

**Brandon Magnini**

**Friday, January 9, 2026 at 10:17:21 Central Standard Time**

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**Subject:** Special Board Meeting Strategic Planning Workshop Reminder 1.14.2026  
**Date:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 at 4:15:05 PM Central Standard Time  
**From:** Brandon Magnini  
**To:** Becky Jante, Matt Brueck, Anna Nelson, Dan Corrigan, Doug Dietzen  
**Attachments:** image001.jpg, January 2026 Board Strategic Planning Meeting Agenda.pdf, Board Strategic Interview Question and Focus Groups.pdf, Sample Grayslake Park District Board Strategic Goals.pdf

**\*\*Please do not reply all\*\***

Good afternoon, Commissioners,

I wanted to provide a reminder that we will be conducting our Board Strategic Planning Workshop as part of the ongoing process to put together a Strategic Plan for the District covering 2026-2029.

As decided during the December Regular Meeting, this Open Meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 14th , 2026, at 6:00pm.

I have re-attached the reflection questions that I would like the Commissioners to review to discuss during Wednesday's Special Meeting. In addition, I have attached a sample Board/Admin Level Goals Plan (borrowed from the Grayslake Park District) that I would like the Commissioners to pull inspiration from to establish some goals for the period covering the new Strategic Plan (2026-2029).

To help assist with this discussion for next week, I have also attached summaries of our past and current focus groups as well the link from our 2023-2024 Community Needs Assessment Summary Report (below):

<https://www.wildwoodparkdistrict.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/CNAR-2024.pdf>

Hardcopies of this information will be put together in packets for your mailboxes as well for pickup.

Please let me know if you have any questions in the interim.

Sincerely,  
Brandon

**Brandon Magnini**  
**Executive Director**  
Wildwood Park District  
33325 N. Sears Boulevard Wildwood, IL 60030  
[www.wildwoodparkdistrict.com](http://www.wildwoodparkdistrict.com)

**Wildwood Park District  
Special Board Meeting  
33325 N. Sears Boulevard, Wildwood, IL 60030  
Wednesday, January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2026, 6:00pm  
In-Person at Rule House**

Consistent with the requirements of the Illinois Compiled Statutes  
5 ILCS 120/1 through 120/6 (Open Meetings Act), notices of this meeting were posted.  
Location of the meeting: Rule House, 33325 N. Sears Boulevard, Wildwood, IL 60030

**AGENDA**

- I. Call to Order - Pledge of Allegiance**
- II. Roll Call**
- III. Approval of Agenda – Special Board Meeting – Wednesday, January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2026**
- IV. Matters from the Public**
- V. New Business**
  - A. 2026-2029 Strategic Plan – Board of Commissioners Workshop**
- VI. Matters from the Public**
- VII. Adjournment**

The Wildwood Park District is subject to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Individuals with disabilities who plan to attend this meeting and who require certain accommodations in order to allow them to observe and/or participate in this meeting, or who have questions regarding the accessibility of the meeting or facilities, are asked to contact the Park District at 847.223.7275 or email Executive Director/ADA Compliance Officer Brandon Magnini at [bmagnini@wildwoodparkdistrict.com](mailto:bmagnini@wildwoodparkdistrict.com).

**The Board of Park Commissioners welcome public comments during all meetings.**

**Key rules governing participation**

All comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per person and no longer than 30 minutes for all comments.

Strategic planning interviews with internal park district staff and the Board are a critical component of gathering a comprehensive understanding of the organization's current state and future needs. The questions should be tailored to solicit honest and valuable feedback that can inform the development of a strategic plan.

Below are sample questions organized by theme to use in interviews internally at a Park District.

**Vision and mission**

- What does our park district do exceptionally well?
- What is the most critical function of our park district?
- How do you feel our park district's vision and mission align with our daily operations?
- What do you believe the park district's vision should be for the future?

**Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT)**

- **Strengths:** What are the park district's greatest internal strengths? Think about our staff, facilities, and programs.
- **Weaknesses:** Where do you see the most significant inefficiencies or weaknesses within the district?
- **Opportunities:** What opportunities are we missing or under-utilizing? This could be new programs, partnerships, or funding sources.
- **Threats:** What external factors pose the greatest threat to our park district's success?

**Programs and facilities**

- Which current programs or facilities do you believe are the most successful? Why?
- Are there any programs that should be eliminated or restructured?
- What improvements would you like to see for existing facilities or parks?
- What new facilities or programs would best serve the community's needs?
- Are we adequately meeting the recreational needs of all demographics within our community?

