

Park Ridge Park District Board Candidate Responses

Briefly describe any environmental accomplishments or projects with which you have been involved, either professionally or personally.

Melissa Hulting, candidate for Park District Board:

I've worked as an environmental scientist at U.S. EPA Region 5 for over 20 years. Nearly a year ago I became the manager of the Clean Air Strategies Section, which implements programs related to toxic air pollutants, indoor air quality, climate change, and energy efficiency. Professionally, here are some examples of work that I've been most proud of:

- *I collaborated with American, Canadian and Mexican scientists to harmonize scientific methods and improve capacity, particularly in Mexico, to track levels of persistent pollutants like PCBs and brominated flame retardants in the environment.*
- *I worked with the Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance (MEEA), industrial energy managers, and utilities to increase the number of manufacturers who manage energy in their operations, which reduces GHG emissions.*
- *I led and supported community-focused air quality projects for which I analyzed data to determine which facilities in environmental justice areas should be inspected, resulting in case settlements and emission reductions; helped a new environmental justice group (Ixchel in Cicero) learn about and get engaged in the regulatory process; and increased local governments' use of ENERGY STAR tools to improve energy efficiency.*

At the local level:

- *I was the primary advocate to the City Council for creation of the Bike Task Force. The work of the TF resulted in the addition of new bike racks, wayfinding signs, and bike lanes in Park Ridge.*
- *I was part of the team who advocated for the creation of the city's Sustainability Task Force, served as the TF co-chair, and authored the Transportation chapter in the Sustainability Plan.*
- *I helped to convince the city to sign the Greenest Region Compact and become SolSmart certified.*

Joan Bende, candidate for Park District Board

I have always been a strong supporter of environmentally friendly practices. I was recycling my newspapers long before Park Ridge started with blue bins! When Cindy Grau was first elected to the Park Board in 2015, we had a meeting with Superintendent Terry Wolf to discuss solar panels on park district roofs. There wasn't board interest at

the time, but the thinking has evolved. I hope with a new pro-environment board, 2021 will be the year to put it on the capital projects list.

Brian Matza, candidate for Park District Board

I have spent the last 18+ years running a recycling business called Fortune Metal in the western suburbs. My company has helped community organizations, manufacturers, utilities, telecommunications and countless other trades find a sustainable home for its byproducts and leftover inventory. Fortune Metal recycles around 30 million pounds annually. We hold third party certifications for our commitment to quality, environmental and safety standards. Fortune Metal also handles the removal and destruction of proprietary information from electronics such as flash memory and hard drives ensuring they do not become reused in a secondary market. We are utilized as a safety net for many companies who want to do the right thing when it comes to sustainability. In 2015, AT&T recognized us with its Sustainability Vendor of the Year award and I was asked to receive the award on behalf of our CEO for my direct involvement over the many years handling AT&T material. From 2014-2019 I was a Certified Hazardous Material Manager specializing in universal waste that helped promote and teach the importance in handling materials properly in my industry.

Rob Bowe, candidate for Park District Board

My own actions concerning the environment started as soon as I moved to Park Ridge 16 years ago. This included avoiding weed killer chemicals on my lawn, planting native plant species, and having certified arborists regularly maintain the 200 year old trees on my property. Now I compost, own an electric car, and, as a multi-year member of Go Green, volunteer for events they sponsor whenever possible. I also helped organize a successful petition in which 22 people collected almost 800 signatures asking the Park District Board to purchase a small parcel of land that had served as the only green space for the under-served families in our neighborhood. I've also worked with other Go Green members at information tables at the Farmer's Market concerning the preservation of trees and green space in Park Ridge. I've attended several Park Board meetings in-person as well as the recent budget discussions that were held online. I made public comments at these meetings concerning Oakton Park and the need to avoid the unnecessary removal of trees and the removal of other outdoor amenities such as the batting cages, salt dome, and dog park without a replacement. I am a supporter of the much-needed renovations for Oakton and I am in favor of the citizen-led Task Force, but I do think we need to be more environmentally aware of its overall impact.

