MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE SPECIAL LEISURE SERVICES FOUNDATION HYBRID MEETING ON THE 17th OF MARCH 2026

Chairman Gattuso called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

Those present: Linda Ballantine, Al Crook, Anthony Gattuso, Diane Hilgers, Jim Houser, Terri Oates, Rafal Piontkowski, Ben Rea, Nick Troy (left at 4:30pm)

Absent: Thomas Campone, Paola Sprenzel

Also present: Andrea Griffin, President; Anne Kiwala, Superintendent of Development; Victoria Gonzalez and Rachel Hubsch, Superintendents of Recreation; Tom Draper, Superintendent of Marketing and Communications; Megan O'Brien, Events Coordinator; Nick Eckelberry, Finance Manager; Liz Thomas, Foundation Manager; Sara Carey, Manager of Human Resources; Dave Hanson, Benjamin F. Edwards Erika Strojinc, Outgoing Board Member (left at 3:47pm)

Chairman Gattuso requested a moment of silence in honor of Allyson Houser.

Introductions
All guests and new trustees were introduced.

Approval of Agenda for March 17, 2026
Chairman Gattuso called for a motion to approve the agenda for March 17, 2026. Trustee Crook made the motion, and Trustee Oates seconded the motion to approve the March 17, 2026 agenda. Upon voice vote, the motion carried.

Conflict of Interest
No conflicts of interest stated.

Approval of Consent Agenda
Chairman Gattuso requested a motion to approve the consent agenda including the minutes from the December 16, 2025, meeting and the SLSF Financial Reports. Trustee Ballantine made the motion, and Trustee Oates seconded the motion. Upon roll being called, the vote was as follows:

AYE: Linda Ballantine, Al Crook, Anthony Gattuso, Diane Hilgers, Jim Houser, Terri Oates, Rafal Piontkowski, Ben Rea, Nick Troy

NAY: None

The motion carried.

Correspondence

President Griffin expressed her condolences and appreciation for the thank you card received from the Houser family. President Griffin also shared correspondence received from a participant's family regarding the transition from the Pursuit program to the Thrive adult day program. The family expressed appreciation for staff communication, program oversight, and the quality of activities, noting a positive and continued participation. Lastly, written correspondence from WINGS was shared, expressing gratitude to the agency for the items collected and donated through the Staff Enrichment Committee's pantry supply drive.

Investment Presentation

Dave Hanson provided an overview of the Foundation's portfolio performance and strategy. The portfolio has seen significant growth and has performed well over, especially the last three years. The investment approach remains balanced, with a mix of fixed income, and plans to transition to lower cost investment options over time. Recent adjustments, including increase international investments, have contributed to positive returns. Dave noted the potential for short term market volatility but emphasized a continued focus on long term growth.

Recognition of Board Members

Chairman Gattuso read a proclamation recognizing outgoing board member Erika Strojinc, thanking her for her dedication and contributions.

Staff Reports

Year End Reports

2025 Grant Activity

Superintendent Kiwala reported that 2025 was a strong year for grant activity. The Foundation submitted over $1 million in grant requests and secured $155,000, exceeding the budget by $25,000. Funding supported key areas such as scholarships and accessible transportation, with a mix of new and returning funders reflecting increased community awareness and strong stewardship. For 2026, Superintendent Kiwala reported a shift in strategy toward focusing on established, reliable funders. Grant revenue is budgeted at $140,000 with over $20,000 secured to date, including $13,000 received.

Events

Coordinator O'Brien gave an overview of the 2025 event fundraising comparison, which included comparisons to 2024 and the 2025 budget. Overall, events performed well, with several exceeding expectations, including the Moretti's and women's golf outings, along with the gala. The St. Patrick's Day event fell below budget due to lower attendance, however a raffle was held in place of full cancellation. A strong start to the 2026 event season was reported, highlighted by the fashion show, which raised nearly $80,000.

Sponsorship

Manager Thomas reported that sponsorship revenue has steadily increased over the past few years, reaching $180,000 in 2025, representing a 37.8% growth. In 2026, the sponsorship budget is $182,000, noting a strong start to the year as the fashion show achieved its highest sponsorship total to date at over $30,000. Upcoming sponsorship opportunities are available as the golf outing season begins.

