



## **The Lemont Park District History**

In 1963, The Lemont Township Park District originated as an idea which was formed by Township Supervisor, Lewis N. Ruppert during his first year in office. In his first year, he received many inquiries from township residents regarding recreational facilities. He realized as Township Supervisor he could not legally do anything to satisfy the recreational needs and requirements of the citizens. So, he proactively suggested to them that the Township needed a Park District.

In the fall of 1965, Mr. Lewis Ruppert enlisted the help of the Lemont Jaycees to take a sample poll of the community as to whether the voters favored the formation of a Park District. The poll included approximately 500 participants and showed 75% in favor and 25% against. With the majority in favor, Mr. Ruppert contacted the Township attorney, Mr. Edward Sager, who agreed to do all the necessary legal work to file a petition requesting an election for voter approval. Attorney Sager agreed to do so and at no charge.

On November 15, 1965, Attorney Sager and Township Supervisor Ruppert, filed a petition to submit to the legal voters of Lemont Township to form a General Park District under the Park District Code in the Township of Lemont. The hearing upon this petition was set for the 25th day of January 1966, at 11:00 a.m.

On January 25th 1966, Attorney Sager and Township Supervisor Ruppert and Mr. Pete Kluga appeared before Judge Thaddeus V. Adesko. At this hearing, Judge Adesko set the election date for voter approvals as the 16th day of April 1966, from 12 noon to 6 p.m. There were three polling places: Lemont Township High School, Bloom's Service Station and the Meyer Residence. Each owner of the above polling places donated their facilities for the election.

Election Judges, all of whom served free of charge, were recruited and served as follows:

Lemont Township High School:

Maryann Sniegowski  
James Madsen  
Donald Weber  
Philip Seiler  
James J. Lynch



Bloom's Service Station:

Pete Kluga  
Owen Cluts  
Harry Kersey  
Richard Novak  
Eugene Latz

Meyer Residence:

Geraldine Lesnieski  
Thomas Kilarski  
Victor Splitt  
Lewis N. Rupert  
Anthony Baricovich

The total cost of filing a petition, printing ballots, etc., totaled \$31.00. This amount was appropriated and paid by the Lemont Chamber of Commerce. This low cost was possible only because of the many good citizens of our community who donated their time and services.

The election to determine whether to form a Park District and to elect five commissioners was approved was on April 16, 1966. 196 residents voted "yes" and 152 residents voted "no." The following candidates were on the ballot and received votes as listed:

Rudy Gotlund	215
Ron Weber	211
Norb Lesnieski	200
Norb Kluga	184
Phil Smith	179
Peter Abromaitis	119

At its first meeting Lemont Township Park District's board elected officers as follows:

President	Ron Weber
Vice-President	Rudy Gotlund
Secretary-Treasurer	Norb Lesnieski



The first program to provide recreation for the community was a summer program for children and teenagers in the township. It ran five days a week for eight weeks and included a variety of sports-based activities. However, the first really big step forward was taken in 1970 when the Park District purchased 35 acres of land on 127th Street to develop a major recreational facility. This park was named Centennial Park early in 1973. This same year approximately two and a half acres of land was purchased on 123rd Street (McCarthy Road) and is now the site of Northview Park.

A comprehensive master plan was prepared by the Park District board in 1973. The plan called for the formal development of a swimming pool and other recreation facilities. The board organized a \$750,000 bond issue to develop a small community center and an outdoor pool at Centennial Park. The bond issue passed in April 1974.

Mr. Robert A. Porter was hired as Director of Parks and Recreation in July of 1975. The Park District acquired the Virginia Reed playground and the Teen Club (Witkoski Center, named for Harry & Clarice Witkowski) in 1978. The Park District built a maintenance barn, a lighted ball field and tennis courts in 1979.

The Park District was recognized in 1988 as being the number one Park District in the nation for program services and public participation. The community started to grow in 1988 causing pressure to expand park services. Numerous park sites were provided through the Village's land/cash ordinance requiring developers to donate land or cash to provide expanded park and school facilities to the expanded population. The Park District initiated an aggressive annexation plan in 1988. It annexed large industrial areas in Will and DuPage counties. This new tax base, the retirement of the 1974 community center bond issue, and an intergovernmental agreement with the Lemont Township allowed for the development of the Centennial Community Center 24,000 square-foot expansion. The Center opened its doors in February 1992. It was completed without a tax increase to the Park District residents. The expanded recreation center included a gym, fitness center, eight meeting rooms, craft center, senior citizen center, racquetball courts and offices for both the Park District and Township governments.

The Park District changed its legal name to the "Lemont Park District" in 1988 due to its expansion into neighboring counties. The Park District acquired and



developed over ten parks between 1985 -1995. The Park District board decided neighborhood parks were a high priority with Lemont's growing population. The Virginia Reed Park was named the best designed park in Illinois in 1990 and was selected for the Governor's Hometown Award in 1991. Centennial Park Community Center was selected as the best Illinois Recreation Center for 1992 by the Illinois Park & Recreation Association.

