

Task Force suggests renovating Ice Center

NEIL MILBERT
Freelance Reporter

The Citizen Task Force that has been conducting an extensive feasibility study on the Glenview Ice Center convened on Nov. 15 and voted to recommend that the Glenview Park District renovate the 44-year-old facility rather than build a new state-of-the-art facility or continue to make costly repairs to address ongoing maintenance problems.

Eighteen of the 25 Task Force members at the meeting voted in favor of the recommendation following presentations on the responses from surveys conducted by Mike McCarty, the Park District's executive director; Paul Hanley, senior vice president of George K. Baum and Co.; and Jim Hobart, principal of Public Opinion Strategies.

The results of a mail survey conducted by Hanley; a phone poll conducted by Hobart, Kyle Clark and Maddy Bolger; and McCarty's community outreach meetings and civic group presentations exerted a significant influence on the decision to recommend renovation.

The proposal — which also includes upgrades to The Grove, installation of flushable toilets at Sleepy Hollow Park and establishment of an open space fund — will be presented to the Glenview Park District Board at its Thursday, Dec. 21 meeting.

If approved by the Park Board, a \$17-million bond referendum will be placed on the March 20 primary election ballot. Using a \$500,000 home as an example, the \$17 million would increase yearly taxes by approximately \$35 for 20 years.

Building a state-of-the-art Ice Center that included an overhead jogging track and a play area for children would have necessitated a \$24-mil-

lion referendum, increasing taxes for a \$500,000 home to approximately \$49.80 annually.

If the jogging track and play area had been included in the Ice Center renovation recommendation, a \$21-million referendum would have been required, increasing taxes for a \$500,000 home to \$41.50 per year.

By eliminating the Ice Center jogging track and play area as part of the renovation project and abandoning plans for a new fieldhouse at Sleepy Hollow Park, the Task Force slashed \$4 million from the \$21 million, thereby making it a \$17-million referendum.

McCarty pointed out that the present Ice Center doesn't cover costs and the Park District is subsidizing it at a cost of approximately \$100,000 yearly. There are structural issues; electrical, plumbing and sewer lines are outdated; the building is energy inefficient; and the locker rooms and restrooms are inadequate.

"We're spending \$12.5 million just to keep it operational," he said. "Bare bones repairs that we need to bring it up to code range from approximately \$8 million to \$11 million, and it could be as much as \$15 million."

According to McCarty, either a new facility or a renovated Ice Center — both of which would have two-and-a-half sheets of ice rather than the current one-and-a-half sheets — would generate enough money to not only cover expenses but also generate yearly net revenue of \$267,000 over a span of 10 years.

Park District yearly statistics on the existing Ice Center show 51,592 hockey visits, 23,409 figure skating visits and 10,415 public skating visits.

Currently, the demand for ice far exceeds its availability, forcing many teams and

players to travel to other communities for access to a rink and making it impossible for existing programs to expand and new programs to be introduced. For example, the Glenbrook high school girls hockey team, made up mainly of girls from Glenbrook South, practices in Niles and plays in Northbrook.

McCarty said an additional sheet of ice in a new or renovated facility would enable the Ice Center to host more tournaments and ice shows. This, in turn, would bring in more concession revenue. Also, it would enable the Ice Center to offer programs, such as sled hockey, for those with disabilities.

Hanley's survey — which proposed a \$24-million bond issue for a new Ice Center — was mailed to 21,933 registered voter households and 2,962 replied. The response was 46 percent 'yes' and 49 percent 'no' with 5 percent 'undecided.'

The main concern expressed was the tax impact, which was cited by 18.7 percent of the respondents.

Hanley concluded that there was limited support for a \$24-million bond proposal. Support was strongest with respondents between the ages of 25-44 and among those who visited the Ice Center during the last 12 months. The order of priority of the proposed projects was No. 1 The Grove, No. 2 Ice Center, No. 3 open space and No. 4 Sleepy Hollow.

The proposed jog track and play area received the lowest priority of the proposals.

Hobart's Nov. 4-7 telephone poll on a \$24-million referendum reached 300 likely voters.

His bottom line: "A majority are initially supportive of the bond measure but intensity is soft. ... Improvements to The Grove should remain front and center of any future bond ballot measure. ... Community

outreach information needs to emphasize how the funding addresses the growing facility needs at the 44-year-old Ice Center versus new amenities like an additional sheet of ice. ... A lower cost, lower-tax impact approach will likely be needed for this measure to be successful."

In Hobart's opinion, "The tax increase is what is going to drive opposition. The Grove is a slam dunk. Everybody loves The Grove."

McCarty had three community information meetings with a total of 40 attendees and made presentations to five civic groups: Glenview Values, Kiwanis, Rotary Noon Club, East Wing Senior Center and Rotary Sunrise.

Feedback from community meetings included "concerns about taxes," "Sleepy Hollow doesn't make sense," "The Grove projects make sense," "there is need for more ice" and "it's time to do it right."

According to McCarty, at the community meetings about 50 percent were for and 50 percent against, whereas all six civic groups were "very supportive of all projects and the tax impact was perceived as reasonable."

Both Hanley and McCarty found that many residents are unaware that the Village of Glenview and Glenview Park District are separate entities and do not have a common pool of financial resources.

"People tie the Village to the Park District and think they're one in the same when they're not," Hanley said.

McCarty said he received complaints about Village projects in which the Park District has no input, influence or involvement, such as the cost of building the new Glenview police station and sidewalks in disrepair, because citizens didn't realize these were unrelated to the Ice Center bond issue.

GLENVIEW PARK BOARD

Tax bond sale to appear on next agenda

NEIL MILBERT, Freelance Reporter

Following a public hearing, during which there was no oral or written testimony from citizens, the Glenview Park Board moved toward selling a two-year general obligation limited tax bond in an amount not to exceed \$2.5 million.

The proposal will appear on the Thursday, Dec. 21 meeting agenda.

Board President Bob Patton said it basically provides authorization to use bond proceeds for land and facility acquisition and/or to build, develop and maintain both new and existing parks, facilities and other capital assets of the District.

Acting on the recommendation of Finance Committee Chairman Dan Peterson, the board gave final approval to a tax levy of \$16,964,113. For existing taxpayers, this amount is an increase of \$369,735, or 2.8 percent, from last year's levy. It is the first increase in five years.

However, it is lower than the preliminary estimated levy of \$17,315,918 that was presented to the board at the Thursday, Sept. 21 meeting.

At that meeting, Peterson told his fellow commissioners: "I'm personally hopeful we can trim this down a bit."

GBS engineering project displayed to board [hed]

Glenbrook South engineering teacher Mike Sinde and junior student Nick Solonko displayed exact miniature replicas of buildings at The Grove to the board.

The replicas were drawn on computers and then built layer by layer with thin plastic in a 3-D printer at the high school. The student project began during the 2106-17 school year and continued during summer vacation.

"I started going to The Grove in late June with Jack Riley, who is two years older and now is a freshman at the University of Michigan," Solonko said while explaining the project to the board. "We found the blueprints and replicated them."

Judy Beck, The Grove Heritage Association's vice president, looked upon the project with great pride.

Full story at GlenviewLantern.com.