

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
OF THE FARGO PARK DISTRICT OF JUNE 30, 2023**

The Special Meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Park District of the City of Fargo was held on Friday, June 30, 2023, at 8:00 a.m. at the Fargo Park District office at 701 Main Avenue, Fargo, North Dakota and via Restream. Present at the meeting were Commissioners Dawn Morgan, Vicki Dawson, Aaron Hill, Jerry Rostad and Joe Deutsch. Also present were: Dave Leker, Dave Bietz, Susan Faus, Carolyn Boutain, and attorney Jeff Gunkelman.

Approval of Agenda

Commissioner Joe Deutsch moved and Commissioner Aaron Hill seconded a motion to approve the agenda. Upon call of the roll, the motion passed unanimously.

**Discussion of Completion of Executive Director's Performance Improvement Plan and Discussion
of Proposed Actions Related to the Same**

All the Commissioners discussed this agenda item. Commissioner Deutsch started the discussion by stating there are three potential avenues to move forward: (1) accept the plan as complete; (2) to extend the performance improvement plan; (3) move forward with an exit plan.

Commissioner Hill stated that he spent a lot of time over the last year listening, observing and asking questions related to Dave Leker's employment. Commissioner Hill noted that there are certain leadership deficiencies but they don't rise to the level to consider terminating Dave Leker's employment. Commissioner Hill noted that Dave started as executive director in February 2020 and that Covid hit immediately thereafter. Commissioner Hill noted that from his personal experiences, leadership was very difficult during that time. Commissioner Hill noted that shortly after that the Park District embarked on two massive construction projects and that Dave is operationally experienced. Commissioner Hill stated that he felt the performance improvement plan should be complete with permanent implementation of certain action items that arose out of the performance improvement plan. Commissioner Hill stated that the duty of the Board is to help and not just criticize.

Commissioner Rostad noted that the job of the Board is evaluate job performance objectively. Commissioner Rostad noted that the Board has given Dave two and a half years to meet expectations of the job and that there are still areas where Dave is failing to meet or exceed expectations. Commissioner Rostad stated that sometimes the right decision is the hard decision.

Commissioner Morgan stated that she is always looking to the future of the Park District and how to expose herself to wider views. Commissioner Morgan stated that she felt communication was lacking and that she had to continue to ask for status updates on certain projects. Commissioner Morgan noted that she wanted to feel like the Board and the Executive Director are working together on the vision for the Park District. Commissioner Morgan noted that she was disappointed that Dave Leker did not engage the community more consistently. Commissioner Morgan noted that she felt Dave is very good at his job but that he is missing leadership and vision.

Commissioner Dawson noted that there have been major decisions made during her five years on the Board but that this decision is the biggest one. Commissioner Dawson noted that Dave has worked for the Park District for many years and that he is a likeable guy. Commissioner Dawson noted that as much as the Board may want Dave to be the right person for the position he is not the right guy. Commissioner

Dawson noted that the Board approved the hiring of two deputy directors to assist Dave. Commissioner Dawson noted that Dave's idea of leading the Park District is to check the box. Commissioner Dawson stated that Dave is a long term person who is in the wrong position with the Park District.

Commissioner Deutsch stated that every person has their strengths and weaknesses and that it's the job of the Board to set up Dave and his entire staff for success. Commissioner Deutsch stated that upon the recommendation of consultants, the Board established a three director plan and that he has been impressed with the new structure. Commissioner Deutsch noted that he has been impressed with Dave's thought process when meeting with his mentor and that Dave's breadth of responsibility is something that he could not do. Commissioner Deutsch noted that he feels Dave has grown and adapted as a result of the performance improvement plan. Commissioner Deutsch stated that the Park District has grown substantially in foot print and employees since he joined the Board and that he appreciates Dave's hard work.

Commissioner Dawson moved and Commissioner Rostad seconded a motion to terminate the employment of Dave Leker as the executive director of the Park District. Upon call of the roll, the motion passed by a vote of 3-2 with Commissioners Dawson, Rostad and Morgan voting in favor of the motion and Commissioners Deutsch and Hill voting against the motion.

Commissioner Rostad then moved and Commissioner Dawson seconded a motion to appoint the the deputy directors, Dave Bietz and Susan Faus, as the co-executive directors of the Park District until further action is taken by the Board. Upon call of the roll, the motion passed unanimously.

At the conclusion of the above agenda items, a motion to adjourn was made and seconded, and upon unanimous consent the meeting adjourned at approximately 8:30 a.m.

Jeffrey Gunkelman, Interim Clerk