

**DES PLAINES PARK DISTRICT  
SPECIAL PARK BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
November 30, 2023**

**I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

President Jana Haas called the Special Board Meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Des Plaines Park District to order at 7:03 pm. Commissioners answering present to the roll call in person were, Commissioner Erin Doerr, Commissioner James Grady, Commissioner Haas, Commissioner Don Rosedale, and Commissioner Eli Williams.

In attendance was Executive Director, Donald Miletic; Deputy Director, Paul Cathey; Superintendent of Administration, April Lohr and Project Manager Jeanette Berard

Guests:

**II. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA:**

None

**III. INTRODUCTIONS:**

Executive Director Miletic provided an overview of the meeting to discuss the Algonquin Bridge Project. He stated the Park District is not in support of the suggested location on Algonquin Road due traffic and safety concerns as well as the look of the newly proposed bridge. The Park District Board will hear tonight a presentation from the City of Des Plaines and their bridge consultants on the project and be available to answer any questions they may have.

**IV. NEW BUSINESS**

**Tim Oakley, Director of Public Works & Engineering spoke on behalf of the City of Des Plaines and provided the plan for the meeting to review the project and speak to the importance / impact to the community.**

**Dave Block from Transystems provided a presentation of the bridge including**

- **Project History**
  - Validation Study (2008)
  - Feasibility Study (2009)
  - Phase 1 Preliminary Engineering (2022)
- **Proposed Improvements**
- **Current Status**
- **Park District Impacts**
- **Responses to Comments**
- **Next Steps**

Questions asked within the presentation.

Question: Executive Director Miletic asked for the height of the Des Plaines Park District entrance.

Response: Dave Block stated 13 feet at the new entrance

Question: President Haas asked for clarification on the view of the walls at the entrance / exit

Response: Dave Block provided information on the details of the walls and that yes there would be walls at the entrance/ exit

Question: Executive Director Miletic asked for ADA compliant pathways

Response: Dave Block stated they are required to be ADA compliant.

**Statement:** Mayor Andrew Goczkowski noted that the City is open to finding ways to enhance the walls with art or plantings and giving 13 Feet of additional green space from the fence line to the wall.

Question: Executive Director Miletic asked if the ponds will store the run off from the road

Response: Dave Block stated no they will be following MWRD requirements and they will have a pipe outlet to the storm sewer.

Response: Tim Oakley stated there is currently an existing 48” store water pipe in the current street that deposits into the Des Plaines River.

Question: Commissioner Grady asked if the Prairie Lakes Pathway will meet the new sidewalk on Algonquin

Response: Dave Block stated yes the pathway will be reworked and the slope increased following ADA to meet new elevation of the sidewalk.

Question: Commissioner Doerr asked what the new height of the sidewalk would be

Response: Dave Block stated 3-5feet in higher elevation.

Question: Executive Director Miletic asked about the speed limit on Algonquin Rd

Response: Dave Block stated the speed limit would remain the same at 35 mph

### **Commissioner Comments:**

#### **Commissioner Grady noted the following:**

- Agree grade crossings are good and needed for Des Plaines
- Do not like the location selected next to a park vs having on Oakton which is already a four lane road.  
Residential vs Commercial impact  
Additional costs and disruption during construction
- Recommend the installation of an underpass at Algonquin, if it needs to go in this location. Was informed at the last city meeting this would be an increase in costs and the maintenance of a pump station.
- The look of the wall for recreation will feel boxed in and will be an eyesore to all park users
- The 300 Foot entrance/ exit slope that will have to be maintained by the park district is an additional responsibility.

#### **Executive Director Miletic noted the following:**

- We currently have weekly issues at the existing skate park. If the bridge will be installed we will likely remove the skate park as the walls will provide additional areas for graffiti and loitering.
- We are concerned with the increase in traffic at 31% and the effect the nose level may have on the Mountain View Mini Golf Course.

**Statement:** Mayor Andrew Goczkowski noted that they do not want the park district to close the skate park but find alternatives to make it more secure.

#### **Commissioner Williams noted the following:**

- Asked about the easement and staging areas for the project.