2025 Donations

Superintendent Kiwala shared that total donations for 2025 were approximately $138,000, representing a 43% increase from 2024 and nearly 22% of total revenue. This increase included a $30,000 gift from a returning donor, which significantly impacted yearly growth. The focus for 2026 will be prioritizing the donor base and enhancing the holiday appeal, while budgeting conservatively for general donations at 2024 levels and excluding assumptions of recurring major gifts.

Programs and Services

Superintendent Gonzalez highlighted the winter program season by sharing the strong engagement received within 60 therapeutic recreation programs. Leisure Education school outings continue to utilize member district facilities and strengthen partnerships. There were 4 large special events that occurred in January in February, allowing both youth and adult participants to connect socially. Athletics had a successful Winter Games where 9 medals were received, basketball advanced to State competition, and swim along with gymnastics advanced to regional qualifiers. Day Camp has begun preparing for the upcoming season with 165 returning staff, 200 campers registered, and the addition of a Rover position to support staff across sites throughout the summer. Through financial support from the Foundation, the Buffalo Grove Media Lab and Rolling Meadows Music Room are expanding which provides participants with more individualized creative programming options. There has been an increase with Snoezelen sensory room field trips through school partnerships. Inclusion trained 45 Inclusion Aides, with a focus on crisis response, behavior support, and advocacy. The Inclusion team also presented at the annual IPRA Conference and provided Inclusion training for over 110 staff at the Palatine Public Library. Superintendent Gonzalez reported that these highlights represent the focus on program quality and participant growth within therapeutic recreation services.

Communication and Technology

Superintendent Draper highlighted that recent marketing efforts focused heavily on the Gold Medal Fashion Show, including model interviews, signage, and promotional materials, with content available on the SLSF website. Superintendent Draper also reported a successful transition to new registration software, RecTrac, which experienced no issues during the high-volume day camp registration. The success of the Fully Involved Fire Academy, a collaborative program with the Hoffman Estates Fire Department that provided participants with hands on fire safety and training experiences, was noted. The program received recognition at the IPRA annual conference, earning both the Program of the Year and Circle of Excellence awards.

Human Resources

Manager Carey reported that the department continues with recruitment efforts by attending multiple job fairs, while noting that the upcoming Spring Break job fair will be hosted by Rolling Meadows Park District and will mark a total of 9 job fairs attended this year. The agency will also be fully staffed once the new Recreation Specialist begins in May. Team engagement and morale has been a focus by planning activities for National Employee Appreciation Day and a March Madness event. Selection for a health benefits broker has been narrowed down to Stumm Insurance and Gallagher. A final selection is expected to be finalized by the end of March/early April. Manager Carey and President Griffin submitted updated full-time job descriptions and launched the HR Source Compensation Survey in February. Results from the survey are currently being reviewed with the goal of ensuring market alignment, competitive pay, and improved retention. Manager Carey gave an overview of the training and professional development opportunities that staff have participated in since the beginning of the year, noting strong participation across the agency.

Fourth Quarter Financials

Manager Eckelberry shared that the financial results presented are unaudited, with the audit currently in progress. SLSF ended the year with revenues of $958,000 and expenses of $712,000, resulting in a net surplus of $246,000 compared to a budgeted deficit of $46,000, finishing $292,000 ahead of budget. The surplus was primarily driven by a strong investment performance, increased donations, and reduced fundraising expenses. Fundraising revenue finished at 99.6% of budget, with lower registration revenue offset by strong sponsorship, auction, and contest income. Administrative expenses were $12,400 under budget and fundraising expenses were under budget by $23,000 due to cost savings. The Foundation distributed just under $358,000 in grants to support NWSRA programs, including increased scholarship support due to higher community need and a onetime restricted donation supporting the Thrive program.

President

President Griffin provided several organizational updates, beginning with the NWSRA strategic planning process, currently happening with stakeholder input being collected. A separate SLSF strategic plan is anticipated to being in 2027 with support from an external consultant. The agency will be fully staffed in May for the first time in several years. President Griffin recognized Superintendent Hubsch and the Manager of Day Camp for presenting on the Fire Academy program to the Illinois Fire Chiefs Association, another Special Recreation Association (SRA) has since adopted the program model. Changes to the annual holiday luncheon were outlined, including a transition to a breakfast format in 2026 and shifting award recognition to the gala, where additional awards and board involvement in selection will be incorporated. Additionally, scholarship policies are under review with the potential expansion to support day program and additional participant opportunities. Strong retention was reported as the adult day program transition begins, noting that majority of families and staff are electing to remain with NWSRA. Lastly, President Griffin shared information about the upcoming Arlington Heights Park District Stroll and Roll event supporting Autism Awareness Month, with proceeds benefiting SLSF/NWSRA.

