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CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Annual / Fourth Quarter 2025 Report

To General Superintendent Carlos Ramirez-Rosa, President Marlon Everett and the Chicago Park District Board of Commissioners,

Attached please find the Annual/Fourth Quarter 2025 Report from the Office of Prevention and Accountability (OPA). This report summarizes OPA's work toward fulfilling the essential mission set forth in Chapter 4 of the Chicago Park District Code.

As the report outlines, OPA in 2025 continued its efforts in the areas of training and policy as it works to set expectations and help avoid violations of the Park District's Human Rights Ordinance. Additionally, the report provides an overview of the investigatory work done by OPA as it continues to take steps to promote accountability.

The OPA team intends to continue this vital work in 2026 and is grateful for the support we have received for our efforts to ensure that the Chicago Park District remains an equitable, inclusive, safe, and respectful recreation and work environment.

Sincerely,

Tamara B. Starks

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Director
Office of Prevention and Accountability

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Mission

The Office of Prevention and Accountability (OPA) works to ensure that the Chicago Park District provides all employees, patrons and visitors with a recreation and work environment that is free from discrimination, harassment, sexual misconduct, workplace violence, abuse and neglect of children and vulnerable adults, and retaliation.

Information regarding OPA's mission and operations is available to Park District staff and patrons online at <https://ChicagoParkDistrict.com/OPA>. Complaints related to the concerns enumerated above can be submitted to OPA in the following ways:

- By phone: 312-742-5OPA (312-742-5672)
- By email: OPA@ChicagoParkDistrict.com
- Online: Via a form linked on www.ChicagoParkDistrict.com/OPA
- In writing: Chicago Park District
Office of Prevention and Accountability
4830 S. Western Avenue
Chicago, IL 60609

Personnel

Throughout the Fourth Quarter of 2025, OPA remained staffed as follows: a Director, a Senior Investigator, three Investigators and a Case Intake Specialist. With those personnel, OPA was fully staffed in accordance with the Chicago Park District's 2025 Budget for this Office. On December 10, 2025, the Chicago Park District's Board of Commissioners approved the Chicago Park District's 2026 Budget. With this approved budget, OPA plans to hire an additional investigator in 2026.

OPA is committed to conducting thorough, fair, impartial and independent investigations regarding any alleged violations of the Human Rights Ordinance. To accomplish that, OPA has assembled a team of individuals with experience in investigations, law, Title IX, Title VII, child protection and human rights issues.

A key focus for the OPA team is remaining up to date on best practices related to the specialized areas that fall under the Office's purview. To ensure that, OPA staff members regularly seek out educational opportunities and bring information back to share with their co-workers. During the Fourth Quarter of 2025, a member of the OPA team attended trainings

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

hosted by the Illinois Chapter of the Association of Inspectors General on the topics of audit and investigative techniques as well as artificial intelligence in inspection and oversight. Another member of the OPA team attended a continuing education seminar focused on domestic violence and family justice centers, including the Chicago Children's Advocacy Center initiative Chicago Advocacy Network for Hope (CAN Hope). Additionally, another member of the OPA team attended continuing legal education seminars hosted by the Chicago Bar Association, as well as the 41st Annual Public Sector Labor Relations & Labor Law Conference at Chicago-Kent College of Law, which included sessions on important legal updates related to discrimination law and human rights policies.

Continued Focus on Park District Training

During the Fourth Quarter and throughout 2025, OPA continued its work on the "Prevention" aspect of this Office's mission. This includes both efforts to improve on the Harassment Prevention and Bystander Intervention trainings and work to identify additional trainings that would benefit the Park District's workforce.

In 2025, almost 3,000 year-round Park District employees completed the Harassment Prevention and Bystander Intervention trainings, which are designed to education staff about the Park District's policies, instruct employees on how to identify harassment and provide tools on how to prevent harassment or intervene if harassment occurs. Additionally, OPA – working in conjunction with Workforce Development and Community Recreation – presented those trainings to the Park District's seasonal employees during orientations and in 12 in-person training sessions presented by OPA team members.

During the Fourth Quarter of 2025, OPA began planning for the 2026 trainings, including meetings with the vendor to collaborate on ways to improve future trainings and meetings with Workforce Development on internal logistics.

Pursuant to the contract with the training vendor, OPA received some vital feedback that Park District employees provided in responses to the questions imbedded withing the Harassment and Bystander trainings. The responses indicated that many employees expressed receiving a tangible benefit from the training provided. For example, 83 percent of respondents answered in the affirmative when asked "After taking this training, I feel confident in my ability to be an upstander." OPA also received an anonymized summary of the written feedback Park District employees provided after taking the training. Much of the feedback on the trainings' content was positive. The most common criticism given was that

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

the training was too long/too time-consuming. Because the length of the Harassment/Bystander trainings is required by law, OPA is unable to change that. But this feedback does indicate that OPA should better communicate those legal requirements and emphasize why the trainings are important, so that employees better understand. The most concerning feedback provided was that several employees expressed fear about the potential for retaliation for reporting or challenging harassment at the Park District. Based on that, OPA will work in 2026 to identify ways to protect against retaliation and better communicate to employees that such actions are a direct violation of the Park District's Human Rights Ordinance that will be taken seriously.

OPA also closed out 2025 by working with the vendor on plans for additional trainings on anti-bias and cultural sensitivity and on how to identify the potential for workplace violence and skills to de-escalate such situations. Those trainings are expected to rollout in 2026.

Outreach, Policies and Best Practices

In the Fourth Quarter 2025, OPA continued its outreach efforts within the Park District by meeting with Area Managers from all three Community Recreation regions – North, South and Central. All three meetings were informative and productive, with Area Managers giving excellent feedback on seasonal training logistics and the need for additional supports related to reporting concerns during crisis / emergency situations.

OPA is working to incorporate the feedback related to seasonal training into plans for the upcoming 2026 summer season. As part of that, OPA is working closely with both Workforce Development, Community Recreation and other Park District departments to refine the process for presenting the mandatory Harassment Prevention and Bystander Intervention trainings to the seasonal employees who will be onboarded. This includes OPA's efforts to update the presentations to ensure that employees receive meaningful trainings that apply to the work they do at the Park District. It also includes efforts to ensure that the Park District's training efforts remain in legal compliance with the State of Illinois and City of Chicago and that all trainings completed are accurately tracked.

In response to the Area Managers' concerns regarding reporting, OPA has been working with the Policy Director and leadership in Community Recreation to develop a one-page checklist that employees will be able to consult in crisis situations to ensure that any required reporting has been completed. This checklist will, for example, provide a list of numbers to call if there

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

is a violent incident, cause to suspect child abuse or a dispute involving discrimination or harassment. This new resource for Park District employees is expected to roll out in the First Quarter of 2026.

Complaints, Reports and Investigations

In 2025, OPA received a total of 591 complaints/inquiries. That compares to 260 in 2023 and 389 in 2024. The significant spike in 2025 complaints is likely due to increased awareness of and trust in OPA as an investigatory agency, fueled by our continuing efforts to promote this office as a resource for the Park District's staff and patrons. Both marketing (including the distribution of additional posters to raise awareness about OPA), trainings and other communications are part of these efforts. This work will continue throughout 2026.

OPA received the bulk of the 591 complaints/inquiries in the Third Quarter (July-September) of 2025, when 263 matters were reported. That compares to 89 received in Q1 2025, 123 received in Q2 2025, and 120 received in Q4 2025.

During the Fourth Quarter of 2025, OPA opened 18 investigations and closed 43 cases. At the conclusion of the Fourth Quarter, OPA had a total of 151 open investigations.

Of the complaints/inquiries received in the Fourth Quarter 2025, the most common complaints/inquiries received were: Discrimination (17), Harassment (15), Workplace Violence (11), and Sexual Misconduct (9). The remaining complaints/inquiries were in less common categories, were determined to not fall under OPA's jurisdiction, or remain under investigation.

Of the 120 complaints/inquiries received in the Fourth Quarter, OPA determined that 40 did not fall under OPA's jurisdiction or require investigation; they included: complaints about cleanliness/maintenance in Park District facilities; allegations regarding misuse of public resources; questions about the Park District's Ethics Policy; concerns about rudeness/unprofessional behavior involving the public and Park District employees; a report about an abandoned dog on Park District property; and a complaint that the public was harassing the Snowy Owls at Montrose Beach. While these complaints were not determined to require investigation by OPA, many of the inquiries raised serious issues. OPA, therefore, worked to ensure that those issues were properly referred to Human Resources, the Office of the Inspector General, Community Recreation, Facility Management, or other appropriate Park District managers/partners. In several instances, OPA conducted intake interviews with

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

the complainants to determine how their concerns should most appropriately be addressed and shared that information as part of OPA's referral process. In several cases, OPA's initial review of the complaints determined that an investigation was not feasible or required; those matters were administratively closed.