**Statement:** Dave Block noted they will not be in our lots or the lots of the other businesses, the staging areas will be kept within the construction areas.

- The need for railroad crossing mitigation is needed in Des Plaines concerned with the area selected.
- Concerns include

The left turn out of the parking lot, potentially no left turn?

**Statement:** Dave Block stated the safety study shows it is safe to have the left turn.

- High traffic events during the summer season, events – this may have not been seen during the traffic study / on a typical day.
- Currently there are a number of cars that cut through the parking lot on a given day to beat the trains anticipate this happening more frequent if there is a bridge instead of waiting at the crossing on Thacker.

- Can more funds from the city be applied for move the location or to install an underpass as there are already grants associated with the project from both State and Federal sources.

Executive Director Miletic noted the following:

- Mountain View Entrance off Algonquin Rd may look at being closed to limit the cut through traffic
- Is there a local bridge/study that has been completed for a bridge of this type in the surrounding communities?

**Statement:** Dave Block stated he can provide the study and will look into existing bridges of this scope. He is not aware of any of the top of his head. Miletic said there are a few communities near by that have underpasses, but have never seen a bridge like this is a residential community, used more by expressways.

Commissioner Doerr noted the following:

- A lot can change from the initial study in 2009 and we have seen that in our community
- This was the same report presented at the City Council Meeting
- Can this be moved to Oakton, yes technically more south but still centrally located

**Statement:** Dave Block noted the Fire Department said this site is very important to allow them to have centralized access.

- Commissioner Doerr replied to Executive Director, can he find out what cost to build a Firehouse west of railroad line.

Commissioner Rosedale noted the following:

- What is the condition of the water coming off of the tracks from the railroad.

**Statement:** Dave Block they will follow all IDOT standards for the roadway, the railroad follows their own set of standards.

- Asked if the Touhy Underpass is the same railroad line

**Statement:** Dave Block yes same line UP- Milwaukee

President Haas noted the following

- If you build it they will come, referencing the 31% increase in traffic on Algonquin Rd. Being mindful of the staff and patrons that utilize this facility and the two neighboring schools
- We are currently unhappy with the proposed location of the project and feel there is another way to accomplish the same goal at a different site or in a different way. We want to think about the next generation as this bridge will be here for 100 years.
- Very concerned with the boxed in look of the wall next to the park and will take away from the open recreational aspect.
- With the current proposal not in favor.
- Would like to be provided additional rendering of the planned bridge with views that can be provided to the park user.

**Statement:** Dave Block they could provide additional renderings

- Also noted the large safety hazard for those who use the pathways and sidewalks with the speed of traffic and slope/ height of the bridge.

**Statement:** Dave Block they would now be installing a new bike pathway along the bridge to provide safer railway crossing for pedestrians.

- What is the plan with the other businesses along Algonquin

**Statement:** Dave Block they are working with those businesses and will provide driveway access into their establishments

**Statement:** Mayor Andrew Goczkowski noted that the City of Des Plaines is looking to solve a big city wide problem and would very much like to partner with the Des Plaines Park District on this project. Would like to provide more for public safety (life vs death in some cases), help units (police & fire) move more efficiently and to elevate congestion caused by freight lines.

## V. COMMENTS FROM THE COMMUNITY:

### Public Comment: Steven Gutow 828 Webster Lane

A Prairie Lakes Park Regular user, not in favor of the proposed bridge installation at Algonquin Rd. Asked for clarification on the cost of the bridge and if was \$350M. Also addressed the Fire Department locations.

The Park Board Thanked Steven for his public comment.

### Public Comment: Brian Inzzerello 1787 S Cora

What step of the project are you currently in? What is the input from the other businesses? He also noted that in theory / on paper the left turn is safe and feasibility at the speed limit, however this may not always be followed by motorists.

**Statement** Dave Block we are not yet at Phase #2 need park district to approve. All other businesses are open to the bridge installation

The Park Board Thanked Brian for his public comment.

Commissioner Doerr asked if the land given during the easement would be kept by the city.