### **Internal communication and collaboration**

- How would you describe the communication between different departments or teams?
- Do you feel that employees have adequate input into decision-making processes?
- How can we improve internal collaboration to better serve our community?
- Are our internal processes and workflows clear and efficient?

### **Staff development and culture**

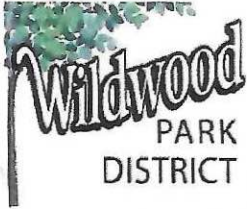
- How can the district better support employee growth and development?
- What is the overall morale of the staff, and what factors contribute to it?

### **Fiscal responsibility**

- What is your perspective on the park district's current allocation of resources?
- Are there areas where you believe we can increase revenue or reduce costs without sacrificing quality?
- How can we better demonstrate value to the resident taxpayers?

### **Implementation and accountability**

- In your experience, what are the primary obstacles to implementing new initiatives?
- What role do you believe staff should play in holding the organization accountable for achieving its goals?
- How can we best track progress and measure the success of our strategic plan?



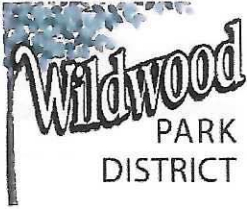
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**Wildwood Park District Strategic Planning FOCUS GROUP Meeting**  
**10/30/2025 Lakeview Room**

**AGENDA**

- I. Introductions***
- II. Strategic Planning Process and Background***
- III. Exploratory Discussion Questions Open Dialogue (See Handout)***
- IV. Nominal Group Technique Group Discussion***
- V. Consensus (See 2022 Focus Group Handout for Comparison) for Strategic Priorities***
- VI. Q & A Session on General Park District Happenings***
- VII. ADA Accessibility Survey Handout Prior to Departure***



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## Wildwood Park District Strategic Planning FOCUS GROUP Meeting 10/30/2025 Lakeview Room

### Exploratory Discussion Questions and Community Answers

1. *How would you describe the District to a stranger or someone who doesn't live or work here?*

District does a great job with the exception of Valley Lake and water quality. Both Valley Lake Parks are in great shape, and the newly redesigned plunge pool has helped with filtration in the lake.

The District is a great place, lots of great and engaging and welcoming family activities (like Harvest Fest). Low enough taxes. Things continue to grow and be maintained in an excellent way.

2. *If you left the District tomorrow, and didn't return for 10-15 years, what do you think you'll see, or what do you hope you'll see, when you return?*

People love the District the way it is, wouldn't change a thing. Do not make any changes or major additions to the parks around Valley Lake. **\*\*There was a theme of some of the residents who attended that lived near Valley Lake were not aware or did not put as much stock into the matters affecting the parks and programs around Gages/not on Valley.\*\*** Being a small District, a lot of the services and amenities (sports courts, etc.) are covered by the Township and would not necessarily be necessary in the Wildwood Parks system.

There was a feeling that prior to the last two years that some of the parks got more attention and care compared to others (especially around Gages Lake). With the improvements at Old Plank Park and the maintenance focus on the Valley Parks/Twin Lakes, that has improved the last couple of years. Continue on that track for all the parks.

There was a hope that the large open greenspace area at Twin Lakes Park off of Fairfield Rd. that was formerly the soccer field could be utilized and intentionally programming moving forward.

3. *What do you like best about the District? Related to that, what are the strengths/greatest assets of the District? Opportunities?*

Variety is something that the District has. Besides the two lakes, there is a strong variety of parks in the system, being able to ride bikes between the parks is worthwhile. With the lake and how the parks are setup on the lake, users can safely fish, waterski, ice skate, swim, boat, etc. You can have a busy lake with lots of activity like Gages and yet move to a calmer lake at Valley for a change of pace to fish and kayak.

With Valley Lake being cleaned up from the algae, there can be further opportunities for special events like kayak or sailboat races.

Respondents appreciate the hardcopy program guide and were disappointed several years ago when the guide was only digital for one year. The Park District has since reversed course on this.

4. *Can you identify areas or topics in need of attention or improvement? Related to that, what are the weaknesses/greatest needs of the District? Challenges?*

The respondents stated that they would like to see an additional and continued investment in the walkability of the parks with paths especially with the busy roads and lack of sidewalks.

Twin Lakes ponds, while not a top priority, was suggested to possibly treat the water in those ponds for aesthetics.

Valley Lake water quality was a top priority. Residents would like to see a focus for shoreline stabilization especially at Valley South Park on the Greentree Road side of the park. The District needs to do a better job of informing people and putting out information regarding harmful lawn practices that can affect the algae and water quality in both lakes.