In the Fourth Quarter 2024, 17 cases were closed after the completion of formal investigations and/or the issuance of an OPA Summary Report. Below are summaries of those matters:

24-0240

An OPA investigation found insufficient evidence to support allegations that a Park Supervisor of Recreation (Supervisor Subject) and a Monthly Instructor (Instructor Subject) engaged in discriminatory and harassing acts against patrons based on race, ethnicity or another protected category.

However, OPA found substantial evidence that Supervisor Subject and a Manager (Manager Subject) violated Chapter 4, Section A(4)(f) of the Park District Code by failing to properly report allegations of racial discrimination, and that Supervisor Subject interfered with an OPA investigation.

INVESTIGATION OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

COMPLAINT AND OIG REFERRAL

On July 24, 2024, OPA was forwarded a string of emails regarding a patron's complaint that Instructor Subject and Supervisor Subject acted "unprofessional," "hostile," and "dishonest" and discriminated against two patrons (Complainant 1 and Complainant 2) because the complainants were Asian. On the same date, OPA received a referral from the Office of Inspector General (OIG) regarding the same.

According to the complaints, Complainant 1 and Complainant 2 alleged that they were playing tennis at the park when a male patron took a picture of them and said Complainants were using the court past their allotted time. Complainant 1 said they had a few minutes left until their hour ended; the male patron called Instructor Subject over, who "accused" Complainant 1 and Complainant 2 of not following the court rules. Complainant 1 alleged that Instructor Subject "yelled" and "threatened" to call security. Complainant 1 and

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Complainant 2 asked for the male patron to delete the photo he had taken of them, but Instructor Subject denied any pictures had been taken.

When Supervisor Subject and a security guard arrived, Supervisor Subject told the Complainants about the court rules and “threatened” to ban them from the park.

Because Complainant 1 and Complainant 2 were Asian and they had not gone over their one-hour time slot, they believed they were treated negatively by Manager Subject and Instructor Subject due to their race.

REVIEW OF PARK DISTRICT RECORDS

Personnel and Disciplinary Records

OPA reviewed relevant personnel and disciplinary files. No subject had discipline relevant to this investigation.

Training Records

According to Success Center records, Supervisor Subject completed the 2023 Bystander Intervention and Harassment Prevention trainings after the July 31, 2023, deadline. OPA noted that in both 2023 and 2024, Supervisor Subject should have completed the supervisor harassment and/or bystander trainings but incorrectly completed the general employee trainings instead.

According to Success Center records, Manager Subject was in compliance with mandated training in 2023 and 2024.

According to Success Center training records, Instructor Subject completed the 2023 Bystander Intervention and Harassment Prevention training sessions after the July 31, 2023, deadline; she was in full compliance with training in 2024.

Review of Park District Incident Reports

OPA reviewed the related Employee Incident Report and Patron Incident Report, and noted the following:

The Employee Incident Report was written by a recreation leader who was present during the interaction. This incident report recorded 9:55 a.m. as the time that the male patron

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

reported to Instructor Subject that the Complainants would not give up the court. Instructor Subject told the Complainants at 10:01 a.m. to exit the court. OPA notes that the Incident Description was lacking in facts and contained language such as “aggressively and disrespectfully,” “took it upon herself,” “very disrespectful and absolutely rude” and “gave security a hard time.”

The Patron Incident Report was submitted by Instructor Subject and recorded the time she was approached by the male patron about Complainants as “around 9:50 a.m.” The Description of Incident recounted the following factual observations: Instructor Subject approached the Complainants at 10:01 a.m. and told Complainant 1 they needed to leave the court due to the court rules. Complainant 1 asked why, was loud, and talked over Instructor Subject. Instructor Subject reported hearing Complainant 1 tell the male patron he had taken pictures of them and noticing Complainant 2 taking video of Instructor Subject. Complainant 1 said she was being asked to leave because she was Asian. Instructor Subject said she was going to call security and walked away because she was “being disrespected and called a racist.” The report outlined the arrival of security and Supervisor Subject as well as the deleting of pictures and videos. Instructor Subject stepped aside and was not present during most of the interaction between Complainants and Supervisor Subject and security.

INTERVIEW OF COMPLAINANT 1

During an interview with OPA, Complainant 1 related the following, in summary:

Complainant 1 reiterated their complaint, which was consistent with prior reports. Complainant 1 knew the rules of the tennis court because she had been taking tennis lessons and playing tennis at the park weekly, plus the rules were posted. The male patron told Complainant 1 and Complainant 2 to get off the court before 10:00 a.m., which was the time their one-hour rotation ended.

Complainant 1 and Complainant 2 were upset that a male took a picture of them, which is what they tried to explain to Supervisor Subject and Instructor Subject, and their court time had not been up when he took the picture. Complainant 1 responded by taking a picture of the male patron. Instructor Subject told Complainant 1 and Complainant 2 that no picture had been taken, which was not true, and court rules were repeated. Neither Supervisor Subject nor Instructor Subject listened to Complainants’ concerns, which further upset Complainants.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Supervisor Subject repeatedly said she could ban Complainant 1 and Complainant 2 from the courts. Complainant 1 admitted she was emotional. When Supervisor Subject said this, Complainant 1 understood Supervisor Subject was threatening them. Since the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic, Complainant 1 had personally experienced significant “Asian hate trauma.” Complainant 1 and Complainant 2 were the only Asian people visible on the courts. The way Supervisor Subject and Instructor Subject spoke to them, Complainant 1 believed it was because of their race.

Following the interaction, Complainant 1 emailed several Park District employees and departments. Complainant 1 later received an email from Supervisor Subject, which included Manager Subject, that was “very aggressive” and accusatory.

Complainant 1 had not returned to the park since because she did not feel “safe” there.

Complainant 1 provided OPA with a copy of the email string. The email was from Supervisor Subject’s Park District email address but did not include any other email addresses and appeared to be incomplete. The email and full string of email exchanges between Supervisor Subject and Complainant will be examined in the below Electronic Discovery – Email Review section of this report.

ATTEMPTS TO INTERVIEW COMPLAINANT 2

OPA made several attempts to contact Complainant 2. To date, OPA has not received any response from Complainant 2.

INTERVIEW OF SECURITY GUARD

During an interview with OPA, Security Guard related the following, in summary:

Security Guard received a call from Instructor Subject about a dispute with patrons on the tennis courts. When Security Guard arrived, he observed two young women on the courts (Complainants), a male patron, and Instructor Subject. Supervisor Subject arrived shortly after Security Guard.

Instructor Subject told Security Guard that Complainants refused to leave the courts on the hour, per the rules. One of the Complainants said the male patron had taken of picture of her and she wanted it deleted.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The male patron told Security Guard that he told Complainant 1 and Complainant 2 the on-the-hour rotation rule and that they had refused to leave the court, so he took a picture of them. When asked, the male patron deleted the picture of Complainants. Security Guard did not note the picture time stamp. The male patron related that one of the Complainants took a picture of him and he wanted it deleted.

When Security Guard returned to Supervisor Subject, Instructor Subject, Complainant 1, and Complainant 2, he overheard Manager Subject saying the court rules and saw her point to the posted court rules. Complainant 1 or Complainant 2 said they were new to Chicago and they did not know the rules. Security Guard heard Complainant 1 or Complainant 2 say they were being asked to leave the courts because they were being racially profiled.

Instructor Subject told Security Guard that Complainant 1 or Complainant 2 had taken a video of her. Security Guard told both Complainants to delete the photo of the male patron and the video of Park District employees. Security Guard confirmed the picture and video were deleted but did not note the time stamps of either.

ELECTRONIC DISCOVERY – REVIEW OF PARK DISTRICT EMAILS

OPA requested and conducted a review of the Park District emails of Supervisor Subject and Manager Subject from the relevant dates.

One of the emails copied a Gmail address; OPA confirmed via Park District records and its review of Supervisor Subject's Park District email that this Gmail address was Supervisor Subject's personal email. In Supervisor Subject's Park District email account, OPA found a different email response written by Supervisor Subject to Complainant 1 that Supervisor Subject sent to her personal Gmail address. OPA was unable to determine whether that email was ever sent to Complainant 1 from Supervisor Subject's personal Gmail address, but her personal email was clearly included in the email from Complainant 1.

ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Supervisor Subject

OPA found insufficient evidence that Supervisor Subject's actions were based on race, ethnicity, or another protected category. However, OPA found substantial documentary

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

evidence that Supervisor Subject violated Chapter 4 Section A(4)(f) of the Park District Code by failing to report allegations of racial discrimination. Supervisor Subject's own words memorialized in emails clearly show that Supervisor Subject knew a patron alleged racial discrimination by Supervisor Subject and another employee, Instructor Subject, and yet OPA has no record of Supervisor Subject ever reporting the matter to OPA.

Not only did Supervisor Subject fail to report allegations of racial discrimination, her actions after receiving the complaint raised serious concerns about what appear to be attempts to downplay the situation, mislead managers, and interfere with an OPA matter. For example, in her email to managers, Supervisor Subject denied the allegations of racial discrimination against herself and another employee, and instead blamed the patron for lack of knowledge. Supervisor Subject took matters into her own hands by sending an inappropriate email to Complainant 1 that only served to escalate the situation by denying racial harassment and using accusatory language.

Furthermore, Supervisor Subject's personal email address was included in Complainant 1's reply email to Supervisor Subject and an email about the incident was sent from Supervisor Subject's Park District email to her personal email, raising concerns about whether Supervisor Subject communicated with Complainant 1 about Park District business via her personal email account.

The evidence showed, and OPA found, that Supervisor Subject's conduct constituted interference with a matter under OPA's jurisdiction.

Based on these substantiated findings, OPA recommends that Human Resources issue Supervisor Subject discipline as it deems appropriate.

Finally, Supervisor Subject's email to Complainant 1 raises serious concerns about Supervisor Subject and other employees encouraging patrons to take images of others as a means of monitoring their facilities. Supervisor Subject states that patrons "take evidence" of other patrons and "send to us so we can regulate the courts," and then says that it was "unacceptable" for Complainants to take "unauthorized photos and videos" of employees. OPA strongly suggests that the Park District examine how court rules are monitored and implement any measures it deems appropriate.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

2. Manager Subject

OPA found sufficient evidence that Manager Subject had knowledge of the allegations of racial discrimination and, because she was clearly included on Supervisor Subject's email to Complainant 1, also had knowledge of both Supervisor Subject's inappropriate handling of the situation and of Supervisor Subject's failure to properly report under Chapter 4. OPA found no record of Manager Subject ever reporting the allegations to OPA; thus, Manager Subject violated Section A(4)(f) of Chapter 4.

Based on these substantiated findings, OPA recommends that Human Resources issue Manager Subject discipline as it deems appropriate.

Instructor Subject

OPA found insufficient evidence that Instructor Subject's conduct amounted to discrimination based on race, ethnicity or another protected category, and closed this matter as **UNSUBSTANTIATED**.

Incident Reports

OPA further notes that the Employee Incident Report reviewed in the course of this investigation showed that employees could benefit from ongoing training regarding the purpose and completion of incident reports. Such reports are records that should contain factual observations and not conclusions about behavior or personal opinions.

24-0243

An OPA investigation has established that a former member of management within the Park District's Beaches and Pools Unit (Subject) violated the Park District's Sexual Harassment Policy, Chapter 4 of the Park District Code (Code), the Park District's Code of Conduct, and the Park District's Employee Handbook by engaging in sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, hazing, unethical behavior, and unapproved dual employment. Additionally, Subject failed to provide truthful information during his compelled subject interview and failed to fully cooperate by declining to participate in his follow-up subject interview.

OPA's investigation uncovered multiple instances of sexual misconduct during Subject's Park District employment, including engaging in sexual conduct with a subordinate and

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

engaging in sexual conduct on Park District property. At least one employee also reported Subject making sexual jokes and commenting on their physical appearance while they reported to Subject. Additionally, OPA has identified evidence that Subject made questionable and concerning public jokes about domestic violence and migrants, engaged in hazing behavior and failed to report hazing behavior. Further, OPA received credible evidence that Subject made inappropriate comments to employees about their ethnicity, engaged in secondary employment including unethical and possibly illegal activity for at least five years, and failed to follow the Park District's dual employment policy.¹

In October 2025, during OPA's investigation and following Subject's first subject interview with OPA, Subject resigned from Park District employment.

OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

During multiple interviews in other OPA investigations, OPA learned of serious concerns related to Subject. While some concerns had been previously investigated, the scope of those inquiries were limited. The other OPA investigations also unearthed additional concerns related to those prior inquiries and led to interviews with additional witnesses. For these reasons, while OPA did not receive a direct complaint related to Subject's conduct, OPA initiated an investigation based on significant evidence it had obtained during the investigatory process in those other matters.

¹ OPA's investigation of this matter uncovered several instances of concerning conduct in addition to the core allegations of sexual misconduct, hazing, failure to report, and interference with confidential OPA matters. Taken alone, allegations of dual employment or general misconduct fall outside OPA's jurisdiction, but because the allegations were so closely related to OPA's core investigation in this matter, and after consulting with the Chicago Park District Office of Inspector General (OIG), OPA included them in this report.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

INVESTIGATION

REVIEW OF PERSONNEL AND DISCIPLINARY FILES

The disciplinary file Human Resources provided to OPA for Subject contained 137 pages of disciplinary records. The records include written reprimands and notices of corrective action meetings from 2003 through 2017.

Notably, Subject's disciplinary file indicates that he was the subject of prior investigations, which are detailed in the next section.

RECORDS RELATED TO PRIOR COMPLAINTS AND INVESTIGATIONS AGAINST SUBJECT

Substantiated Residency Violation

On March 2009, the Chicago Park District Department of Legal Investigations² issued a report sustaining findings that Subject violated the Park District's residency policy. According to the report, investigators conducted surveillance on 27 separate dates in 2008 and 2009. On all 27 surveillances, Subject was observed at a residence in the Chicago suburbs.³ Additionally, the information Subject provided investigators during his interview did not match the evidence gathered by the investigators. The report was sent from the Law Department to the Department of Human Resources.

To better understand what if any disciplinary action was taken or contemplated in response to the substantiated finding, OPA sent a request to Human Resources; however, Human Resources was unable to locate any additional information. To date, there is no evidence that any discipline occurred as a result of the investigative findings.

Sexual Harassment Complaint

On June 16, 2010, Subject was placed on an emergency suspension for allegedly violating the Chicago Park District's Sexual Harassment Policy. A former Park District employee (Witness 1) filed a complaint against Subject for engaging in unwelcome verbal and physical conduct.

² The Chicago Park District Office of Inspector General was established in 2012.

³ The suburban address also matched Subject's driver's license, which was suspended at the time.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

At the time, the complainant submitted a written narrative detailing how Subject made inappropriate comments to them, cornered them, grabbed their face, kissed them without consent, and joked about his conduct saying that he did it once and could do it again. When Witness 1 told him to stop and give them space, he told them to “shut up” and sent them back out to work.

The file includes Witness 1’s written narrative detailing multiple instances of Subject making inappropriate comments to Witness 1 and grabbing, kissing, and touching Witness 1 without their consent. Additionally, the file contains handwritten notes from Subject’s June 30, 2010 corrective action meeting. There is no indication whether any other interviews or investigatory steps occurred.

On August 25, 2010, Human Resources issued a memo indicating that Witness 1’s complaint against Subject was “not sustained.” Human Resources instructed that Subject be reinstated with 67.5 hours of back pay. It is unclear what evidence and analysis Human Resources used to reach this conclusion.

OIG Investigations (Witness 3 and Witness 4)

Throughout this investigation, OPA worked closely with OIG to obtain all available information regarding this matter and any related prior investigations conducted by the OIG. This cooperation between the offices and anticipated future collaboration is vital to ensuring that the Park District continues to build on the work already done to ensure the safety of its employees and patrons.

OIG provided OPA with records related to two OIG cases against Subject. A June 3, 2022, memo indicated that the OIG “received a report from a third party that a supervisor in the Aquatics Department had sexual relations with two underage employees.” Records obtained by OPA revealed that Subject was the supervisor in question.

In one case, the OIG issued a determination that the allegation was “unfounded” because the alleged victim, Witness 3, was interviewed and stated that they were 21 or 22 years old when they began a sexual relationship with Subject. The individual in this case informed the OIG that Subject “had sexual relationships with a lot of lifeguards[.]”