**Statement** Dave Block stated the land will be returned after construction is completed

### Public Comment: Stan Zimmerman 408 S Wolf Road

Is against the installation of the proposed bridge at Algonquin Rd.

The Park Board Thanked Stan for his public comment.

### Public Comment: Dominik Bronakowski 15 W Mayor Court

Is in favor of the proposed bridge at Algonquin Rd. This bridge will provide safety benefits city wide. Heard a lot of discussion about the bridge appeal and would like the board to consider the safety benefits from the police and fire department to be able to navigate to emergencies using this crossing. Safety of residents as a whole of Des Plaines was a main point articulated.

The Park Board Thanked Dominik for his public comment.

### Public Comment: Art Garceau 915 Alfini

Is in favor of the proposed bridge at Algonquin Rd. Invested in Prairie Lakes Community Center and Park. Has noticed the traffic that spills into Wolf Road due to the train congestion, which causing significant safety issues for the roadway and the Algonquin School pedestrian traffic.

The Park Board Thanked Art for his public comment.

### Public Comment: Alderman Colt Moylan

Is in favor of the proposed bridge at Algonquin Rd. Lots of good questions asked tonight. Would like to focus on the safety and how this bridge would benefit Des Plaines Residents. Would like to address the cost of the project, \$35M for the bridge, \$18M in funding secured via grants with more Federal Funding coming once agreement reached with park district where they will pay 75% and city pays 25%, will end up costing the taxpayer \$4-\$5M.

The Park Board Thanked Alderman Moylan for his public comment.

Public Comment: Alderman Sean Oskerka

Is in favor of the proposed bridge at Algonquin Rd. As this will help with the delays and safety within the city. Impact the bridge will have on traffic will be significant. My son currently uses the skate park and would hate to see that close. Can you work with the Chief of Police to mitigate the issues you are having vs closing.

The Park Board Thanked Alderman Oskerka for his public comment.

Public Comment: Alderman Dick Sayad

Provided information that the trains would see increase of 31% usage in the next 2 years. Ask the City of De Plaines staff if there would be any additional costs associated with the maintenance of the bridge. Alderman Sayad also said the police and fire are already aware if there are trains before they leave their stations, this was addressed years ago.

**Statement:** Tim Oakley stated there would be on going costs for the upkeep of the bridge. These costs would be the responsibility

**Statement:** Dominik Bronakowski highlighted the increase in train usage at 31% provides additional reasoning for the need for a bridge in Des Plaines to reduce traffic congestion.

The Park Board Thanked Alderman Sayad for his public comment.

Public Comment: Sharon Lynch 1425 E Algonquin

As someone who lives on Algonquin Road can attest to driving patterns of motorists and lack of following the law for lights, stop signs, speed limits etc. Live and work in Des Plaines constantly commuting and having to navigate the train schedules. This bridge being 1 block from the school poses more of risk to students. The Bridge will increase the flow of traffic down a residential street more than just 31%. Concerns for this proposed location and would suggest the Oakton Street as the better option, as it already has 4 lanes and already has heavier traffic than Algonquin.

The Park Board Thanked Sharron for her public comment.

## **VI. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:**

Commissioner Williams noted the following:

Would like to know the feasibility of an underpass at Algonquin Rd

Executive Director Miletic noted the following:

- Can we be provided the underpass study
- Main concern is safety, especially for the kids using the parks
- Would like to find ways to make it work for everyone

**Statement:** Mayor Andrew Goczkowski noted that we can speak with the engineer for additional safety questions. When speaking with the School District 62 they are not concerned with the project location on Algonquin Rd. The City of Des Plaines would like to work with the Des Plaines Park District on this project.

Commissioner Grady noted the following:

This improvement is needed, just need to evaluate the anticipated costs and not in favor at this location. This study might have been done years ago, I have been on the board and did not know about it until recently.

**VII. ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Williams made a motion to adjourn the Park Board Meeting at 8:35 p.m.

Seconded by Commissioner Doerr

**All in Favor, Opposed**

**Ayes: 5 Nays: 0, Absent: 0**

**Motion Carried: 5-0-0**

APPROVED \_\_\_\_\_

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President

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Secretary