

## Park District of Oak Park

1. What are *ongoing initiatives* that your organization is pursuing to improve efficiency of service delivery? Please consider these along each of the following dimensions:
  - a. Operating expenses
  - b. Retiree pensions and benefits
  - c. Capital expenses
  - d. Expenses related to financing and debt

### A. Operating Expenses –

- a. Park District expanded after school programs from one to seven to meet the needs of the community for quality after school activities for their elementary school students. Additionally, the Park District has grown its program and pass sales by \$3.6M in new revenue annually since 2012, allowing these new revenues to fully cover the bond repayments of approximately \$2.1M annually. The additional revenues minus direct expenses are approximately \$500k-\$800k annually and those dollars are transferred to our Capital Improvement Plan to assist in projects addressing deferred maintenance.
- b. The District leverages earned revenue (programs and passes) to make capital investments that in the long run make reductions in operating expenditures. Current examples include the installation of solar panels at RCRC, Longfellow, and Austin Gardens; cistern installation at Austin Gardens, Longfellow Park, Conservatory and Field Parks (saving 1,000,000 gallons of water annually equaling \$66,000), replacement of most lights throughout the District with energy efficient LED lights through grant funds.
- c. The District has instituted numerous cost saving measures in day-to-day activities as well, including banking and merchant processing fees, technology infrastructure and connectivity costs, and electronic document retention instead of on paper.
- d. Staff have been using proactive turf management practices to promote healthy grass growth. This approach has lowered our operating budget by \$50,000 annually through savings on turf replacement.
- e. Parks staff has utilized vehicle GPS units to cut down vehicle idling and extra driving trips. Through this process, we have changed operations to minimize driving by assigning staff to specific parks based on geographic location.
- f. Park District uses state and national joint purchasing programs for a variety of purchases from blinds, office supplies, and vehicles.
- g. Park District purchased a used bus from WSSRA as our programs expanded rather than a new vehicle for a saving.
- h. PDOP employee base is lean with approximately 90% of our staff at a part-time status, many of which are seasonal.
- i. Creating a standard inventory at our maintenance facility has cut down on trips to the stores, resulting in savings on item cost, staff time, and fuel.
- j. The Park District no longer contract out our landscaping service and have improved the overall service for a slightly lower cost.

- k. Park District staff uses current expertise to manage all D97 athletic fields and shares one full-time staff member to accomplish this.
- l. PDOP merged the position of Project Manager with the Superintendent of Buildings & Grounds position.
- m. PDOP and VOP share resources for Fleet and Park District equipment such as bucket truck, front-end loader, chipper, and more.
- n. PDOP is now growing a majority of our plants at the Conservatory for our parks. The District has shifted from annuals to more natives and perennials reducing water, staff and material costs.
- o. PDOP has our own trash truck to remove trash from our properties. This is a savings from having this contracted out. PDOP also removed one-third of the trash receptacles in the parks as part of a carry-in-carry-out program which has reduced -man-power and dumping fees.
- p. The District has launched an interactive idea generating tool (Launch Pad) for all Park District staff to make suggestions on new programs, cost-saving measures, and improving efficiencies. Many initiatives have originated from this tool including purchasing a gas tank for the back of our landscaping truck to use for refueling our mowers instead of constantly returning to Fleet for fueling. This saved man-hours and expense of mileage and expected wages.
- q. Park District launched zero-waste events at Scoville Park for the concerts in the parks with the assistance of Greening Advisory Committee members. This serves as an education to our residents, but also reduced landfill costs to the District by diverting to recycling and composting.

**B. Retiree pensions and benefits**

- a. Park District staff created a real-time performance system that includes tracking staff hours to ensure we staff within set limits for IMRF and ACA to keep PDOP expenses from increasing more than budgeted. This allows the District to pay close attention to the number of positions that are eligible for pension benefits through IMRF. Staff must define the need for the position to be classified as IMRF prior to having the employee work the allocated hours.
- b. The District has also been diligent about funding our actuarial required contribution from IMRF as well as making some additional payments since 2008 to put the District in a position to be at a 100.4% funded.

**C. Capital expenses**

- a. The District annually creates a 5-year capital improvement plan that is driven by the District's comprehensive master plan, individual park master plans that are driven by public input, and scoring of each park on the District's annual report card, which strives to measure the experience a resident would have if they went to that park. The Park District's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is driven by using 25% of the original referendum amount from 2005 as well as monies transferred from other revenue generating funds. The

amount of funds annually transferred to the CIP has continued to grow over recent years as the District's share of earned revenue has grown from 29% in 2012 to 48.5% in 2017.

- b. Staff have replaced pickup trucks with smaller, more fuel efficient utility vehicles.
- c. Worked with D97 to install three synthetic turf fields in addition to the PDOP RCRC Field. These fields require much less staff time and resources to manage, and support dramatically higher levels of play and support to the PDOP, D97 and community groups. Additionally, PDOP allocates \$100,000 annually in the CIP toward the replacement costs of these fields, so funding is available at the end of the field's useful life.