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

In the second case, the OIG issued a determination that the allegation was “unfounded” because the alleged victim, Witness 4, was interviewed and stated that they were 22 years old when they began a “consensual relationship” with Subject.

SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

During its investigation, OPA identified a then publicly accessible Facebook page for Subject,⁴ which listed Subject as a Park District employee. Subject’s Facebook account was “friends with” other Park District employees including those who report to Subject in the Aquatics Department. While Subject’s Facebook account was not an official account of the Park District, his profile was representative of the Park District in multiple ways. His profile not only listed him as a management level employee for the Park District, but several photos, including his “profile pictures” depicted Subject wearing Park District apparel.

Since at least April 16, 2013, Subject repeatedly used his Facebook account to publicly promote the Chicago Park District and positions within the Chicago Park District, including links to the Park District website and the Park District job application site. Additionally, since at least June 10, 2015, Subject repeatedly posted public “profile photos” wearing apparel clearly depicting Chicago Park District logos and indicating that he is a member of management.

On May 20, 2024, Subject publicly posted to his Facebook account “She got one more time before I’m running down the hall in a white towel!!! 🤔 Too soon? 🤔 🤔.” He also used a laughing “reaction” to a comment that was left on the post which read “No Diddy.”

While reviewing Subject’s Facebook account, OPA identified multiple posts regarding migrants authored by Subject in 2023 and 2024. In addition to posts authored by Subject, OPA also identified similar comments written by others, which Subject “liked.”

⁴ This account’s posts were switched to private during the pendency of OPA’s investigation.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT
OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

INTERVIEWS OF CURRENT AND FORMER EMPLOYEES

Witness 3

On May 7, 2024, OPA conducted a phone interview of Witness 3.

Witness 3 described inappropriate behavior as being prevalent within the Aquatics Department. She said: "It wasn't a one-person thing. That's just what it was. It was part of the culture. As a woman obviously you are going to feel more targeted." She added that inappropriate behaviors were normalized. She said both men and women observed these behaviors, but "not once did they do anything to stop anything."

Witness 3 stated that some female employees tolerated or went along with such conduct in order to receive favorable treatment or easier schedules. She noted that older monthly instructors were somewhat more vigilant, but that many women in positions of leadership "would not step in at all."

Witness 3 informed OPA that she had a sexual relationship with Subject for most of the time she was an hourly natatorium instructor. Witness 3 was approximately 20 and stated that she did not recall how old Subject was at the time but stated "He was way older than me." Subject was Witness 3's direct supervisor during their relationship. Their "sexual interactions" ended when Witness 3 was approximately 22 or 23. She ended it because it was "so messy." Witness 3 explained that she felt like other women in the Park District "harassed [her] indirectly" due to her relationship with Subject, because Subject was a monthly natatorium instructor and was married at the time.

Witness 3 described being harassed by other women as a result of the situation, which she characterized as "mental abuse from everyone else." She said: "I was very young when the whole thing started ... very easily influenced as a young woman. I think it was very easy to fall into that situation and then obviously years go by and I started realizing what was actually behind it. A lot of untold truths that were kept from me." Witness 3 said she was naive, believed stories Subject told her about his personal life, and eventually realized those stories were not true. She described the experience as exhausting and said it impacted both her personal and professional life.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Witness 3 stated that retaliation was a reality in the Aquatics Department. She stated: "Any time you fall out of good graces it's because you are doing or saying something. You can count your beach summers goodbye if you challenge what's happening."

When asked how her relationship with Subject became sexual, Witness 3 said that she had previously dated a different Park District employee and Subject began telling her that individual was cheating. Witness 3 stated: "[Subject] was feeding the cheating rumors to me ... it was [Subject] who gave me the most information. That was the turning point. I felt like I could trust [Subject]." She said the relationship developed from there.

Witness 3 also described another incident involving a different Park District employee. She said they had a brief flirtation that she ended, after which that employee began sexually harassing her. She said she reported this to Subject, told him she felt unsafe, and asked him to switch her schedule. She recalled showing Subject text messages from the individual as proof. She said Subject handled the situation well, switched her schedule, and asked if she wanted to file a formal complaint. She declined, believing she was partly at fault, but said this built trust with Subject. Witness 3 explained that Subject got into her "good graces" due to his handling of the situation and that, whether it was on purpose or not, Subject made her feel that he would "have my back."

Witness 3 said sexual encounters with Subject occurred on Park District property, including more than once at Chicago Park District Location 1, in personal vehicles, and in the beach house at Location 1. She said Subject was her supervisor at that location.

Witness 3 said she believed the relationship with Subject was not made public because he was married at the time. She said she never intended for the relationship to be known, but believed Subject wanted it to get out.

Witness 3 said that after their relationship ended, working with Subject was uncomfortable and awkward, but not unsafe. She stated: "It was uncomfortable on a personal level but not a professional level."

Witness 3 said Subject told her about a prior harassment complaint made against him by another employee. She recalled him telling her that the complaint was investigated and he was found "not guilty." She said Subject told her it related to an allegation of verbal

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

harassment; he never informed her that anyone had complained about him physically touching or kissing them.

Witness 3 said Subject decided her schedule, approved benefit time requests, and made daily assignments when they worked together, but was not involved in location assignments, hiring, promotions, or raises. Witness 3 stated: "I was assigned to him for such a long time. It was actually hard to get away from him."

Witness 3 stated that Subject told her he had previously been in a relationship with Witness 4. She said she believed it was possible Subject was involved with Witness 4 and with her at the same time. She also recalled believing there was another young woman, Witness 5, who may have had a relationship with Subject. She said she never heard that Subject treated Witness 5 favorably but believed "it is very probable that things were happening."

Witness 3 said she was familiar with Witness 6, a male supervisory employee, because they were friends with Subject. She said she never worked with Witness 6 directly, but that Subject and others told her to be careful with him. Witness 3 recalled that during their "pillow talk," Subject told her "Be careful with [Witness 6] because next thing you know he is going to get in your pants." She said Subject warned her that Witness 6 drank heavily but could appear sober, saying "[Witness 6] is my guy but if [Witness 6] ever gets a chance he will go for it. Don't take too many drinks because [Witness 6] can outdrink anyone. [Witness 6] will be totally sober and who's to say what could happen from there."

Witness 3 said she never saw Subject give favorable treatment to Witness 6, but she believed Subject's concerns about Witness 6's drinking were accurate. She said she never saw Witness 6 act inappropriately toward her but described his "tactics" as concerning.

When asked about broader harassment or misconduct, Witness 3 said she was not aware of Subject attempting to physically touch or grab anyone else and had not heard of misconduct with patrons or swim team participants. She said she shared some of this information with the OIG but did not provide the level of detail she shared with OPA. She stated: "It takes two so it wasn't all [Subject]. I am as guilty as he was for most of it so we share the blame and I told them that."

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Interview with Witness 7

On May 16 and May 29, 2024, OPA interviewed Witness 7, a supervisory employee in the Aquatics Department.

Witness 7 reported to Subject. They heard rumors in the past that Subject had sexual harassment complaints filed against him, but previous management threatened people to make it go away. Witness 7 was unable to recall details about the alleged victims but stated that in one instance, after a female employee reported Subject for physically touching her, a member of upper-management (Witness 18) “showed up” at the south-side beach where the employee was assigned and threatened her. The next day, the employee quit.

Witness 7 has concerns about Subject showing favoritism to individuals but stated that they do not believe it is something that can be easily proven. Most recently there has been the perception that Witness 6 and several other employees received favorable treatment and were promoted because of their relationships with Subject.

Witness 7 stated that Subject has personally offered them a “jailbroke” or unlocked Amazon Firestick during work hours on Park District property. Additionally, Witness 7 informed OPA that Subject uses a jailbroke Amazon Firestick on Park District property at Location 7, where he watches television “all day.” Witness 7 explained to OPA that these firesticks are modified to bypass the restrictions imposed on the device by the manufacturer, effectively eliminating the need for paid streaming memberships (e.g. Hulu, Disney+, and Netflix) which are otherwise required for the device to access these streaming platforms. The employee further explained that the device Subject uses on Park District property is “fully loaded” in this regard.

