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**Vernon Hills Park District  
Board of Park Commissioners  
Special Board Meeting**

**June 22, 2023  
635 N. Aspen Drive  
Vernon Hills, IL 60061  
5:00 PM**

**Minutes**

**1. Call to Order**

President Doerhoefer called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

President Doerhoefer led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**3. Roll Call**

Present: Commissioners Robbins, Giraldo, Jacobs, Sente, Doerhoefer  
Staff: Jeff Fougerousse, Amy Darling

**4. Welcome to Visitors and Guests- Public Comments**

Prior to public comments, President Doerhoefer addressed a few of the comments that had been made on social media.

He clarified that staffing lifeguards has not been a problem at the park district. Turtles Coach Robert Wood builds relationships with staff that motivate them to return. He clarified that the expenses related to the operation of the Lazy River were the deciding factor in removing the amenity. President Doerhoefer provided summary financial information related to those operations. He provided summary financial information related future mechanical expenses that will be required to keep the Lazy River open. President Doerhoefer further commented that other park districts and aquatic specialists concur that Lazy Rivers are no longer being built due to aforementioned expenses.

President Doerhoefer then reported that the Splash Pad is 10 times the size of the current sand pit and as such, cannot be constructed in that area.

President Doerhoefer stated that as elected officials, their duty when making decisions is to place fiscal responsibility and patron safety at the forefront.



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President Doerhoefer stated that the board would now hear any comments from members of the public. He asked that comments be preceded with speakers' name and address.

Visitors present per meeting sign in sheet:

Chris Maier  
Catherine King  
Laura Otto  
Sharon Bryne  
Barbara King  
Michael Schenk

Comments were made at the podium by:

Chris Maier- Her late husband was a Founder of park district. The Lazy River was always their favorite part of the aquatic center. Other seniors have commented the same. She would hate to lose the Lazy River; it's quiet, you can sun and enjoy the aquatic center. Perhaps the Splash Pad could be scaled down to keep both. She also commented that on the east side of the pool deck, more shade would be nice.

Catherine King-She would like to make a case for keeping the Lazy River. A mom from Vernon Hills posted the district social media post and it received over one thousand shares and comments. The Lazy River provides an amenity for all ages, including seniors. She expressed the concern of safety for young kids getting from the Splash Pad over to the other pools and commented that the pad should be fenced for safety. Minding multiple kids at the facility takes an enormous amount of mental energy is exhausting for moms and caregivers. Further, this plan is a mistake- the Splash Pad is an infant thru grade 5 pool- plus its dangerous. Middle school and up will not attend. There was no consideration in terms of who would be visiting this amenity and it takes the pool down compared to other local facilities. The board has underestimated the popularity of the river. She stated that there was no public notice of the meeting- more people would be here if they knew.

Laura Otto- Has lived in Vernon Hills for 15 years and moved here for parks and the pool. Her main concern is this plan leaves nothing to appeal to older kids. She would like to plead for the development of something to appeal to older kids. The current tube slide is the best. This new pool is geared to younger children.

Mike Schenk- The park district has the full support of the Village of Vernon Hills in whatever determination is made. He encouraged those in attendance to consider the benefit of the board making a financial decision to positively impact the residents. We have a great park district.



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Further comments took place between residents in attendance regarding the safety of the Splash Pad. The pad will have a supervisor and meet all the safety standards required.

Public comment period was concluded.

5. New Business

A. Family Aquatic Center Lazy River/Splash Pad Future

President Doerhoefer stated that having heard comments from the public, he would now invite comments from the board.

Vice President Sente

Thank you for all of the comments- it's very important. The board have received many emails and have been closely following social media.

What is very important to the whole board is reinvesting in and maintaining the existing facilities prior to adding anything new. Outdoor pools generally lose money; knowing this, what can we add that is fiscally responsible and will appeal to everyone. In the last 10 years aquatics engineers have not been designing Lazy Rivers due to cost and minimal usage. We have been observing the actual use and on average, on a hot day, only 20-25 patrons are using the amenity over the course of the operating day. This is a distinctly designed plan for all age groups and meets required guidelines for safety.

Please also realize that our board meetings are posted each month. We reach out to public in every meeting. There were 5 meetings held to discuss this project. We are aware that people find their information different ways. What I have learned is that moving forward we can perhaps do more to involve public.

Commissioner Jacobs

Thank you for coming. I was appointed to the board in January to fill a vacancy by a long standing Commissioner. My professional position is in Risk Management. I am also a mom to 11 year old twin boys and can understand the comments being made to represent the community. We are here to be good stewards of money and have to make decisions based on numbers and regulatory standards. There are legal compliances that the state determines, none of the decisions related to the footprint or safety standards of the project were made on our own. This was not an easy decision and was made based on financial implications and age of facility.



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We adhere to the Open Meetings Act. All public meetings are recorded. We want to make everyone has a voice, which is why we called this Special Meeting. The public is provided with plenty of outlets to make their voices heard. Perhaps we can also look into alternative communication methods.

Commissioner Robbins

I was just elected to fourth term and would like to thank the community for that support. I have been a CPA for 53 years and know how important is was to look at this from a fiscal point of view. The expenses of the operation gave me concerns. It's an old aged facility that requires major attention. I also consider the fact that the district has 26 parks and other facilities to maintain. I am concerned that if we keep both it will minimize the ability to improve pathways or to offer new playgrounds or programs. We must consider the whole picture and what is best for the whole district that we are custodians of.

Commissioner Giraldo

My full -time job is in finance and I approached this decision considering our fiscal responsibility. I also am aware that the Lazy River is one amenity – we have a whole district that requires attention and promotion of growth.

Thank you for feedback and suggestions, that goes a long way. We have spent countless hours reading all social media posts and emails- in addition to maintain our individual full time jobs.

Commissioner comments were concluded

President Doerhoefer asked if any commissioner like to make a motion to continue to operate the Lazy River for the 2024 summer season and relocate the splashpad to it's new location for 2024?

Motion by Commissioner Jacobs

Second by Commissioner Sente

Discussion: Commissioner Giraldo will support the motion under the condition that it is reviewed annually.

President Doerhoefer agreed, but clarified that the annual consideration would be based on fiscal information, not public opinion.

Ayes: Commissioner Giraldo, Robbins, Jacobs, Sente, Doerhoefer.

Nays: None. Motion Carries

Upon proper motion and second the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 6:00 p.m.

David Doerhoefer, Park Board President

Jeff Fougrousse, Park Board Secretary



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