



**chicago park district**  
541 N. Fairbanks Chicago, IL 60611

## **FORMATION OF A PARK ADVISORY COUNCIL**

Thank you for your interest in becoming more involved with your neighborhood park and community through the formation of a Park Advisory Council (PAC). The Chicago Park District (CPD) is committed to the improvement of its parks by enhancing their maintenance, beauty and recreational programs. A successful partnership between a PAC and the CPD can help enhance our parks as important centers of community activity.

These guidelines were developed as a result of requests from citizen groups seeking assistance in forming active councils so their community's needs can be organized and expressed accurately to the CPD. The guidelines outline the process for the formation and recognition of a PAC by the CPD and provide recommendations and requirements for the purpose and structure of a PAC and its members.

It is important to note that PACs are separate and independent entities apart from the CPD. Their role is to provide recommendations and suggestions to the CPD regarding their respective parks and have no authority or power related to the Chicago Park District, City of Chicago or State of Illinois. The CPD cannot provide any funding for a PAC and may not hold funds for a PAC. Membership on a PAC is voluntary and the CPD accepts no responsibility for the actions of PAC officers and members. The CPD reserves all authority to make policy and administrative decisions. PACs may not mandate activities, programs or policies. The CPD retains all authority to set fee structures and establish operating procedures for its facilities.



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## **PARK ADVISORY COUNCIL GUIDELINES**

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### **PART I: STARTING THE PROCESS**

Any park or playlot within the Chicago Park District (CPD) may be represented by a Park Advisory Council (PAC). **The CPD recognizes only one (1) registered PAC per park and an official PAC can represent the interest of the park and adopt neighboring pocket parks.**

Prior to beginning the PAC formation process, the CPD recommends you contact the Park Supervisor or Area Manager to determine if a PAC exists or if others are interested in forming a PAC.

1. For parks or playlots **without** an existing PAC:
  - i. Any person can request to convene the initial meeting of a PAC by submitting a letter of intent to form a Park Advisory Council to the Park Supervisor or Area Manager.
  - ii. This letter should include the date and time of the initial meeting of the PAC. It is recommended that the meeting take place no sooner than 21 days and no later than 60 days from the date filed.
  - iii. The Park Supervisor or Area Manager will review the document and post notice of the initial meeting.
  - iv. This meeting should be held at the park or, if no park space is available, at the nearest public facility.
  - v. Interested residents should work closely with park staff to notify the community and local elected officials of the intent to form a new PAC.
2. If there is an **existing** PAC:
  - i. Park staff can provide you the PAC contact information or meetings.
  - ii. If a PAC has been formed you can become a member by attending the next PAC meeting and abiding by the PAC By-laws.
  - iii. If you are unable to obtain PAC information please contact the CPD Department of Legislative and Community Affairs at 312-742-2797.



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## **PART II: Initial Meeting and Election of Officers**

Assuming a PAC does not exist, the next step is to hold the initial meeting of the PAC. The purpose of the initial meeting is to determine community interest in the PAC, receive nominations for PAC officers and set the date for the next meeting and elections.

At the initial meeting, Park District staff can be made available to assist with the coordination and order of the meeting. The CPD encourages the use of Robert's Rules of Order (condensed version included in this packet) to govern all PAC meetings.

At the initial meeting we ask that a sign-in sheet be circulated for completion by each prospective member. The sign-in sheet should be attached to the Registration Form when submitted to the CPD. The Chicago Park District recognizes the invaluable contribution of citizens' input as provided by a broad-based, representative advisory body. Completion of the Registration Form provides the CPD with the assurance that a PAC will conduct itself for the best interest of the park through commonly shared values and establishes a partnership with the CPD.

In order to ensure a certain level of consistency, the CPD suggests each PAC follow the principles below:

- 1) Elections should be held for the offices of President, Vice-President, and Treasurer.
- 2) All officers of the PAC shall be elected by the general membership according to the PAC by-laws.
- 3) Each voting member is allowed one vote.
- 4) Elections for each office should be held annually.
- 5) Any attendance requirements for voting must be established in the by-laws.
- 6) All elected officers of the PAC must read and sign a Registration Form, so that names can be posted on the Chicago Park District website.
- 7) **All members of the PAC who handle funds or work with children must complete and submit a Volunteer application to the CPD and submit to a background check.**

The CPD requests that PACs maintain a binder containing meeting minutes, by-laws, attendance, financial statements, and member contact information for quick access if such information is requested. This binder should be kept at your respective park for convenience.

In addition to the above each PAC is free to include additional officers or sub-committees as necessary.