Witness 7 stated that Subject makes “off-color jokes” and that Subject and other supervisory level employees have made jokes about OPA and about the yellow, orange, and red language related to the Park District’s Workplace Harassment Prevention training. Witness 7 has witnessed Subject make inappropriate comments. Witness 7 explained that Subject “often” says “I shouldn’t say this because it’s racist” and then proceeds to make an offensive comment. Subject has made multiple jokes about Witness 7’s ethnicity, including but not limited to an incident that occurred in approximately 2021 during a staff training at Soldier Field. Witness 7 described the day as an “awesome experience” except for the tour of the

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

field. During the tour, Subject turned to Witness 7 and said “I wasn’t going to say this because it’s racist, but you should go join the grounds keepers with your fellow Mexicans.”

Witness 7 also informed OPA that on or around April 20, 2024 at Location 5, a female swimmer had “slippage” of their swimsuit, which exposed their breast. The swimmer was aware of the wardrobe malfunction and adjusted her swimsuit. Subject gave Witness 7 a “funny look” and raised his eyebrows a few times while smiling.

3. Interview with Witness 8

On March 26, 2024, OPA interviewed Witness 8, a supervisory employee.

While Witness 8 had not heard any specific rumors regarding physical or sexual inappropriateness involving Subject, Witness 8 had heard that Subject, Witness 6, and a former Park District employee used to “prey on the girls.” Witness 8 referred to them as “The Trio.”

Witness 8 was aware that Witness 9⁵ and Subject were friends, and that Witness 9 hung out at Subject’s house. Witness 8 was not aware of Witness 9 ever receiving any discipline, and noted again that Witness 9 was friends with Subject. Witness 8 related that she felt that she should have been promoted over Witness 9 and implied that Witness 9’s connection to Subject contributed to their promotion.

Witness 8 had never worked with Witness 6 but she got “bad vibes” about him. Witness 6 was Subject’s “best friend” and they were part of the group of Aquatics staff who hung out and drank alcohol at the beaches after work – the same group that Witness 9 was part of.

When Witness 8 was a seasonal employee, she was assigned to Location 2. This was approximately six or seven years ago and she was approximately 18- or 19-years-old at the time.

On an unknown date, in approximately 2017 or 2018, while assigned to Location 2, Witness 8 and some other lifeguards were in the lifeguard office and the door was closed. A man

⁵ Witness 9 was terminated for sexual harassment as a result of substantiated OPA Case # 23-0251 and has been designated as permanently ineligible for rehire.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

suddenly kicked the door open. Witness 8 had no idea who he was and later learned that the man was Witness 6. Witness 6 was wearing a plain white T-shirt and he was not wearing any item of clothing with the Park District logo on it. Subject was with Witness 6 and Subject was Witness 8's boss at the time. Witness 8 had assumed that if he was with Subject, then Witness 6 was supposed to be there. Witness 8 later learned that Witness 6 was not a Park District employee at the time.

Witness 6 walked into the room "very stern" and "big shouldered." He asked the lifeguards what they were doing there and yelled at them that there was only one lifeguard out on duty. Witness 6 snatched the Aquatics board and had all of the lifeguards line up. One of the lifeguards had their cell phone on the lifeguard perch, which was not permitted, and Witness 6 was yelling at him. Witness 8 did not know who the lifeguard was.

Witness 8 was confused and scared; she had no idea what was going on. Subject was recording the whole thing on his cell phone, from the point when Witness 6 had kicked the door in. On their way out, Subject was laughing. Again, Witness 8 was confused.

Later, when Witness 8 was assigned to a different pool, Witness 10 was Witness 8's supervisor. Witness 10 told Witness 8 that someone was going to come in and coach their family members. It turned out to be Witness 6, which is how Witness 8 found out who Witness 6 was. Witness 8 mentioned the Location 2 incident, and Witness 10 said that they had seen the video on Snapchat and "that is so messed up." Witness 8 learned that Subject had posted to his Snapchat account the video that he had recorded of Witness 6 at Location 2 that day.

When Witness 6 came in to coach his family, Witness 10 told Witness 6 to apologize to Witness 8. Witness 6 did apologize to Witness 8; he said that he and Subject were best friends and they had thought the Location 2 incident was funny. Witness 6 then took out his phone and showed Witness 8 a video of Subject sitting on a toilet. In the video, Subject stood up to try and stop Witness 6 from recording him. Subject's nude buttocks were fully visible in the video. Witness 8 did not see any other naked part of Subject's body.

Subject brought Witness 6 onto Park District property and into a staff-only area without authorization. Witness 8 also learned that Subject and Witness 6 had done the same thing to other lifeguards at other pool locations. According to Witness 8, no one gave Subject

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

permission to video record them, and no one gave Subject permission to post any video or images on Snapchat or social media. In 2023, Witness 8 brought the incident up to Subject, who remembered it. Subject told Witness 8 that it was a “seasonal test.” He then apologized to Witness 8.

Interview with Witness 12

On August 26, 2025, OPA interviewed Witness 12, a supervisory employee.

Witness 12 stated she had never felt unsafe or uncomfortable as a lifeguard. She said that “the older guys flirted with younger girls,” but explained that this did not happen to her and that “girls would talk about it amongst each other.”

Witness 12 reported to Subject when she was assigned to Park District Location 3. He was a monthly natatorium instructor, and she was a lifeguard at the time. She described her relationship with Subject as “pretty good,” and stated that he taught her a lot. Witness 12 first stated that Subject never acted unprofessionally and that she was never aware of anyone who felt uncomfortable around him; however, she later stated that she was warned by several other employees and friends about Subject engaging in favoritism and unprofessional behavior. One of the friends she spoke with was former Park District employee Witness 11.

Witness 12 said that during her employment, she heard rumors that Subject had favorites and dated employees that he supervised, including Witness 10 and Witness 14.

Witness 12 stated that she has only been in the car with Subject one time, and she did not feel that he offered rides as a way to pursue people. Witness 12 said he never attempted to touch or kiss her while she was in the car with him, nor is she aware of anyone else having this experience. Witness 12 stated that she did not recall sharing that information with any other individuals. When asked why other people would inform OPA that Witness 12 had complained about Subject’s conduct and that he had been “flirty” with her, she explained that after she became friends with Subject, he became more “touchy,” occasionally made sexual jokes, such as “that’s what she said,” and at times complimented her outfits or told her she looked nice.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Witness 12 recalled one occasion during the pandemic in 2020 or 2021 when she went to a bar in Hyde Park after work with coworkers. Witness 14, Subject, and several other staff members were present. Witness 12 explained that during this outing, Subject complimented her outfit, touched her back, and made a sexual joke. She responded “eww,” and she said Subject “got the hint immediately when I shut things down.” Subject laughed it off and did not pursue anything further with Witness 12. Witness 12 said she later discussed the interactions with her friends, some of whom were former Park District employees, including Witness 11.

Witness 12 described Subject’s joking as “sexual” and “childish.” She stated that he also made these jokes and comments in front of Witness 14 including at least one night when Subject and Witness 12 were at Witness 14’s house for a party. When asked, Witness 12 stated: “I don’t think it’s appropriate for a monthly natatorium instructor to tell sexual jokes in front of lifeguards.” She also said: “No, I don’t think it’s appropriate for a supervisor to flirt or comment on the appearance of someone they manage.”

Witness 12 recalled attending social gatherings outside of work with Subject and other staff. When asked if Witness 12 ever attended an end-of-year banquet with Subject, she said yes. She explained that in 2020, they had an end-of-year banquet on the beach at Location 1. The event took place in the evening after everyone’s shifts had ended. They had a barbeque with food and alcohol. Witness 12 stated that only employees over the age of 21 were consuming alcohol, but she was unable to explain how she knew that was true. Witness 12 stated that Subject was strict about not drinking with minors when he was out with her. She explained: “When we would all make plans, he would make sure everyone was of age.” Witness 12 stated that everyone brought their own alcohol to the event.

When asked how the alcohol was brought to the party, Witness 12 said she thinks everyone drove it after work because the event did not begin until approximately 8:00 p.m. When asked how Witness 12 was aware the banquet was occurring, she said, “I knew about it because we all planned it together.” Subject was a monthly natatorium instructor at the time, and Witness 12 stated that this occurred shortly before he was promoted. Witness 12 does not know if Subject was aware of individuals consuming alcohol because people had the alcohol in their bags and went off by the rocks to drink. They did this because they did not want to drink “in front of the boss,” which was Subject. When asked if individuals were visibly intoxicated, Witness 12 said yes.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

When asked if Witness 12 attended any other banquets with Subject, she said the only other time was at Location 3 in 2022 or 2023. The event was held in the gym. There was food and no alcohol was present. Subject was an upper-management level employee at the time. Witness 12 stated “we didn’t really do awards at any party” when asked if she witnessed or was made aware of any awards being given out at end-of-year banquets. When asked if she was aware that staff were not allowed to host end-of-year banquets, Witness 12 said Subject never informed her that end-of-year banquets were prohibited, nor did she otherwise know that they were not allowed.

