th , 2023 _____	_5:30 PM, 333 E. 1 st St. _____

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 1943. 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 seven 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 4% of the local tax bill.

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

- Park Board Manual
- Personnel Manual
- Ordinance Regulating the Use of Parks
- Comprehensive Master Plan
- Annual Reports
- Safety Policy Manual

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, the local school districts, City of Genoa, Genoa Chamber of Commerce and other units of local government within or near the community, the State, non-profit organizations, and for-profit corporations. Below is a comprehensive list of the current partnerships, agreements, and other relationships that assist the Park District's mission of delivering the best possible services at the least possible cost to our community.

1. Membership in SRA

The Park District is part of the Kishwaukee Special Recreation Association ("SRA"). Special recreation associations are a form of intergovernmental cooperation among units of local government that are authorized under the Illinois Constitution, the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act, the Park District Code, and the Municipal Code.

Their formation is rooted in a fundamental belief and recognition that “Recreation is for Everyone.” They are shining examples of local government efficiency.

By partnering together, local communities are able to effectively and efficiently deliver more successful program opportunities to community members who have special needs. Furthermore, by participating in the SRA, the Park District networks with 4 other local governments to provide many more program opportunities for our community members who have special needs and offers a choice between participating in the SRA’s programs or in programs that are provided by the Park District.

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

- *Genoa Park District Fitness Center*
- *Chamberlain Park and Swimming Pool*

The SRA also provides the support needed for participants with special needs who choose to register for the Park District programs or inclusive programming. The SRA collects information on the registered participant and determines what supports are needed for that participant to be successful in this inclusive setting or the Park District program. This could include additional training of the supervisory staff, additional support staff, the use of adaptive equipment, behavior management, and/or other measures that will assist in the successful participation of this individual in the Park District program. Although success may not look the same for everyone, the SRA works with the Park District’s staff to ensure the best possible results for all the participants in the program. The Park District’s cost of providing these services would be much greater without its participation and partnership in the SRA.

In 2023, the SRA successfully served 15 residents in their various programs. The SRA also supported 4 participants in inclusive programs that were provided by the Park District.

- The Park District is very proud of the ongoing collaboration with the SRA. By working cooperatively with other local governments, not only are we better able to collectively serve all citizens within our communities, including persons with disabilities.

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

- Joint programming with Dundee Township Park District, Marengo Park District, Hampshire Park District and Huntley Park District

- Events with the Genoa Chamber of Commerce,
- Member of PDRMA
- Genoa Park District Foundation

3. Intergovernmental agreements with other units of local government

- City of Genoa Land/Cash Funds
- City of Genoa/Fitness Center Agreement
- D424 Intergovernmental Agreement for Use of Gyms/Afterschool Space

4. Intergovernmental agreements with the State of Illinois

- Grant funding such as OSLAD (Open Space Land Acquisition and Development)

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

- Genoa-Kingston Baseball Use Agreement
- Genoa-Kingston Softball Use Agreement
- AYSO Soccer Use Agreement
- Genoa Broncos Football Use Agreement
- Genoa Little Cogs Football Use Agreement
- Kingston Khaos Travel Baseball Use Agreement

6. Partnerships or other interrelationships with non-profits

- Genoa-Kingston Girl Scouts
- Genoa-Kingston Fire Department/Genoa Days Festival
- Genoa Lions Club
- DeKalb County Basics Toddler Garden
- DeKalb County Community Gardens
- Genoa Veterans Home

7. Partnerships with for profit organizations

- State Farm Insurance
- Resource Bank
- Heartland Bank
- Awe Insurance Group
- *Country Companies*
- Midwest Physical Therapy
- Tower Hill Stables- Horseback Riding

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

- We offer discounted Non-Resident rates for summer seasonal pool passes for residents of Park Districts for Kingston, Hampshire, Sycamore and DeKalb since they advertise our pool in their websites and social media and since they do not have, closed or are renovating their outdoor pools.

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. In 2023, 108 individuals volunteered 2,030 hours of service to the Park District.

Youth employment. The Park District is the largest employer of youth in the community. Last year, the Park District employed 80 youth. Not only is this an efficient way to deliver services, but youth employment serves as a valuable training tool for the future workforce.

Joint purchasing (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.

Genoa Park District Foundation. In 2023-24, the Foundation raised \$8000 in private donations, which help alleviate the burden on taxpayers. The Foundation also supported the Park District by helping construct and fund a Memorial Brick Walkway and raise funds for trees.

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.

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	County
• Annual budget and appropriation ordinance	Administrative Office
• Agendas and minutes	Website
• Comptroller’s annual finance report (AFR)	Website
• Annual audit	Website
• Statement of Receipts and Disbursements	Website
• Conduct Ordinances	Website
• Comprehensive Plan	Administration Office
• Capital improvement plan	Administration Office

- ADA transition plan

Administration Office

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

- The Board of Commissioners meets two times 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. The Park District's annual levy is also subject to the limitations of the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law.

