



PRESS RELEASE

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State of the Lisle Park District

Photo: [Lisle Community Park](#)

Lisle, IL – We hope this message finds you safe, healthy, and eager to get outside this upcoming summer season. While programs have slowed over the past few months due to the impact of COVID-19, the Lisle Park District continues to connect with and serve our residents in a variety of ways. We are proud of the adaptive strategies we've developed and implemented during such unprecedented times. As we continue to rapidly strengthen and streamline our services to meet the evolving needs of our community and industry, we are optimistically planning for certain operations to safely resume in the near future.

From the start of the pandemic, the safety of our staff and patrons has been at the forefront of all decisions. The District has followed the State of Illinois Executive Orders and recommendations provided by Federal, State and local agencies including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Illinois Department of Public Health. Additionally, the Restore Illinois plan issued on May 6 by Governor Pritzker's office provides guidelines for how to reopen the state in the coming weeks and months.

As restrictions are modified and we transition into Phase 3 of Restore Illinois, we are prepared to offer an assortment of programs and services that reflect the necessary safety precautions, while also providing a meaningful experience for all participants. Be sure to check out the most updated list of virtual and in-person offerings on our website by clicking [here](#).

As we near the start of summer, program details may be modified based upon evolving government mandates. Our commitment to safety and customer service remains paramount during this time and we will communicate updates directly to program participants as needed. Additionally, please check our website and social media — [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), or [Twitter](#) – for the most updated information.

The COVID-19 pandemic has helped reinforce the important role parks and recreation has in a well-

balanced lifestyle. This moment in time has also caused the need to further evaluate and adapt our services to align with Executive Orders, government guidelines and risk management best practices. Unfortunately, however, it has also presented some truly challenging obstacles.

As stated above, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting Executive Order and Restore Illinois plan, the majority of Lisle Park District services have been interrupted. With close to 40% of the District's budgeted revenue coming from programs, facility memberships and events, we are projecting a loss in budgeted revenue of \$3.2 million by year's end. As a result, we have furloughed 90 part time employees and 9 full time employees, frozen all vacant full-time positions, and deferred a number of capital projects. At the Board of Park Commissioners meeting held on May 21, the Park Board made the difficult decision to close and/or suspend operations at certain park district facilities and to defer a long-awaited capital project.

First and foremost, Sea Lion Aquatic Park will not open this season. As the District's flagship facility, this is truly a low point in the Lisle Park District's history. We are saddened by the events that led to this decision, but again, the safety of our patrons and employees is of the utmost concern. Given the standing Executive Order and Governor Pritzker's Restore Illinois plan, we see no responsible way to open the facility while keeping our patrons and staff safely in compliance with standing restrictions, including gathering limits and social distancing, as well as sanitization of the facility according to the CDC's recommended guidelines. Everyone who purchased a season pass will be able to lock in 2020 pricing and carry the pass over to use during the 2021 season. More information on pool pass options will be sent to all current 2020 pass holders by May 31.

Wheatstack – A Midwestern Eatery & Tap will suspend operations effective June 1, 2020. Citing the current restrictions on gathering limits and social distancing, we simply cannot generate enough revenue to sustain operations. Even though outdoor seating will soon be permissible, we need to operate at full capacity in order to cover our costs and debt obligation on the facility. Furthermore, any revenue shortfall has traditionally been covered by the strength of our many recreation programs and facilities. With those revenue streams slowed to a trickle, that safety net no longer exists. Wheatstack will remain open through the end of May so please continue to take advantage of our curbside pickup services.

Operations at The Museums at Lisle Station Park will also be suspended effective June 1, 2020. In order to preserve fund balances and limit the District's overall tax levy for the 2021 Fiscal Year, we will be reducing expenditures to only necessary building maintenance and content preservation. Virtual exhibits and tours will still be available on our website, but there will be no on-site access to the buildings until further notice.

The Community Park Boat Launch project was deferred until further notice. Like so many other situations, this is not an easy choice to make given this project has been a long-term endeavor. Even though we have alternative funding in the amount of \$95,000 through the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the

Lisle Partners for Parks Foundation, it still requires the District to fund 100% of the \$142,500 up front. Assuming the State of Illinois will honor the current grant agreement and provide reimbursement, it still requires the Lisle Park District to expend \$47,500. Considering the District's funding source for these types of projects still requires the assessment of taxes to our residents, we believe it is best to retain this funding to maintain current District assets, like parking lots, pathways, playgrounds, bridges, tennis and basketball courts, Sea Lion Aquatic Park, and other existing facilities. By reserving these expenditures to existing infrastructure, we can limit any future tax levies and/or bond issues to these sorts of projects and stretch the existing Capital Fund balance as far as possible. While the project has been deferred, it has not been permanently tabled. We will continue to monitor the District's financial position and will revisit the project if and when we feel it is responsible to do so.

These are truly painful decisions as it is at the Lisle Park District's core to provide as many opportunities to the community as we can muster. However during these times when so much of our non-tax revenue has been cut off, we must make these moves in order to preserve and maintain existing parks and facilities, control the depletion of fund balances, limit future tax levies, and assure that when the current restrictions are softened and eventually lifted, we're able to resume as many of the services as our finances will allow.

Regarding community events, due to gathering limits and social distancing restrictions, all events through the end of June have been cancelled, including the Fishing Derby, Totally Tuesdays and Movies in the Park. Outdoor and indoor facility rentals will not be available through the month of June, either.

On a more positive note, registration is underway for all active summer programming. As we transition to Phase 3 of the Restore Illinois plan, our focus will be on offerings that best meet community needs, including day camps, fitness, outdoor recreation and the use of the parks, all while adhering to social distancing requirements and gathering limits. This includes a variety of in-person programs like Camp Summer Quest, No Name Teen Camp, and our new series of contact-less outdoor recreation and exercise programs (CORE).

Parks and trails will remain open for walking, jogging, and biking under the current social distancing guidelines and gathering limits. However, at the current time, playgrounds and the skate park remain closed and athletic field use for groups in excess of ten are not permitted. We will continue to monitor Governor Pritzker's public addresses and changes to the standing Executive Order and Restore Illinois plan and will make any and all amenities available as soon as we are allowed to do so.

In closing, while it pains all of us deeply to forego our collective passion for providing endless recreational opportunities, we remain optimistic and encouraged that even given the current limitations, we can all still enjoy the beautiful parks, interactive programs (limited as they may be), and the true sense of community that makes the Lisle Park District a great place in which to live, work and play. We remain hopeful for the future and committed to our community in a deeper way than ever before. Thank you for your trust and

support.

Be well and stay active,

The Lisle Park District

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