Witness 12 was not aware of any instances of Subject offering to give or sell Amazon Firesticks to anyone. She was also not aware of Subject modifying streaming devices for individuals in any way. Witness 12 stated that she was not familiar with the term “jailbroke.” Witness 12 informed OPA that Subject previously held secondary employment as an Amazon delivery driver.

Witness 12 was familiar with Witness 6 and used to work with him at the YMCA. Witness 12 said Witness 6 is “cool” and has never done anything to make her feel uncomfortable. Witness 12 does not really talk to Witness 6 because she does not think he is funny. Witness 12 described Witness 6’s jokes as “recycled.” Witness 6 and Subject are “good friends” and spend time together outside of work. Witness 12 knows this because Subject would tell her about his weekend, which included hanging out with Witness 6.

Interview with Witness 6

On October 8, 2024, Witness 6 was interviewed as a subject in OPA Case #23-0202. During his interview, Witness 6 made several inconsistent statements; however, Witness 6 did admit to his own involvement in misconduct, and corroborated several key pieces of information relevant to this investigation.

When asked whether an incident had occurred at Location 2, Witness 6 first denied any involvement or knowledge of the incident. When asked if video evidence would show otherwise, Witness 6 informed OPA that he had gone around to different parks and “playfully kicked in a door” and questioned staff in approximately 2017 or 2018, after he was terminated from Park District employment and before he was rehired. After kicking in the door, Witness 6 made the guards line up and asked them a series of questions. Witness 6 said

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

he was bored and thought it was funny. Witness 6 did not recall Subject being present but said it was possible. Witness 6 denied that anyone encouraged him to engage in the conduct. Witness 6 admitted that the conduct was inappropriate and against Park District policy.

Interview with Witness 17

On January 30, 2024, OPA interviewed Witness 17, a supervisory employee.

Witness 17 stated that while it is generally acceptable for staff to socialize outside of work, it becomes a problem when it coincides with decisions such as bypassing others for promotions or assignments. Witness 17 stated that Witness 14 was promoted to a position and bypassed other hourly instructors. He said Witness 14 is “very good friends” with Subject, and that this raised concerns about favoritism. Witness 17 explained that he has personally seen Witness 6 and Subject spending time together outside of work and said they “have known each other for a very long time.”

Witness 17 informed OPA that Witness 6 had been accused of sexual harassment in the past and that Subject “would have been aware” of those issues. Additionally, Witness 17 stated that Subject himself “has been accused of stuff like that too when he was in the field.” Witness 17 believed that Subject was suspended more than once for his conduct.

Witness 17 recalled that during the summer of 2010, Witness 17 was working at South Shore Beach and Subject was assigned to Location 6. He said that at that time, Witness 1 submitted a complaint “of a sexual nature” against Subject. Witness 17 reported that Subject was placed on emergency suspension. He stated that Witness 18 went to Location 6 and pressured Witness 1 to resign, after which Subject was immediately returned to work.

According to Witness 17, Witness 1 told him directly that Subject “was hitting on her all summer” and “got overly aggressive” before she decided she was not going to tolerate it. Witness 17 said Witness 1 told him she called Human Resources and completed paperwork regarding her complaint. Witness 17 further stated that Witness 1 told him Witness 18 pressured her and suggested that she was “making stuff up.”

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Witness 17 said he was not able to provide any specific examples of Subject engaging in retaliatory behavior, but that “people are scared to speak up because he’s [an upper-management level employee] and they think it will get back to him.”

Additional Interviews

In addition to the interviews summarized above, OPA also interviewed seven more current and former Park District staff members who made consistent statements related to Subject previously dating Park District employees including direct reports, purportedly being in a relationship with a current Park District employee who was Subject’s subordinate, selling jailbroke Firesticks to Park District employees, and discussing these Firesticks during Aquatics management meetings.

INTERVIEW OF SUBJECT

On October 2, 2025, OPA interviewed Subject with Subject’s attorney present.

Prior to the interview, OPA provided Subject and their attorney with an administrative rights form, which they reviewed and signed acknowledging that the interview was compelled. During the interview, Subject was reminded three times that he had a duty to cooperate and provide truthful information. Subject was also reminded three separate times that intentional failure to provide truthful and accurate information would be considered a separate violation under Chapter 4 of the Park District Code.

Secondary Employment

Subject stated that he does not currently hold any secondary employment. When asked if Subject ever held any secondary employment during his tenure with the Park District, he said yes.

Most recently, Subject was a contract employee. He began this position in approximately 2020. While he did not recall when he stopped picking up hours for this position, he said he worked “minimally” in 2024 and had not worked for the company at all in 2025.

Subject did not complete a secondary (dual) employment form for this position because he was a contractor. When asked if his status as a 1099 vs. W2 employee was differentiated in

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

the Park District policy requiring an approved dual employment form for secondary employment, Subject stated that he did not know.

Subject stated that he “never” owned or operated his own business.

When asked if there were any other ways that Subject made money outside of his Park District employment, Subject first stated no, but then stated that he has done favors for family and friends. He stated: “I guess I would say I’m a jack of all trades, I get asked to do a lot of things.” Subject explained that the tasks he has been paid for were things like hanging televisions and changing vehicle brakes.

Personal Relationships with Park District Affiliated Individuals

Subject was asked whether he had any familial or personal relationships for with any Park District affiliated individuals including employees, vendors, volunteers, or participants during his Park District employment. Subject indicated that he had a familial relationship with several current and former Park District employees. Additionally, Subject stated that he had previously dated several individuals while they were Park District employees.

Subject stated that he dated Witness 4 from 2012 until early 2014. She was a lifeguard and may have been promoted to an hourly natatorium instructor while they were in a relationship. Subject did not recall when he first met Witness 4. He stated that he worked with her one summer in 2015, at which time they were no longer in a relationship. Subject explained that he “technically” directly supervised Witness 4. Subject never reported their relationship to anyone while they were dating because they did not work together and he did not report their prior relationship when she reported to him because it was “more than a year later.”

Subject dated Witness 3 for approximately five months from the summer of 2016 until early November 2016. He had supervised Witness 3 “on and off” from the fall of 2013 until the spring of 2016. Subject denied supervising Witness 3 for any period of time while he was in a relationship with her. Subject denied that he ever had a personal relationship or personal interactions with Witness 3 at any other point in time. Subject stated that he did not report his relationship with Witness 3 to anyone because he only supervised her before they dated, not after.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

When asked if Subject engaged in sexual conduct or a personal relationship with any other Park District affiliated individuals, he stated “not that I can recall.”

Amazon Firesticks

When asked if Subject was familiar with what an Amazon Firestick was, he said yes. He explained that Firesticks convert a regular television into a smart television. When asked if Subject has a Firestick, he said yes. Subject estimated that Firesticks range in price from approximately \$20 to “60 dollars at most plus tax.” Prices vary depending on sales as well as features such as 4k quality.

When asked if Subject was familiar with the term "jailbreak" as it relates to Firesticks, he said yes. Subject explained that it is a slang term that means “unlocking” a Firestick so that a person has “developer options.” When asked to explain further, Subject stated that jailbreaking a Firestick allows you to download applications that are not in the Amazon store. When asked for examples of the applications that are not available in the Amazon store, he said streaming Live television, additional games, more media players, and VPNs. Subject informed OPA that the process of jailbreaking a Firestick “takes 10 seconds.” When asked how much it costs to jailbreak a Firestick, Subject stated that it is free.

When asked if jailbroken Firesticks are legal, he said yes. When asked how he knows that they are legal, Subject replied: “A simple Google search will tell you it's not illegal to unlock a Firestick.” When asked if there are ways to circumvent paying monthly subscription fees to services such as Hulu, Disney, Netflix, and Amazon, Subject said yes. Subject explained that you can find instructions on YouTube. He further explained that there is a menu that allows you to select the applications that you want and some applications allow you to circumvent payment. When asked if it is illegal to download and use applications that allow you to circumvent payment to subscription services such as Netflix, Subject said: “I would assume, if that is what their terms state.” When asked if using jailbroken/unlocked Firesticks is unethical, Subject said yes.

