MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF NORTHWEST SPECIAL RECREATION ASSOCIATION HELD AT PARK CENTRAL; 3000 CENTRAL ROAD, ROLLING MEADOWS, IL ON THE 22nd OF JULY, 2026, AT 10:30 AM

Chairperson Janda called the meeting to order at 10:32 a.m.

Administrative Coordinator Olson took roll call. The following members of the Board were present: Carrie Fullerton, Arlington Heights Park District; Kevin Romejko, Bartlett Park District; Erika Strojinc, Buffalo Grove Park District; Ben Curcio, Elk Grove Park District; Steve Bessette, Hanover Park Park District; Jim Jarog, Mt. Prospect Park District; Ben Rea, Palatine Park District; Christina Ferraro, Prospect Heights Park District; Bret Fahnstrom, River Trails Park District; Diane Hilgers, Salt Creek Park District; Rob Ward, Schaumburg Park District; Jeff Janda, Streamwood Park District; Matt Wehby, Wheeling Park District

Absent: Craig Talsma, Robert Dowling, Nick Troy, Jay Morgan

Also present: Andrea Griffin, Executive Director; Rachel Hubsch, Superintendent of Recreation; Tom Draper, Superintendent of Communications and Technology; Anne Kiwala, Superintendent of Development; Sara Carey, Manager of Human Resources; Nick Eckelberry, Manager of Finance; Danielle Olson, Administrative Coordinator; Andi Criswell, Manager of Inclusion Services; Zharia Bean, Virtual Therapeutic Recreation Intern

Introduction of Guests

Director Griffin welcomed Matt Wehby to his first board meeting as Executive Director for Wheeling Park District. Superintendent Hubsch introduced Zharia Bean as the virtual therapeutic recreation intern. Chairperson Janda read five-year recognition letters for Andi Criswell and Danielle Olson.

Approval of Agenda

Chairperson Janda asked for a motion to approve the agenda dated July 22, 2026. Director Romejko made the motion and Director Fahnstrom seconded the motion to approve the agenda dated July 22, 2026. Upon voice vote, the motion was carried.

Public Comment

None

Approval of Consent Agenda

Chairperson Janda called for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda of July 22, 2026. Director Fullerton made the motion and Director Bessette seconded the motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Upon roll being called the vote was as follows:

AYE: Carrie Fullerton, Kevin Romejko, Erika Strojinc, Ben Curcio, Steve Bessette, Jim Jarog, Ben Rea, Christina Ferraro, Bret Fahnstrom, Diane Hilgers, Rob Ward, Jeff Janda, and Matt Wehby

NAY: None

The motion carried.

Correspondence
None

Staff Reports
Programs & Services
Superintendent Hubsch gave an update on the 2026 day camp season, highlighting strong recruitment and staff retention with 60 new hires and a 70% staff return rate. 283 campers are participating, with staffing filled earlier than in previous years. Various all camp field trips include activities at Twin Lakes, Elk Grove Rotary Fest, and an upcoming Mini Monsters Bears Clinic featuring football skill activities. Superintendent Hubsch thanked community members, commissioners, and park district board members who volunteered to support camps throughout the summer. Elk Grove Rotary also increased its contribution to $10,000 this year. Lastly, participants will be attending long trip to Maine and Florida in August.

Human Resources
Manager Carey stated that the HR team is working to update the agency's primary handbooks to ensure compliance, strengthen risk management practices, and align policies with agency goals and strategic planning initiatives. Department specific handbooks are also being reviewed and updated with the goal of completing the revisions by next year. The annual staff appreciation event to recognize employee work anniversaries and milestones is scheduled for July 29th at Twin Lakes. Additionally, the HR team continues to participate in local chamber and rotary events to strengthen community partnerships. Staff are exploring a financial wellness in-service for employees focused on retirement planning, saving, debt management, and other financial wellness topics.

Finance
Manager Eckelberry reported that the budget timeline has been shared with leadership and management, and departmental budget meetings have been scheduled as the agency prepares for the 2027 budget. It was noted that the budget can now be developed directly within the agency's financial software, which will allow for a more efficient budget process. The goal is to develop a budget that supports agency priorities while maintaining long-term financial sustainability. Manager Eckelberry provided an update regarding the proposed transfer of the 2025 operating surplus to the Capital Fund, sharing that the agency is no longer recommending the transfer at this time to focus on rebuilding reserves and strengthening the agency's financial position. Instead, staff are evaluating an annual transfer within the budget process from the Operating Fund to the Capital Fund to provide a consistent and transparent approach to funding future capital needs. Staff are also working to prepare revisions to the agency's fund balance policy to provide greater clarity regarding reserve levels and better align the policy with the agency's current structure of separate Operating and Capital Funds.

