

Ruling on whether Naperville commissioner's social media comments violated park district policies to be announced Thursday

Rafael Guerrero, Naperville Sun, Ill. - 45 mins ago




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Oct. 13—The Naperville Park Board lawyer is to issue his findings Thursday on whether Commissioner Josh McBroom broke any decorum and ethics policies in social media comments he posted about other commissioners, including one that was considered as "body shaming."

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However, the board is not expected to discuss the policy of current and former commissioners receiving discounted fees to participate in district programs and use or rent district facilities, questions about which were raised by a government watchdog group.

Attorney Derke Price said he would not discuss what he planned to tell the board this week.

"The board needs to hear it first," he said.

Last month, commissioners asked that Price conduct an inquiry into comments McBroom made in a private Facebook group thread about district face mask requirements to determine if he violated board policies and bylaws and/or damaged the park district as an organization. The majority of the board voted in support of mask usage while using district facilities while COVID-19 numbers remained high.

In one passage, he responded to a comment on the difficulty of playing sports while masked, writing it "should be a requirement of board members who support this to play a full court basketball game masked up." When someone commented that, "I've seen those gals and that's not going to happen anytime soon," McBroom posted a laughing face emoji.

The board meeting is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Thursday at the Fort Hill Activity Center.

Price and the park district are also in the process of reviewing policies pertaining to commissioner benefits. While elected board members do not get paid, current and former members can receive discounts that include:

- * 20% off golf rounds with scheduled tee times and/or cart rentals and free golf for walk-on rounds;
- * Free admission to Centennial Beach and 20% off Centennial Beach programming;
- * 20% off some program registration fees;
- * 50% off facility rentals;
- * Free fitness memberships for current commissioners and 20% off fitness memberships for eligible family members.

A Freedom of Information request filed by the watchdog group Edgar County Watchdogs and later obtained by the Naperville Sun revealed commissioners Mary Gibson, Leslie Ruffing and Alison Thompson had received 20% discounts on a combined 25 different courses/activities this year, amounting to \$439.64 in savings.

In a park district news release, officials noted Edgar County group had questioned the use of this discount.



Price said the district adopted the policy as a way to encourage elected officials to participate in and evaluate its offerings, facilities and programming. Other park districts have similar policies in place, he said.

"It is something we want them to be aware of," Price said of the discounts current and former commissioners can receive.



The policy has been in place since 2009, according to board documents. It has been revised five times since then and underwent a review in 2018. Price said the scope of the policy has been reduced over the years.

The park district will discuss the policy at the Oct. 28 meeting. The discussion and review was going to happen regardless of questions raised because the board policy manual is evaluated every three years, Price said.

raguerrero@tribpub.com

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