VII. District Awards and Recognition

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

- DCFS Licensed Day Care and Preschool
- Staff credentials:
 - Certified Pool Operators License
 - Certified Park and Recreation Professional
 - Certified Food Handling Certificate
 - Bassett Certified
- Grant recipient of the following:
 - DeKalb County Community Foundation
 - IPRA Healthy Play Initiative Grants
 - State of Illinois OSLAD Grants
 - TC Energy Grant
 - IL Clean Energy Grant
 - DeKalb County Youth Engaged in Philanthropy (YEP) Grants

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/Parks

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

- Facilities/Parks
 - Chamberlain Park: 36 acres with a pavilions, outdoor swimming pool, skatepark, 2 pickleball courts, 2 basketball courts, cement bags set, bocce ball, 2 playgrounds, 4 baseball/softball fields, sand volleyball court, 5 soccer fields, fitness stations, walking path, gaga ball pit, administration center and recreation center.
 - Kiernan Park: 43 acres with a large pavilion, baseball field, 3 soccer fields, playground and nature trail path.
 - Lions Corner Park: 8 acres with 2 playgrounds, pavilion, nature trail path and open recreation space
 - Derby Line Park: 2-acre neighborhood park with playground and open recreation space.
 - Durham Park: Half acre park with District's marquee sign and pavilion.
 - Genoa Woods: 3 acre wooded natural area.
 - Oak Creek Open Space: 5-acre undeveloped open space
 - Riverbend Development Parks: 4 total parks with 8 acres with playgrounds located in the Riverbend Development,
 - Genoa Park District Fitness Center: 14,000 sq ft Fitness Center located on 2nd floor of Genoa City Hall/Police Department.
 - Chamberlain Park Outdoor Swimming Pool

2. Programs

The Park District offered the following programs last year.

- After School/Extended Care

- Summer Day Camp
- Pre-School
- Special Events
 - Halloween Trunk or Treat
 - Market in the Park
 - Easter Egg Hunt & Bunny Visits
 - Pool Member VIP Appreciation Event
 - Volunteer Appreciation Party
 - Parent-Child Sweetheart Dance
 - Movies in the Park
 - Concert in the Park
 - Little Chefs Cooking Class
 - Meltdown Program
 - Kids Frozen Tea Party
 - Nerf Warz
 - Cubs Trips
 - Teen Flashlight Egg Hunt
 - Easter Basket Delivery
 - Christmas Stocking Delivery
 - Mom and Me Luncheon
- Contractual Classes
 - Cooking Classes
 - Horseback Lessons
 - Youth and Adult Karate
 - Performing Arts Dance

- Youth Art Classes
- Athletics:
 - Basketball
 - Tball
 - Soccer -
 - Flag Football
 - Adult Softball
 - Youth Volleyball
 - Pickleball Lessons/Leagues
 - Archery
 - Swim Team
 - Numerous Fitness Classes

3. Additional Services

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

- Community Room use for special events, classes and various rentals.
- Canoe/Kayak usage for Chamber of Commerce Events

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. Before and after school and summer programs offer safe, convenient, and affordable childcare options for working families during critical times when school is not in session. These opportunities also help reduce juvenile crime. The Park District's open space and trees help improve air and water quality and mitigate flooding.

IX. Recommendations for Increased Accountability and Efficiency

1. Inefficiency of Other Governments

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

- OSLAD Grant reimbursement delay in 2022 of \$110,000 for 11 months. As a cash-flow agency this is extremely difficult to fund this delay.
- GATA reporting is often marked as incomplete despite being completed.
- *State of Illinois Continues to threaten the sweep OSLAD Funds which takes time and effort and grassroot efforts to stop the sweeps.*

2. 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. Last year, the park district spent staff time and legal fees to fulfill FOIA requests. Often the individuals/businesses submitting the FOIA requests are from outside of the park district boundaries, and they appear to be serving a specific agenda, rather than assuring better local government.

- SmartProcure quarterly request

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

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

b) Criminal Background Checks. All park districts are statutorily required to conduct criminal background checks on all employees pursuant to Section 8-23 of the Park District Code. The background checks must be done through the Illinois State Police (ISP). Last year, the park district spent \$4000.00₁ for criminal background checks. The Park District does not recommend eliminating this mandate because it is necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of children and other park district patrons. However, the State should explore ways in which it could improve the current system and make it less costly for park districts to comply with the law.

The mandate also raises the fundamental question as to why one layer of government is forced to charge its taxpayers to comply with a State mandate when the State made the determination to impose the mandate. Put another way, if the State has determined that criminal background checks are necessary for public safety, the State should assist with compliance.

The Park District recommends studying whether there can be a more efficient background check process implemented through the ISP to reduce the time and expense it takes for background checks. Another suggestion is for ISP to waive the fee for checks on minors or waive all fees for name checks. If there is a “hit” from a name check, the fee could be charged for the 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 \$100,000, will result in more local bids and decrease the overall cost for these smaller public works projects.

d) Newspaper Publication. The newspaper is no longer the most effective way to provide notice. Websites are cheaper and reach more people. Permitting the park district to post the information on its website in lieu of newspaper publications would reduce costs.

e) Minimum Wage. The Park District is required to comply with the increasing minimum wage requirements. The Park District would seek a carve-out for minimum wage requirements for part-time and seasonal employees.

3. Opportunities for Increased Transparency

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

- Programs and events are posted on Facebook and sent out via Constant Contact to increase transparency.

4. Opportunities for Other Intergovernmental Agreements

- The Park District benefits from IGA Agreements with the City of Genoa and the Genoa-Kingston School District

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

- Community Information Sign
- Solar Power for buildings and swimming pool.
- Have competitive bidding for electric and gas providers.
- Verify have most efficient lighting systems.

X. OTHER

Park Districts provide gathering spaces that connect a community while providing physical and mental health benefits through encouraging activity and social engagement. Park Districts are specialized agencies that provide services, including during times of crisis, to support the public and the economy. Park and Recreation professionals impact people their entire lives through providing opportunities for learning and activity through continually adapting to popular recreational trends to keep the community excited about recreation. Park Districts are an imperative part of a local community.

Dated: _____

Signed: _____

Date of Committee Approval: December 4th, 2023