Communication & Technology
Superintendent Draper reported on the launch of NWSRA's redesigned website, which went live on July 9th. The website was redeveloped to improve navigation, streamline content, enhance mobile accessibility, and strengthen the connection between NWSRA and SLSF. Superintendent Draper also introduced the updated Director Site, which provides access to board packets, participation reports, financial documents, organizational information, and other

resources. Board materials from the current year and the previous three years will be maintained on the website. The ADA compliance project submission process is also accessible directly through the NWSRA website, allowing staff to submit projects without logging into the Director Site.

Foundation

Superintendent Kiwala shared that SLSF has 500 active donors and has raised more than $392,000 year to date, including $68,000 in secured grant funding and $90,000 pending. 6 golf outings have raised more than $224,000, with sponsorship commitments approaching $130,000 and exceeding budget. The Foundation made its 1st of 3 planned grants to NWSRA totaling $112,775, with total grants of $400,000 budgeted for the year. The Foundation has also secured more than $36,000 in in-kind goods and services benefiting NWSRA participants. It was also noted that planning is underway for the Celebrate Ability Gala, which will incorporate awards previously presented at the holiday luncheon. Strategic planning has also started and will focus on fundraising, revenue diversification, community engagement, and alignment with NWSRA's long term priorities.

Director

Director Griffin highlighted the Fully Involved Fire Academy and staff involved in the program as they present on the program to various fire departments in Peoria on October 14th. The closing meeting for the Pursuit program is scheduled for August 20th to review the final June budget, outstanding revenue, and closeout the program. Staff are currently reviewing program profitability and sustainability, identifying programs with low participation and high operating costs, and exploring opportunities to modify, subsidize, or discontinue programs as appropriate. Director Griffin reported on the latest employee pulse check, noting that engagement increased from 2.9 to 3.3 on a 4-point scale, with employees reporting stronger connection to their work. Areas for continued improvement include hiring and onboarding, cross department communication, timely communication to staff, and structured opportunities for employee feedback. Overall, employees expressed pride in the agency's mission and appreciation for their coworkers and supervisors.

Old Business

Programming Space Lease Agreement Update

Superintendent Hubsch shared updates regarding rental agreements, including a review of square footage and current rental rates, and discussed efforts to establish a fair and equitable approach as the agency moves forward with updating the program space leases. After board discussion, the consensus was to maintain consistent lease language, align lease terms to a common calendar, and include a CPI adjustment. Rental rates will be negotiated individually with each district to account for differences in facilities, usage, and other site-specific factors. Director Griffin will work with each of the 6 park districts to determine mutually agreeable rental amounts. Updated 3-year lease agreements are anticipated to begin January 2027 and will be presented to the respective Park District Boards and the NWSRA Board for approval.

Vehicle Leasing Update

Superintendent Hubsch reported on staff research on vehicle leasing options. Staff discussed exploring vehicle leasing options to support a consistent vehicle replacement cycle, reduce repair costs associated with aging vehicles, and maximize vehicle resale values. Several financing and lease options were reviewed, including tax exempt municipal leases, fair market value leases, and fixed purchase option leases. Staff will continue evaluating options and

consider incorporating a vehicle leasing program into the 2027 budget, with an RFP process anticipated.

Thrive Program Update

Superintendent Hubsch provided an update on the Thrive Program, sharing that participants have responded positively to the new program and activities. The program is currently operating across 6 sites, with staffing ratios adjusted at select locations to better meet participant needs and provide appropriate support for community outings and activities. The program currently has multiple assessments scheduled for new participants and anticipates serving around 40 individuals from the waitlist by the end of the year. Superintendent Hubsch noted that participant numbers continue to change as individuals adjust their schedules or transition to other service providers. An update on the program's financial outlook was also shared to emphasize the importance of maintaining financial transparency and ensuring program revenue supports participant services and future Capital Funding needs. The Board continued the discussion on prioritizing in-district residents due to significant demand for Adult Day Program Services. Moving forward, although demand for the program remains high, in-district residents will be prioritized from the waitlist before out of district applicants. Families have been clearly informed of this policy. The Board congratulated staff on the successful launch and implementation of the program.