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## **PART III: POLICY**

### **A. MEMBERSHIP AND MEETINGS**

Once the initial officers have been elected the PAC is free to amend its by-laws to address its purposes, goals and membership needs. Below are some guidelines the CPD has recognized as vital components to the successful and equitable operation of every PAC. In order to ensure a certain level of consistency, the CPD would expect each PAC to incorporate these items:

1. The CPD requests that those PAC members who will either be working with children or handling any financial funds or records to complete an official CPD Volunteer Application.
2. A PAC should consist of at least three (3) members, this includes officers.
3. We suggest Resident members (Chicago residents) be allowed to serve as officers with full voting privileges, and that Non-Resident members (those who reside outside of Chicago) participate only as general members with voting privileges to be determined according to each PAC's by-laws.
4. We request that every January each PAC post a calendar of their scheduled meetings for the year and provide a copy of such to their respective park, or establish a regular meeting date and time (e.g. the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m.).
5. Members should be properly notified of all PAC meetings and activities. At a minimum, notice of scheduled PAC meetings shall be posted 14 days in advance at its respective park. 48 hour notice should be provided for emergency or special meetings; Criteria to determine what constitutes emergency or special meetings should be included in the PAC by-laws. Meeting cancellations shall be posted immediately by the PAC and they should inform the Park Supervisor or Area Manager of such cancellations.
6. Park District employees may be members of PACs; however, they may not hold office in a PAC, and can only be a non-voting member at the park where they are employed. The CPD requires employees to disclose their CPD employment.
7. A person can only hold office in one PAC at a time unless voted the community and approved by the Chicago Park District.
8. In order to maintain recognition as an official PAC, every PAC should meet once annually in order to accept nominations for election of officers.
9. Each PAC is free to determine whether they will require membership fees or dues; however, no person interested in becoming a member of a PAC should be excluded from membership for inability to pay any such dues or fees.



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## **B. PURPOSE/GOALS**

If possible the PAC's purpose/goals should be determined as soon as its officers are elected. Changes to existing purpose/goals can be made at subsequent meetings in accordance with the PAC by-laws. The CPD has provided the following items as a means of assisting a PAC when determining its purpose/goals:

1. The purpose/goals should have a positive impact on the park and the surrounding community.
2. It is important to remember that the purpose of a PAC is to provide the CPD's appropriate local, regional and administrative staff with an advisory voice on matters related to its specific park. These include, but are not necessarily limited to, facilities and equipment improvements, programming, landscaping, budgeting, safety/security and overall evaluation of service.
3. The CPD strongly supports the idea of PACs conducting fund-raising events in cooperation with the local Park Supervisor and/or Area Manager, for the purpose of generating revenue to fund the purchase of equipment, additional programming or other improvements in partnership with CPD. (See Section D below for more information.)
4. Several PACs have established committees that deal with very specific areas of their respective park. Examples of such committees are: Dog Friendly Area Committee, Program Committee, Fund-Raising and Promotions Committee, Garden Committee, Playlot Committee and Landscape Committee.

## **C. BY-LAWS**

1. The CPD has developed a standard set of by-laws that every PAC can use to operate and maintain their organization. These by-laws contain many of the items discussed within these guidelines and can be used immediately by a PAC to operate and maintain their organization. However, each PAC should have its own identity and the CPD encourages each to expand upon these by-laws in order that they reflect the goals, purpose, and identity of its respective park and community.
2. Customization of by-laws is expected to be crafted in a way to encourage participation by all and must not discriminate because of disability, race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, and marital status, unfavorable discharge from military service, parental status, or sexual orientation.



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## **D. DONATIONS, FUNDRAISING & FINANCIAL REPORTS**

PACs are independent from the CPD and cannot receive funding from or represent the park district in any manner; however, the CPD is very willing to work together with our PACs to assist them in obtaining donations or conducting fund raisers supporting park programs, equipment or capital projects. Due to the fact that funds or equipment obtained by a PAC will ultimately be used for public purpose, there are certain requirements the CPD must ask every PAC to follow. This includes requiring:

1) **All members of the PAC who handle funds must complete and submit a Volunteer application to the CPD and submit to a background check.**

2) Whenever a PAC solicits or obtains funds, the CPD requires that it open a bank account in the name of the PAC and either register as a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization or work with a third-party fiscal agent, such as the Chicago Parks Foundation or Friends of the Parks.

3) PACs must maintain financial records detailing its fund raising efforts. These records should be available to the public and submitted to the CPD.