5. *What are/should be the top priorities of the District over the next 3-5 years?*

Park Safety was briefly brought up and addressed. The wish was that our Park Safety staffing levels and presence remains at the level it is now to ensure that the Parks are being watched at peak use and that we maintain a good relationship with the Lake County Sherriff's Office.

Valley Lake was mentioned again as the top priority to keep focused on improving along with Gages Lake water quality and weed removal.

6. *If you could change or initiate a key item or thing about the District, what would it be?*

While the District tries a variety of programs, it is somewhat discouraging that some of the smaller programs do not run. It was suggested to continue working with neighboring agencies in co-op programs to make joint programs run and not focusing on things that do not consistently run or gain good registration. In the 2022 Focus Groups and 2024 Community Needs Assessment, the consensus was our camps/swim/preschool and Special Events were the most enjoyed recreational offerings.

# 2022-2023



## WILDWOOD PARK DISTRICT DISTRICT PRIORITIES

### BOARD FEEDBACK

#### STRENGTHS

- Maintenance standards of parks and lakes
- Mature trees and abundant natural resources
- Small town feel
- Community within a community
- Community created by the WPD

#### OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

- The growth of Harvestfest into an annual event.
- Maintenance and improvement of core programs with high participation instead of devoting time and resources to new programs with no documented interest.
- Implementation of more, smaller special events
- Utilization of Sunset, Willow and Twin Lakes Parks for various programming
- Consistent programming for our Active Adults and Seniors
- Implement a system to determine if State and Federal grants can be utilized by the WPD while maintaining exclusivity for residents.
- Capital improvement projects:
  - Roof at Rule House
  - New playground at Pebble
  - Pebble and Sunset seawall improvements

#### PRIORITIES

- Communication to the residents
- Create opportunities to bring the community together through events and programs
- Maintain parks, facilities at the highest standard possible and conserve all natural resources
- Dedicate time and resources to maintain high-quality experiences for core programs and offerings
- Restore and maintain District assets utilizing a comprehensive capital plan.
- Provide safety and security for the parks and natural resources.

### STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

#### STRENGTHS

- Outdoor spaces including parks, lakes, beaches and playgrounds
- Variety of socio-economic status within the community
- Preschool program
- Swim lessons
- Mature trees and abundant natural resources
- Decades long partnership and cooperation with the Lion's Club
- Harvestfest
- Community created by the WPD

#### OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

- The growth of Harvestfest into an annual event.
- Cooperation and communication between each lake community (Gages and Valley) and the stakeholders involved.
- Lake safety education
- Communication of programs. Specifically, the need for multiple streams of communication including a paper brochure, social media, emails and newsletters
- An outdoor ice rink during the winter months
- Develop a volunteer database and program.

#### PRIORITIES

- Communication to the residents.
- Create opportunities to bring the community together through events and programs.
- Maintain parks, facilities at the highest standard possible and conserve all natural resources.
- Dedicate time and resources to maintain high-quality experiences for core programs and offerings.

2022-2023



# WILDWOOD PARK DISTRICT DISTRICT PRIORITIES

## PRIORITIES

## OPPORTUNITIES

### COMMUNICATION

- Increased communication of programs through multiple channels. Each program and event needs to be communicated in advance via multiple streams to gain more awareness. Some examples include paper brochure, social media, emails, posters and newsletters
- Continue the decades long partnership and cooperation with the Lion's Club *Keep things ~~done~~ well-maintained! - [unclear] program for [unclear] history space*
- Develop regular communication and cooperation between each lake community (Gages and Valley) and the stakeholders involved.
- Develop a volunteer database and program to help with running events and word of mouth communication. *(Gages Lake History Bus) → Historical FD page to play with*

### EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

- Continue to grow Harvest Fest and prioritize it to be an annual, community building event.
- Implement more, smaller special events
- Utilize Sunset, Willow and Twin Lakes Parks for various programming
- Develop and maintain an outdoor ice rink during the Winter months
- Develop a volunteer database and retention program to help with events. *Volunteer ~~is~~ ~~cost~~ etc. recognition X key!! [unclear]*

### PARK MAINTENANCE

- Continue high quality maintenance standards for outdoor spaces including parks, lakes, beaches and playgrounds
- Continue to prioritize the maintenance and care of mature trees as a valuable natural resource.