John Tunnell, candidate for Park District Board

As a small business owner, I have worked since 2011 to convert all of our paper files into electronic records, and eliminated the excessive use of paper in the office environment. I believe it is important to recycle. We recycle our old computer and phone equipment when we replace them. We have donated to shelters and nonprofits, so they don't end up in landfill. I also had the opportunity to work with Bateman Elementary school to secure a grant to help plant a learning garden as one of my agency's community causes. We were able to plant native plants in an outdoor space so that students could have class outside. It was great to see the difference the plants made to the space. As a board member over the past two years, I have helped advocate, and vote for the outdoor learning classroom. I was able to assist with the Friends of the Park bike fundraiser, and secure a grant from Allstate for \$5,000 to go towards the classroom. I voted to secure the property adjacent to the Wildwood Nature Center. I am committed to securing more space for the community, as we are landlocked.

An environmental plan gives a blueprint to an organization regarding environmental issues. Would you support the development of one for the Park Ridge Park District? If yes, what three major priorities/issues would you suggest for the plan?

Melissa Hulting, candidate for Park District Board:

Yes. The park district's Green Commitment was an excellent start and many green practices have been implemented, most notably the increased use of natural lawn care, but a more robust plan with specific goals and actions could help advance this work. Main priorities should include energy management (energy efficiency and renewables), waste minimization, and actions to protect the health of patrons and staff (indoor air quality, green cleaning, etc.). The idea of the city and the park district sharing a sustainability coordinator has been floated in the past, and I would love to see this become a reality.

Joan Bende, candidate for Park District Board

Yes to the plan! The Park District needs to partner up with the city and schools for the new Sustainability Commission and work together to initiate good ideas and be a leader in the community by modeling environmentally friendly practices. Solar panels & electric vehicles are bigger ticket items. I'd like to see the "Beyond the Bell" program implement more best practices – what a great way to teach the next generation eco-friendly good habits.

Brian Matza, candidate for Park District Board

Yes, I would support the development of a plan similar to what the City of Park Ridge is currently doing with its sustainability committee. I feel we need to identify where the Park District currently sits in terms of policy and priority. In the Park District's Green Commitment, there are some vague terms and ideas but there is not much else about what it has done. I would like to see clear objectives and goals for such a policy.

1) Direct the staff to initiate a study to determine what areas we could change to help bring the Park District to a more sustainable level. Building energy usage is normally the greatest area affected with these kinds of changes.

2) Once the study is complete, the Park District would identify areas where the lowest economic impact has the greatest results. The Park District can then put into place policies and goals that are not only economically friendly but environmentally as well.

3) Prioritize these items just like we do with capital projects and start a process of upgrading and pursuing the goals established. Replacement of light and water fixtures could potentially reduce waste and lower utility costs to the Park District. Another option could be to reduce fossil fuel dependency of motor pool vehicles by 20% or some other measurable.

Lastly, I would like to see more partnership with either the City of Park Ridge or the Solid Waste Agency of Suburban Cook County. The Public works of Park Ridge does collections of recyclables for its residents but only quarterly. The park could do something in conjunction with drop-off locations for recycled items to partner with intergovernmental agencies to streamline the offerings to the community

Rob Bowe, candidate for Park District Board

The Sustainability Task Force is a Park Ridge citizen-led group that recently presented its Sustainability Plan to the City Council. This carefully constructed plan is the blueprint that the Park Board can use so that our local community can help alleviate the ongoing challenges that are caused by Climate Change. Inter-governmental discussions with the City Council could facilitate the adoption of some of the suggestions by continuing this citizen-led group of concerned citizens. The Sustainability Plan promotes the adoption of electric vehicles, and, with the growth of new improvements in this area, the Park Board should bring this into consideration when purchasing new vehicles. I commend the Park Board which has already embraced many new steps to avoid the use of chemicals and instead uses more natural approaches that have been proven to work while being cost-effective. And while the Plan promotes that we “plant more trees”, we need to be as diligent about protecting the existing trees that take several hundred years to grow and create the important tree canopy that defines Park Ridge. The momentum of this plan could bring much-needed improvements and direction for the Park District budgeting process.

John Tunnell, candidate for Park District Board

Stormwater/Flooding and Lack of Green space are my major issues that are priority.

I believe that the stormwater issue is a major concern. If elected, I will work with the board to see if there are opportunities to help with rain gardens, or other options that could help the neighborhoods surrounding the parks.

I believe that if green space becomes available, it is important to discuss the options that would best benefit the Park District, environment, and taxpayer. The parks will be here a lot longer than me, so it is important to preserve the green space we have, and if opportunities come up, consider the options available.

I am open to support other issues that have a positive impact on the environment , community and parks. I don't personally have a third issue at this time, but am open to discussing with the community, board, and Go Green Park Ridge.