Old Business

Revised SLSF Board and Admin Manual

Superintendent Kiwala presented the revised SLSF Board and Administrative Policy Manual for approval. The document was reviewed by legal counsel to ensure compliance, clarify processes, reduce governance risk, and improve usability. Key revisions include clarification of board size and trustee terms, officer election procedures, removal and meeting notice requirements, trustee independence, and purchasing authority. The investment policy statement was also updated with input from Time March at Benjamin F. Edwards to better define objectives, risk tolerance, spending policy, and asset allocation guidelines. A discrepancy between bylaws and the proposed policy regarding officer terms was also noted. Superintendent Kiwala recommended maintaining the current two-year officer terms through 2026, with a transition to one-year terms beginning in 2027, to align with the bylaws. Chairman Gattuso asked for a motion to approve the revised SLSF Board and Adin Manual as presented. Trustee Oates made the motion, and Trustee Ballantine seconded the motion. Upon roll being called, the vote was as follows:

AYE: Linda Ballantine, Al Crook, Anthony Gattuso, Diane Hilgers, Jim Houser, Terri Oates, Rafal Piontkowski, Ben Rea, Nick Troy

NAY: None

The motion carried.

New Business

2025 and 2026 Foundation Goals

President Griffin reported on the successful business engagement across all 17-member park district communities and expansion of volunteer involvement to strengthen community partnerships. Additional accomplishments for 2025 included onboarding new board trustees and completing updates to the board and administration policy manual. For 2026, there will be a continued focus on enhancing networking and community presence across districts, along with key initiatives such as launching a new integrated NWSRA/SLSF website, updating Foundation bylaws to align with the administrative manual, and expanding focus on planned giving.

SLSF/NWSRA Year in Review

President Griffin provided an overview of the impact and operations of SLSF in 2025. NWSRA recorded over 10,000 program registrations and nearly 2,000 inclusion requests, with more than $91,000 awarded in scholarships to support participant access. Participants were highly engaged, including athletic involvement across multiple sports and tournaments, and contributed over 2,500 hours of volunteer hours within the community. The adult day program served 189 participants, with strong retention anticipated moving forward. The Fully Involved Fire Academy program continued to demonstrate meaningful impact and positive participant outcomes. Financially, SLSF raised $958,000, exceeding budget expectations, with 6 of 8 fundraising events achieving record results. The Foundation also received community

recognition, including Nonprofit of the Year from the Schaumburg Business Association. Over 100 grant applications were submitted, securing support for scholarships, inclusion services, and transportation, while continuing to build new partnerships. Overall, President Griffin emphasized the strong impact of programs and expressed appreciation for ongoing Board and community support.

2026 NWSRA Grant Schedule

Superintendent Gonzalez noted the upcoming grant schedule for 2026. The transfer of grant funds will take place 3 times annually. For 2026, these transfers will be presented to the board for approval at the June 16th, September 8th, and December 8th meetings.

Information/Action Items

Installation of Trustees

President Griffin asked for a motion to approve Diane Hilgers, Ben Rea, and Paola Sprenzel as official SLSF board members. Trustee Oates made the motion, and Trustee Houser seconded the motion. Upon voice vote, the motion carried.

Appointment of Legal Counsel

President Griffin requested a motion to approve the change of legal counsel from Robbins Schwartz to Barber Law Offices, LLC. The change is intended to further distinguish SLSF from NWSRA and to engage legal representation with strong ties to the community. Chairman Gattuso asked for a motion to approve the appointment of Barber Law Offices, LLC as the new legal counsel. Trustee Rea made the motion, and Trustee Houser seconded the motion. Upon roll being called, the vote was as follows:

AYE: Linda Ballantine, Al Crook, Anthony Gattuso, Diane Hilgers, Jim Houser, Terri Oates, Rafal Piontkowski, Ben Rea

NAY: None

The motion carried.

Comments

Chairman Gattuso encouraged board members to review the stakeholder meeting summary previously shared, while noting that it provided helpful insights, potential action items for board members, and reminders on ways to further support and add value to the Foundation.

Adjournment

Being no further business to come before the board, Chairman Gattuso called for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 4:40 p.m. Trustee Ballantine made the motion, and Trustee Oates seconded the motion to adjourn. Upon voice vote, the motion carried.



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Secretary