When asked if Subject owned any jailbroken Firesticks, Subject stated that he has three. Subject does not use his Firesticks to receive free or discounted services. He does not circumvent payment to any services. Subject explained that his children use the Firesticks to stream Netflix which is paid for through his phone provider. When asked who unlocked his

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Firesticks, Subject said that he did. When asked where the Firesticks were located, he said they were all located in his home. When asked if Subject currently has or previously had any Firestick plugged into Park District property, Subject said no.

When asked if Subject ever works at Location 7, Subject said yes. Subject denied ever using an Amazon Firestick on a television at Location 7. When informed that OPA had received reports that Subject watches TV at Location 7 using a jailbroken Firestick, Subject denied the allegation and stated that he did not know why anyone would allege this. Immediately after being reminded of his duty to cooperate and provide truthful answers during the compelled interview, Subject said "well since you said that" Location 7 does not have an Amazon Firestick because it is an Amazon Fire television. When asked to explain the difference, Subject said the television has the Amazon Firestick technology built-in. When asked if the television was unlocked, Subject said he did not know. When asked if the television had ever been unlocked he said: "I am not sure if it has ever been unlocked."

When asked if Subject has ever sold a jailbroke Firestick to a current employee, he said no. When asked if Subject has ever given out an unlocked Firestick to an employee, Subject said no.

When informed that OPA had received information from more than one individual that Subject has sold a management employee an unlocked Firestick, Subject said the employee purchased their own Firestick and asked Subject to unlock it. When asked if Subject charged the employee approximately \$35, Subject said he unlocked the Firestick for free and the employee "may have" paid him a tip. When asked if any other employees tipped Subject to provide them with an unlocked Firestick or to unlock their Firestick, Subject said: "Possibly. I can't recall now."

When asked if Subject has ever sold or provide unlocked Firesticks to anyone outside of the Park District, Subject said that he has sold them to family and personal friends on a one-off basis and only if they reached out to him because he does not like to purchase and pay for the Firesticks upfront. When asked how family or friends would know to reach out to him for an unlocked Firestick, Subject stated: "I guess word spreads." Subject denied ever soliciting customers or otherwise promoting his ability to unlock Firesticks in any capacity

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

including in-person or on any social media platform. Subject stated "I'm only contacted," and "I'm not a marketer," as well as "I don't promote that I sell them."

When asked the most Subject has ever sold any version of a Firestick for, he stated "maybe one hundred dollars. Maybe more, maybe less." When asked if Subject has ever posted about Firesticks on any social media platform, he stated that he posted a picture of a Firestick once "years and years ago when Firesticks first came out." He stated that his post was not about unlocking Firesticks or selling them, it was just about the product itself. When asked the purpose of the post, he said that he was "promoting and spreading the word that they exist." He estimated that he would have posted this to social media in approximately 2014 or 2015. He has not posted since because they are "so popular now" and "everyone has one."

OPA provided Subject with a document (Exhibit 1). Subject reviewed and initialed the exhibit. The document contained 18 pages of Facebook posts related to the sale of Firesticks. Subject confirmed that the Facebook account depicted throughout Exhibit 1 was Subject's Facebook account. Subject confirmed that the posts are dated as recently as March 10, 2024, and include dates ranging from November 2019 through March 2024. Subject confirmed he was a management level employee during the dates of the posts. Subject was asked to read the first page out loud which read "Fully loaded fire sticks with no buffering on live tv for 1 year! \$200 each. Inbox me or HML." Subject explained that "HML" was short for "hit my line."

Subject was directed to a page that depicted 15 boxes of Firesticks which he listed for \$100 each. Subject informed OPA that while what was being depicted totaled \$1,500, he was not profiting the full amount and may have only profited \$20 per Firestick depicted in that photo.

When asked if Subject profited from selling unlocked Firesticks that were posted to include adult channels, premium live TV, and sports league passes, Subject said yes. When asked if there was anything else Subject wanted to share he stated: "After seeing pictures it jogged my memory. I just didn't recall at the time."

Racial Comments

When asked who is responsible for ensuring staff comply with the Park District's Human Rights Ordinance, Subject said staff are required to take the annual Harassment Prevention

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

and Bystander Trainings, and OPA sends a list of any employees who have not completed the training. Subject sends the list to the assistant managers and supervisors. When asked about handling inappropriate conduct, Subject informed OPA that it is his “responsibility to ensure things don’t take place.” When asked if Subject has ever witnessed racial or discriminatory jokes, he said yes. He gave the example of a white person making a joke about a black person. When asked how he has handled those incidents, Subject stated: “I guess I really didn’t, especially if a co-worker is saying it to me.”

Subject explained that when he was a natatorium instructor at Location 4, staff used to call him Obama and Wesley Snipes because he is black. Subject did not believe any of the individuals who called him these names currently work for the Park District. When asked if he witnessed employees making racial or discriminatory jokes when he was an upper-management level employee, Subject said he did not recall, but “it’s possible.” When asked if he has ever made comments or jokes about someone’s actual or perceived race, ethnicity, or national origin, Subject said he did not recall. When asked if Subject ever made these comments as a supervisor, he said that it was too difficult to answer because it was a 22-year timespan. When asked if he made such remarks in the last 10 years Subject said “I don’t recall.” When asked if Subject made such remarks in the last five years Subject said “I don’t recall.” When asked if it is possible that Subject has made jokes or comments about someone’s actual or perceived race, ethnicity, or national origin, he said I’m not a racist person who makes comments about race. When informed that OPA had received reports of Subject making derogatory comments to other employees about their race or ethnicity, Subject said if the person was his friend “maybe I have made jokes but they were not meant to hurt feelings.”

Subject did not recall saying “I probably shouldn’t say this because it’s racist, but ...” When asked if it would be appropriate to start a comment by saying “I probably shouldn’t say this because it’s racist, but...” Subject said no.

When asked if Subject attended a work-related outing at Soldier Field in or around 2021, Subject said he only recalled being at Soldier Field twice, and believed the last time he was at Soldier Field was more than 10 years ago.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

When asked if Subject ever said “I probably shouldn’t say this because it’s racist but you should go join the groundskeepers with your fellow Mexicans” to any Park District employee while at Soldier Field, Subject said: “No. Absolutely not. I don’t use that term.” When asked if Subject has ever made a similar comment to Witness 7, Subject said no and that OPA should ask Witness 7 because they have a good relationship. When asked if Subject has made jokes or comments about ethnicity to others, he said: “I don’t recall.”

When asked if Subject is connected with other Park District employees on his Facebook, he said yes. When asked if he is connected with Lifeguards and individuals that he supervises, he said yes. When asked if those individuals would report up to him if they experienced or were made aware of concerning behavior, he said yes.

Posts about Migrants on Facebook

When asked if Subject has ever made comments about migrants on social media or in-person, he said he did not recall.

OPA provided Subject with a second document (Exhibit 2). Subject reviewed and initialed the exhibit. The document was one page and depicted a Facebook post from the same account Subject had previously identified as his Facebook account. Subject read the post “How does every migrant in this city own a vehicle? 🤔” out loud. When asked to explain the post, Subject said he was just asking a question because he wanted to know how migrants obtained a driver's license and a vehicle without having a residence.

OPA provided Subject with a third document (Exhibit 3). Subject reviewed and initialed the exhibit. The document was one page and depicted a Facebook post from the same account Subject had previously identified as his Facebook account. Subject read the post “I just found out [a Chicago high school] let migrants enroll in the school but they wouldn’t let my salutatorian straight A daughter in. I’m sick of this backwards ass world we live in! 🤔🤔🤔” out loud. Subject informed OPA “I didn’t mean this in any racist way.” He explained that his daughter attends that school and he also wanted his second daughter to go there. Subject stated that Chicago Public Schools (CPS) informed him that his daughter would not be able to get into that school because CPS needed to “save seats for incoming migrants.”

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Subject was then directed to a comment below his post, which read “I wonder how many of these migrants can swim good enough to pass the Lifeguard test 🤔🤔🤔[.]” Subject reviewed the comment and confirmed that he “liked” the comment which was indicated by his name and a small blue circle with a thumbs up emoji. Subject stated that he did not find anything wrong with the comment because the Park District was short staffed on lifeguards and he was genuinely trying to determine if migrants could be hired.

Sexual Harassment and Swim Meet

When asked if Subject ever raised his eyebrows or otherwise drew attention to a female’s swimsuit exposing her nipple or breast, Subject said no. Subject explained that there are situations where an individual may have a wardrobe malfunction, but he would never “smirk” or draw attention to the situation. Subject stated that when this occurred, he would feel embarrassed, would quickly look away, and would tell a female staff member to go inform the individual.