**D. Expenses related to financing and debt**

- a. The District's current debt is funded by profits from revenue generating programs and did not require an additional tax levy to pay for it. The PDOP Board has formally abated the principal and interest annually beginning in 2011 for the \$30M in bond issues for facility improvements. In fact, since 2011 when the first bond issue was done, the District has seen earned revenue grow by \$3.6 million dollars or \$1.5 million more than the debt payment of \$2.1 million annually.
- b. The Park District has grown its program and pass sales by \$3.6M in new revenue annually since 2012 allowing these new revenues to fully cover the bond repayments of approximately \$2.1M annually. The additional revenues minus direct expenses are approximately \$500k-\$800k annually and those dollars are transferred to our Capital Improvement Plan to assist in projects addressing deferred maintenance.

2. What has been your experience with *coordinating, sharing, or consolidating services, equipment, staff, or other assets* with another unit of government? Please share with us any specific examples. As above, please consider this in terms of: operating expenses, retiree pensions and benefits, capital expenses, and expenses related to financing and debt. Can you comment on how any such coordination has worked in terms of service level outcomes and financial impacts? What barriers, if any, have you encountered in pursuing such efforts?

- a. Park District purchases gas through the village's gas program to fill buses and mini-vans. This has been a positive for the community as the fuel is available at a lower fee per gallon.
- b. Park District utilizes the Village's fleet services to maintain our vehicles which allows them to bring in revenue during down times for their staff. This has been a positive for the community as the Park District vehicles are repaired by excess capacity from Fleet.
- c. Park District uses the High School's facility to host our Frank Lloyd Wright Race, gymnastics meets, swim lessons, as well as our basketball program. This has been a positive for the community as more children have been able to learn to swim year-round and participate in youth basketball. Also, the FLW race is participated in by over 50% residents and it is nice to have this centralized hub for this event. PDOP does pay for OPRFHS staff.

- D. Park District uses D97 facilities for summer camps and youth sports programs. This has been a positive for the community as children are able to engage in sports and camps in existing facilities.
- E. Park District operates facilities and programs at Barrie, Dole and Stevenson, properties owned by the village that allows the space to be used for recreation for the community. Programs include: preschool, afterschool, youth sports, fitness programming, arts programming, and general recreation programming. The facilities house classrooms, a preschool indoor playground, outdoor basketball, volleyball and skate park as well as playground and field space for the Park District, the community and local sports affiliate groups to utilize.
- F. Park District allows the Oak Park Township to utilize our buses to help with their senior transportation program.
- G. Park District utilizes Village expertise and equipment to help us at our Frank Lloyd Wright races to reduce the amount of waste going into landfills.
- H. Park District partners with the library on several community events such as the eclipse viewing party and they bring their book bike to our parks and several community events such as DIOV. The library also supports the wi-fi connection in Scoville Park.
- I. D97 schools utilize several parks for events such as end of the year celebrations, field days, track and field practices and meets.
- J. Park District partnered with D97, a local foundation, and local sports groups to install turf fields at both middle schools allowing schools and user groups to increase the amount of physical activity available both during and after the school day.
- K. D200 uses Ridgeland field for P.E. classes during the school day, various afterschool sports practices and the ice rink for P.E. classes. They also use other fields for baseball games and practices, various afterschool club sports and tennis courts for the tennis team.
- L. Ridgeland Common serves as an evacuation site for emergencies at D200.
- M. Township allows PDOP to come to senior lunches to meet with seniors to talk about recreational opportunities available.
- N. PDOP works with D97 to share scholarship availability with staff who work directly with families that would benefit from services.
- O. PDOP participates in various events through the community to help support other organizations – Earth Fest – D97 PTO events – Thursday Night Out – Oaktoberfest.
- P. All government agencies were involved in the feasibility process to determine direction on a community recreation center.
- Q. The Township interventional staff participates in staff training, drop-in courts, and provide advice and leadership with staff and youth when needed if social incidents flare up at any site.
- R. Park District uses the VOP sign shop to make some signage for buildings and parks, which is often less expensive than other business pricing.
- S. The Communications Departments from all governmental entities meet regularly and help communicate each other's important news, meeting dates, and activities that affect the entire community.

- T. The Park District and Library share an insert in the VOP FYI as does D97 and D200.
- U. The Park District has worked with Joe Kremel to create a videos.
- V. The Parks Passport program is offered with support from D97 and the Library.
- W. PDOP uses the Fire Department's CPR equipment and license to provide our staff trainings.
- X. VOP Forestry works with PDOP to asses trees when uncertain on conditions. They also partner with PDOP on Arbor Day events. The two entities worked together to obtain arboretum status for the Village of Oak Park.