Progress and growth throughout the Park District continued through the first decade of the new millennium. In 2008 a complete renovation of the outdoor pool was completed. In 2009 the tennis courts were resurfaced; upgrading the courts allowed for safer, more enjoyable games. Also, at Centennial Park, the front parking lot restoration took place filling in the unutilized driveway on the east side of the Community Center with a grassy lawn that is level with the building resulting in a safe and inviting environment.

A referendum was passed in 2007 to enable the construction of a 70,000 square-foot Fitness & Aquatic Complex. Upon the passing of the referendum, design of the new facility began. Part of the plan was to build the new complex around the existing Lesnieski Community Center linking the history to the future of the Park District. Construction began in the summer of 2007 and The Lemont Park District CORE Fitness & Aquatic Complex opened on December 20, 2009. The CORE is home to a state-of-the-art fitness facility which houses over 100 pieces of the most innovative fitness equipment and free weights available. Adjacent to the equipment and free-weight rooms is an open area for stretching, warming up and cooling down. The indoor 6-lane pool at The CORE measures nearly 8,000 square feet plays host to lap swim, water aerobics, swim meets, open swim and a variety of other Park District aquatic events. The CORE's 3-court Gymnasium spans over 21,000 square feet maximizing Court Time for all. "Open Gym" as well as an array of other events take place here every week. Encompassing the entire Gym is a remarkable elevated indoor track. Extending a 10th of a mile around, it allows ample room for all runners and walkers year-round. Three deluxe workout Studios and a multipurpose room also sit inside The CORE. The new facility was immediately embraced by the community and by January 20, 2010, just one month after opening, The CORE had over 1,000 members! Currently, CORE Memberships continue to climb along with Youth and Student "Open Gym and Swim" Pass holders at The CORE.



The Lemont Park District operates over 500 recreation programs and special events annually. The Park District headquarters is now referred to Centennial Campus and is located at 16028 127th Street in Lemont, IL. The Campus, measuring over 1,700,000 square feet in its entirety is home to three buildings operated by the Park District—Centennial Community Center, The Lemont Park District CORE Fitness & Aquatic Complex, and the Maintenance Facility. Centennial Campus includes the following outdoor amenities: Outdoor Pool with Spray and Water Park Amenities, Picnic Pavilion, Shade-Covered Picnic Pad, five lit Baseball-Softball Fields, one ADA-Compliant Rubber-Surfaced Baseball Field, three Basketball Courts, three Tennis Courts, "Rock Pit" Skate Park, five Soccer Fields, and outdoor Walking Path (1.14 miles or 6,020 ft.), two Fully Accessible Shaded Picnic Groves, The Grove - 40" Open Space Nature Area, the Lemont Jr. Women's Club (LJWC) Playground. Centennial Community Center the following indoor amenities: six Classrooms, two Racquetball Courts, two Multi-purpose Rooms, Locker Rooms for the outdoor Pool, Concessions, and six offices. Centennial Campus hosts approximately 250,000 visitors per year. The past Park District Board Members are:

Ronald Weber	1966-1967
Rudolph Gotlund	1966-1977
Philip Smith	1966-1978
Morris Reinke	1967-1981
William Gwodz	1978-1985
Joseph Pociask	1987-1993
Norbert Lesnieski	1966-2002
William Keenan	1977-2005
Norbert Kluga	1985-1991
David Garvey	1985-2003
James Lesnieski	1991-2003
Wayne Molitor	1993-2005
Kathy Joiner	2002-2003
Daniel Ganzer	2003-2007
Nancy Uher	2005-2007
Amy Kramer	2003-2009
Daniel Lipowski	2003-2009
Michael Colaizzi	2007- 2013
Jack Williams	2007- 2013
Patrick Sexton	2005-2014



James Davoren	2009-2015
John Diorio	2009-2017
Peter Korbakes	2013-2019
Brian Pepich	2013-2022

**Current Board Members:**

Bill McAdam	Elected in 2015, Re-Elected 2017, Re-Elected 2023, Term expires 2029
Leland Wagner	Elected in 2017, Re-Elected 2021, Term expires 2027
Julie Mescher	Elected 2019, Re-Elected 2021, Term expires 2027
Michael Scarlati	Elected 2019, Term expires 2025
Steve Richmond	Elected 2023, Term Expires 2025

**Current Parks:**

Abbey Oaks	Amberwood	Ashbury Woods
Bambrick	Briarcliffe	Brown
Carriage	Centennial	Connemara
Copper Ridge	CORE Train Station	Covington Knolls
Covington North	Derby	Hilltop
Jaycee	Kensington	Kettering
Legion	Lions	Mayfair
Northview	Rolling Meadows	Virginia Reed