4) Coordination of donations and fundraising strategies with the CPD by following one of the appropriate financial contribution guidelines outlined below:

A. Capital Fundraisers. Capital improvements are generally those repairs or improvements that are more permanent in nature and typically do not involve programs, equipment or operations. This process requires:

1. *Notification to CPD:* Discuss the project with the Park Supervisor or Area Manager to make sure that the idea is consistent with Chicago Park District plans for the future of the park. Submit a letter of intent to the Department of Legislative and Community Affairs (LCA).

2. *Executed Agreement:* LCA will conduct a review of the proposal and provide a Capital Partnership Pledge form to the PAC for completion. Before a project can be bid for construction the PAC must submit a copy of a bank statement indicating the total funds raised, as well as the specific purpose of the funds for execution of a final agreement.

a) A final agreement will be drafted between CPD and the PAC and must be signed by the PAC and the General Superintendent or designee.

b) The CPD must receive the executed agreement and copy of bank statement prior to the CPD issuing spending authority; the PAC will then be invoiced for the agreed donation amount.

B. Monetary and In-kind Donations. All monetary or in-kind donations (such as temporary equipment, refrigerators, computers or other similar assets) for a park **must** be reported to the CPD. The respective Park Supervisor or Area Manager will complete a Donation Acceptance Form. Additionally, monetary donations must include a letter identifying the donation amount, purpose of the donation and a copy of the payment. Please remember that any equipment or in-kind donation becomes the property of the CPD, and as such, the CPD has the right to use them as it deems safe and necessary. The CPD also has the right to refuse to accept any in-kind donation or capital improvement project at its sole discretion.



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4). Any funds raised by the PAC may not be used to pay the salary of any PAC member, CPD staff or other organization for their efforts.

## **E. COMPLAINT REVIEW PROCESS**

This review process is designed solely for the purpose of reviewing complaints from PACs regarding actions of members acting on behalf of their PAC.

1. The officers of the PAC have the responsibility of monitoring the actions and activities of their PAC as a whole. The objectives set by the individual PACs must be lawful, good for the community and not conflict with CPD policies.
2. The PAC has the right to review the actions of an individual member, officer, or group of members or officers acting on behalf of the PAC. The PAC may consider separation of a member, officer, or group of members or officers should they deem it appropriate based on just cause.
3. PACs should respond to any complaints in writing and file a copy of the response in the file kept at its respective park. Should the complainant be dissatisfied with the response, they have the right to appear before the PAC's general membership to voice their concern.
4. If the above procedures fail to reach an amicable conclusion the complainant has a right to file a written appeal with the PAC Oversight Committee, which details the complaint, the steps taken and the result. The Oversight Committee will provide the final opinion on the matter. For more information on the PAC Oversight Committee or how to become a member please contact the Department of Legislative and Community Affairs.

## **F. REGISTRATION FORM**

In order to complete the PAC formation process each PAC must complete a [Registration Form](#) after its members are elected. This agreement constitutes the basic partnership between the CPD and the PAC. Each member of the PAC is expected to respect the terms of the agreement in order to retain the PAC's official designation. Once complete, the fully executed [Registration Form](#) must be filled out. The CPD will return a copy of the fully executed [Registration Form](#) when it has determined the PAC has complied with all requirements.

Only when all documents are in order and the PAC and its applicants are in compliance with CPD policies and guidelines can a PAC become recognized as an official Park Advisory Council by the Chicago Park District.

The above Chicago Park District guidelines are required of every PAC.



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## **G. COMPLIANCE**

In order to enjoy certain Chicago Park District PAC advantages all PACs must be compliant with the following

- a) All Park Advisory Councils must submit the [Park Advisory Council Yearly Report](#)
- b) When new officers are elected the PAC must submit the [New Officers Form](#) to the Chicago Park District
- c) Any PAC members handling finances or working with youth must submit an Adult Volunteer Application

## **CONCLUSION**

We hope that you find these guidelines and additional information helpful to your formation of a Park Advisory Council. By being a recognized Park Advisory Council with the Chicago Park District you are entitled to several benefits.

Including:

- Recognition as an organization that can effectively relate your community's goals and visions for its park to the Chicago Park District
- Updates on various park projects and programs
- Appropriate space (where/when available) for meetings of PACs at local parks
- A mailbox at the local park

In addition to these benefits, you will surely find that being a member of a Park Advisory Council is a very rewarding and fulfilling experience. If you have any questions about the formation process, please contact your local Park Supervisor, Area Manager or the Department of Legislative and Community Affairs at 312-742-2797.

Thank you and we look forward to working with you to continue to enhance your park.