**3. Beyond your current activities, are you aware of any *past efforts* by your organization to coordinate, share, or consolidate such services with another unit of government? If these efforts have ended, please share with us those examples as well?**

- a. When PDOP was rebuilding RCRC staff coordinated to allow VOP to replace its 100 year old water main to reduce future cost once the building was erected and the turf field installed.
- b. VOP and PDOP have worked together on curb cuts when joint work is occurring near a park such as with the Fillmore water project. These efforts reduce cost through coordination.
- c. The District had discussions with all the other taxing bodies on the creation of a fiber sharing agreement. These discussions had gone on for numerous months and then quickly moved from discussions to a completed agreement between the Village and D97. The Park District was not a part of the end discussion and had been very interested in part of the agreement as we had a need for fiber to connect all of our sites. Since this agreement, we have to do a standalone agreement which currently costs approximately \$60,000 per year.
- d. The District spent multiple years attempting to find a solution for the needed improvements at our Administrative Center. The District had multiple conversations with government entities on partnership opportunities to centralize at least two administrative centers. The District reached a point that we needed to move forward due to facility conditions (roof, plumbing, black mold, etc.) and the financial review showed it was cheaper to the taxpayers for the District to stay at 218 Madison St. and not do a joint facility based on the cost estimates provided by D97. The final agreement between VOP and D97 was different than the discussions the Park District took part in. (The cost p/sq foot to renovate the 9,000 sq feet at 218 Madison was \$318 per square foot. The cost of partnering with D97 was estimated to be \$422.50 p/sq foot for 5,000 sq feet, plus PDOP would have had to purchase the D97 maintenance building which was appraised at \$818,000.) Additionally, since D97 wasn't able to fit into the VOP Public Works as planned, the decision was correct as there would have been a shortage of maintenance space by one of the three entities. The savings from the renovating at 218 Madison made it possible for PDOP to partner with D97, AYSO, Chicago Edge, OPYBS and Good Heart Work Smart to install the multipurpose fields at both of the middle school schools, of which PDOP funded over \$1M of this project. Lastly, by having recreation, administration and our maintenance department under one roof we have improved efficiency, internal communication and overall quality to our residents.
- e. PDOP and D200 worked in 2008 on Ridgeland Common Recreation Complex (RCRC) and again in 2017 on a Community Recreation Center (CRC) to try and collaborate on a pool to benefit both the school as well as the community. To date, the desire to partner by D200

does not seem evident. The financial model that PDOP presented provides a revenue surplusing entity similar to RCRC and GRC after the capital costs are covered.

- f. In 2010, the Park District requested that VOP sell the PDOP the Volvo lot to allow the Park District to consolidate its efforts in one location. The VOP Board President, responded no without a public discussion.
  - g. In 2010, a master plan was created for Stevenson Park and VOP staff were consulted on the elements of the project. In 2014, PDOP was working to implement its Stevenson Master Plan which included the installation of a synthetic turf field and was at the final design stages of the project when VOP decided they could not move forward due to concerns with field material. The amount of time and funds spent on the drawings could have been saved had VOP staff shared concerns earlier in the process.
4. **Please share with us any further opportunities that you see regarding opportunities for *coordination, sharing, or consolidation of services, equipment, staff, or other assets* – either between or among your governing body and other governing bodies or among other governing bodies exclusive of your unit of government?**
- a. The Park District would like to expand its programming spaces at Dole, build a stronger partnership with the Library, and better serve senior and residents seeking maker spaces for art exploration.
  - b. With only 83 acres of green space in a community that should have been 260-520 acres based on population, it would be ideal to add smaller pocket parks to neighborhoods on property owned by the Village that is not prime for development.
  - c. The construction of a community recreation center that also houses a D200 pool would save staffing, equipment, and provide coordination and service consolidation to the residents of Oak Park. Additionally, the community recreation center could provide services to the underserved such as gym space to support after-school needs for middle and high school students, a walking track for year-round fitness, space for mental health services that are discreet, as well as a fitness space to promote healthy lifestyles at affordable prices.
  - d. PDOP is currently exploring managing D97 landscaping services. PDOP has the expertise in house to improve the grounds on all D97 properties.
  - e. Stormwater management – PDOP and Village could look to leverage open space to mitigate stormwater flows. There was one successful project at the Conservatory, but there are likely many additional opportunities to continue partnerships with the village to implement bio-swailes where appropriate.
  - f. Establish a mechanism by which OP Taxing bodies impacted by multi-family development are able to gain financial compensation for impacts to facilities from new multi-family developments. Such programs are successfully used by other communities which include: fee/per sq. ft., transfer taxes, land donation, etc.).
  - g. The use of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to ensure that all parties understand the discussion and responsibilities as presented has served PDOP well and are now used as a best practice for matters such as D97 fields, D200/RFPD/PDOP discussion on CRC, etc.