### CORE PROGRAMMING

- Maintain and improve core programs with high participation and success rates like preschool and swim lesson programs
- Devote time and resources to new programs if there is documented community interest.
- Develop a consistent program for local active older adults, not to compete with Warren Township. *Meghan Licht Pickleball!!*

### COMPREHENSIVE CAPITAL PLAN

- Develop a project list that could be eligible for state and federal grants.
- Capital improvement projects for the roof at Rule House, new playground at Pebble and Pebble and Sunset seawall improvements.

### SAFETY AND SECURITY

- Provide boater and water safety education to the community.
- Determine a policy and procedure for after hours use of parks.

The purpose of this entire document was to provide a number of analyses of the park district’s physical assets, service offerings and financial status in order to develop a set of measureable goals through plans that cover all facets of the district’s operations. This chapter will break down categorically and by time frames the most the preferred methods and processes of continually maintaining and/or improving the overall services that the district provides to the community. The plans will be presented in numerous templates and categories to include district level goals, departmental level goals, capital projects and replacement plans for numerous assets and will also include strategic elements for integration into service delivery and performance plans. Some assumptions have been made in regards to anticipated financial resources coming into the district such as external funds through grants and then the reinjection of those dollars to further accomplish the set of identified initiatives. A few contingencies have also been integrated in case some of those resources are not received. In any case, the following plans are intended to serve as guide for the district’s short-term (1 – 3 years), mid-term (4 – 6 years), and long-term goals, (7 – 10 years). It will include fiscal year 2014/15 as the majority of this plan was composed during that timeframe and to also include the significant amount of initiatives already developed through the district’s bond refinancing that was completed in early 2014.

The first set of goals will focus on Departmental Level Goals. These goals include suggestions and ideas received from the community survey, (Appendix D), initiatives identified through program, service and physical asset assessments, from existing sub-plans already in place and from goals already identified through annual goal setting processes by departments. Departmental goals labeled as Administration may include the Executive Director and/or any staff assigned by the board and/or Executive Director.

**Board/Administrative Staff Level Goals:**

| Department(s) | Goals  | Preferred Timeline                        | Notes   |
|---------------|--|---|---|
| Board/Admin   | Intergovernmental Agreements with local governments for shared use of facilities | Short and medium timeframes (1 – 7 years) | Reduces reliance on a few local space providers |

|             |  |  |  |
|-------------|--|--|--|
| Board/Admin | Intergovernmental Agreements with local governments for reciprocal rates | Short and medium timeframes (1-7 years)      | May reduce need to provide redundant facilities/services   |
| Board/Admin | Policy Manual Updates  | 2015/16<br>2015/16<br><br>2015/16<br>2017/18 | Personnel Policy, Admin/Operations. Policy Manual, Park Code Board Policy Manual<br><br>*policies may need minor updates in between projected dates as required by legal statutes<br>*additional policies could include signage and sponsorship in parks, maintaining statistics and conducting a community survey |
| Board/Admin | Parks Tour   | 2016/17                                      | Tours could be conducted every 2 – 3 years or as newly elected officials join the board. Tours assist the board in examining completed projects and helping to identify other needs throughout the district  |
| Board/Staff | Strategic Planning Session   | 2017/18                                      | Review mission statement, develop organizational goals, review the district's comprehensive plan, identify district needs and any new strategic elements   |
| Board/Admin | Policy Updates   | 2020/21                                      | Review and update as needed  |

|             |                            |         |  |
|-------------|----------------------------|---------|--|
| Board/Admin | Parks Tour                 | 2022/23 | Board can revisit all improvements made since last tour and start to identify new set of goals for future improvements |
| Board/Staff | Strategic Planning Session | 2022/23 | Initiate planning process for next comprehensive plan to include community survey                                      |
| Board/Staff | Comprehensive Plan         | 2023/24 | Develop next 10 year Comprehensive Plan  |

Administrative Staff Goals

| Department(s)                     | Goals   | Preferred Timeline | Notes  |
|-----------------------------------|---|--------------------|--|
| Administration                    | Bi –Annual Training   | Ongoing            | Conduct All Staff meetings 2 times per year for informational, training and team building purposes |
| Administration                    | Expand outreach of Grays Lake Management Committee  | 2015/16            | Hold quarterly meetings, expand education and informational outreach of Grays Lake related issues  |
| Administration, Recreation, Parks | Determine staffing requirements for additional services such as <b>Alleghany Park</b> maintenance, expanding marketing and expanding recreation programming | 2016/17            | To position district when Corporate and Recreation funds hit target fund balance levels in 2017    |
| Administration                    | Perform Organizational Assessment   | 2017/18            | Contract out firm to produce objective measurement of organizational make-up and services          |