Inclusion Overtime Expenses

Director Griffin reported that inclusion overtime expenses totaled $891 through June 21st. Overtime will continue to be closely monitored, with staff reviewing expenses each payroll period and communicating updates to management. Director Griffin also noted that the 2027 budget will clearly identify inclusion overtime expenses to provide greater transparency and more accurate budgeting. Overtime primarily occurs during the summer months due to increased program needs and participant schedules. The Board recognized staff for their diligence in monitoring overtime and thanked the Inclusion team for their communication and efforts to maintain consistency and appropriate support for families.

New Business

Second Quarter Reports

Director Griffin reviewed the second quarter agency goals, highlighting the Behavior team's development of a Readiness to Return to Program Checklist to guide families and member districts following a participant's program pause or suspension. Staff are also developing guidelines for resources to be shared through the new website's resource page to ensure alignment with NWSRA's mission and outreach efforts. Manager Eckelberry provided the second quarter financial report. The agency's net profit through second quarter was $1.56 million, compared to $1.08 million last year, with the increase partially attributed to the implementation of BS&A's accounts receivable module. Professional fees are at 97% of budget, primarily due to legal fees related to programming space leases. Part-time salaries and inclusion expenses remain within variance thresholds, with higher expenses anticipated during the summer camp season. Superintendent Draper informed the Board that NWSRA served 1,101 unique participants through 1,625 registrations during the second quarter. Adult programs, adult day programs, day camps, and social clubs continued to have strong participation, while inclusion services supported 165 individuals through 263 registrations. Superintendent Draper noted that, as RecTrac is being used for the first year, prior quarterly reports may be reviewed and adjusted to ensure yearly comparisons are consistent and accurate.

Member District Annual Assessment FY2027

Director Griffin clarified that the 2026 MDAA was 2%, correcting a previous statement of 2.5%. The 3% MDAA rate for 2027 was previously agreed upon. Board members received MDAA packets containing EAV, population, inclusion services, and contribution comparisons, along with special recreation fund recommendations and the 2027 sample resolution. Director Griffin asked board members to present the resolution to their respective boards and return the approved resolution to NWSRA to proceed with the 3% MDAA rate for the 2027 budget.

Information/Action Items

2026 Board of Directors Contact List

Director Griffin provided an updated 2026 Board of Directors Contact List to include Matt Wehby for the Wheeling Park District, along with email and phone number corrections.

NWSRA Park District Representative

Director Griffin reminded the Board to identify their NWSRA Park District Representative and alternate and then return the information to NWSRA.

Updated Organizational Chart

Director Griffin reviewed the updated organizational chart, which now identifies positions eligible for benefits. Part-Time 3 employees are eligible for health benefits, with 2 of the 6 eligible employees currently enrolled. Staff will continue monitoring enrollment through the end of the month. The organizational chart will be further clarified to distinguish benefit eligible positions and avoid confusion among the different part-time classifications.

Stumm Health Insurance

Director Griffin shared that the previous requested additional insurance coverage for general liability and cyber liability has been added by Stumm Insurance. Director Griffin asked for a motion to approve the Stumm Health Insurance Client Services Agreement for 2027. Director Bessette made the motion and Director Rea seconded the motion to approve the Stumm Health Insurance Client Services Agreement. Upon roll being called the vote was as follows:

AYE: Carrie Fullerton, Kevin Romejko, Erika Strojinc, Ben Curcio, Steve Bessette, Jim Jarog, Ben Rea, Christina Ferraro, Bret Fahnstrom, Diane Hilgers, Rob Ward, Jeff Janda, and Matt Wehby

NAY: None

The motion carried.

Closed Session

Chairperson Janda requested a motion for adjournment to closed session for the purpose of discussing personnel and litigation. Director Romejko made the motion and Director Fahnstrom seconded the motion for adjournment to closed session. Upon roll being called the vote was as follows:

AYE: Carrie Fullerton, Kevin Romejko, Erika Strojinc, Ben Curcio, Steve Bessette, Jim Jarog, Ben Rea, Christina Ferraro, Bret Fahnstrom, Diane Hilgers, Rob Ward, Jeff Janda, and Matt Wehby

NAY: None

The motion carried.

Adjournment

After no further business, Chairperson Janda called for a motion to adjourn. Director Romejko made the motion and Director Bessette seconded the motion to adjourn the July 22, 2026 NWSRA Board of Directors meeting at 12:13 p.m. Upon voice vote the meeting was adjourned.

Secretary: 

Date: 9/23/2026