OPA told Subject that it had received a report that a swimmer’s breast was exposed during a swim test at Location 5 on or around April 20, 2024. OPA was informed that Subject had raised his eyebrows and smiled at other members of Beaches and Pools management. Subject responded by saying: “That is absolutely false. Black men would never do something as corny as that, to be frank. I have never done that.”

When informed that OPA has received reports of Subject making inappropriate jokes and comments, Subject said “Have I ever made off color jokes? Yes, possibly.” Subject explained that he tries to be professional at work but sometimes, when he is “shooting the breeze at the water cooler” with people, they may make inappropriate jokes.

Making Fun of Park District Harassment and Bystander Trainings

Subject denied ever making fun of OPA or OPA-led trainings including the Park District’s Workplace Harassment Prevention training or the Bystander Intervention training. Subject also denied ever making jokes at or outside of work about sexual harassment, sexual assault, workplace violence, or domestic violence.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Domestic Violence

OPA provided Subject with a fourth document (Exhibit 4). Subject reviewed and initialed the exhibit. The document was one page and depicted a Facebook post from the same account Subject had previously identified as his Facebook account.

When asked what the post referred to, Subject said “nothing.” When asked if Subject was familiar with Sean John Combs, also known as P. Diddy or Diddy, Subject said yes. When asked if Subject was familiar with the public video of Diddy, Subject said “somewhat.” When asked to describe the video, Subject explained that he had assaulted a woman. When asked what Diddy was wearing in the video, Subject said “a white towel.” Subject the said that he did not know when the post was made, but he was “in no way” making fun of domestic violence. Subject then stated that his post was “in some way” related to the incident of abuse involving Diddy.

Subject said the “too soon” comment meant “Is it too soon to talk about it?” Subject explained that the post should have contained quotation marks because he believes they were words that someone else said, possibly on television. When asked if there was any additional information that Subject wanted to share regarding the post, Subject said: “I shouldn’t have repeated it, this was a serious situation.” When asked to describe the emoji in his post, Subject stated that it was a laughing emoji.

When asked if he was a management level employee at the time of the post, Subject said yes. When asked if he believed it was appropriate for someone in his position to post this, Subject said: “no, I don’t.” When asked how he would handle the situation if he became aware of a staff member posting this, Subject said he would talk with them and explain the seriousness in hopes that they would learn and not repeat the mistake.

Witness 6

Subject informed OPA that he used to be good friends with Witness 6, but lately they are not as close. Subject said they grew apart because they both have families and jobs. Additionally, Subject stated that he does not agree with some of Witness 6’s behaviors. When asked to explain, Subject said that Witness 6 makes “off-color” jokes about women, women have said they don’t feel comfortable around him, and Witness 6 has lied about several things including

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

having cancer. Subject said that in approximately 2022, Witness 6 informed him that he had cancer, had to have surgery, and underwent radiation; however, Witness 6 did not have a scar and Subject did not believe him.

When asked to explain what knowledge Subject had about Witness 6 making women feel uncomfortable, he said that a Park District employee had complained about Witness 6. The incident was reported to OPA, and Witness 6 was emergency suspended.

When asked if Subject ever warned an individual to be careful with Witness 6 because he would try to get into their pants, Subject said that he may have told people that Witness 6 is the type of guy who tries to sleep with women. Subject denied ever having knowledge of Subject taking advantage of an individual who was intoxicated.

Location 2

When asked whether an incident ever occurred with him and Witness 6 at Location 2, Subject said no. When asked if Subject ever witnessed Witness 6 or any other individual access a staff only area on Park District property and question staff, Subject said he did not recall. Subject then said that he was made aware of Witness 6 questioning staff but he did not learn about the incident until after the fact. When asked why employees would inform OPA that they witnessed Subject being present and recording the incident, Subject said that he did not recall recording the incident but did recall that he was swimming with Witness 6 and Witness 6 began questioning staff about policy and procedure because Witness 6 was a former employee. Subject was unable to recall when this occurred but stated that it occurred after Witness 6' first round of employment with the Park District and before he was rehired. The interaction took place on the pool deck, which is not a staff-only area. When asked if Subject has witnessed Witness 6 enter a staff only area, Subject said: "Probably. He knows a lot of employees."

Subject then informed OPA that he was made aware of an incident involving Witness 6 kicking a door in and entering a staff only area, but Subject did not recall who informed him of the incident. Subject spoke with Witness 6, and Witness 6 admitted to the conduct. Subject did not recall exactly when he found out about the incident but said it may have been after the Covid pandemic.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Subject confirmed that Witness 6 did record Subject on the toilet while they were at Subject's home. Subject believed Witness 6 posted the video on social media.

Hazing (Shake and Bake)

When asked if Subject ever engaged in hazing behavior, Subject said yes and explained that "things were different" years ago. Subject informed OPA that he had witnessed and participated in "shake and bakes." When asked to explain what a shake and bake is, Subject said that it is named after the chicken meal; chicken covered in breadcrumbs. The action involved covering a wet individual in sand.

Subject said that he never engaged in this conduct while he was a management level employee but may have participated in shake and bakes while he was a supervisory employee as an hourly and monthly natatorium instructor.

SUBJECT'S RESIGNATION

On October 6, 2025, a management level employee within the Park District's Community Recreation Department (Community Recreation) contacted OPA by phone, and informed OPA that Subject had resigned from his position. Subject had informed Community Recreation that he was under investigation by OPA and that his attorney recommended that he should resign after attending an interview with OPA.

During Subject's October 2, 2025 interview with OPA, Subject's attorney stated that he had time constraints. OPA informed Subject that his attendance was mandatory for the full duration of OPA's interview and that the interview would likely need to extend beyond the time restriction placed by Subject's attorney. OPA, Subject, and Subject's attorney agreed to a continuation of the interview on October 7, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. On October 6, 2025, at 4:13 p.m. Subject's attorney emailed OPA: " I received a copy of [Subject's] resignation from the Chicago Park District effective today. In light of [Subject's] resignation, we will not be appearing tomorrow." As a result, OPA was unable to ask Subject all of its questions.

During its investigation, OPA considered reviewed Subject's work cell phone for possible evidence; however, OPA was informed by Human Resources that Subject had deleted all of the data from his phone before returning the property to the Park District.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

ANALYSIS

As part of its investigation, OPA interviewed more than a dozen current and former Park District employees. These individuals held various positions, including subordinates who reported directly to Subject, individuals who considered themselves to be close personal friends of Subject, alleged witnesses outside of Subject's direct chain of supervision, and individuals who have held various levels of management positions within the Park District. Consistently, interviewees provided information that corroborated the allegations against him.

The Park District is in a phase of rebuilding both the public's perception of the Park District but also the employees' trust that the Park District and its management staff take matters of sexual misconduct, physical abuse, retaliation, and domestic violence seriously.

The Park District's Aquatics Department is comprised of nearly 1,000 personnel during peak season, and is responsible for overseeing approximately 50 outdoor swimming pools, 26 miles of lakefront- including 26 named beaches, 4 mobile-response boats and 27 indoor pools. In addition to facility management and lifeguard services on the lakefront, the department also provides safety and logistical support for numerous special events, including the Chicago Air and Water Show and Chicago Triathlon. The unit also works closely with emergency response agencies, including the American Red Cross, U.S. Coast Guard, the Chicago Police Department, and Chicago Fire Department. It is imperative that staff are not only adequately trained and physically able to effectively act as a first responder, but also able to maintain the trust of parents, participants, patrons, and community partners.

Inappropriate Comments

Subject's comments at and outside of work jeopardize the strides that the Park District's determined efforts have made by mocking and joking about the serious nature of domestic and intimate partner violence.

On May 17, 2024, video surveillance footage that caught national media attention depicted widely known public figure Sean John Combs, also known as Diddy, wearing a white towel and physically attacking his then partner by throwing her to the ground, repeatedly kicking and physically dragging her body.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Subject first denied that his Facebook post related to Diddy, but then admitted that it was related but that his words were something that he had heard on television and not a joke he was making. Aside from being untruthful despite receiving multiple compelled warnings, the more concerning matter is the conduct itself.

The next two posts on Subject's Facebook account, immediately following the post related to Diddy, are reposted videos of the Chicago Park District including a media video of Subject publicly speaking on behalf of the Park District.

Additionally, the Park District has been one of many partners in the City of Chicago coming together to support the dignity and safety of the migrants. On at least three occasions, Subject used his public Facebook page to express comments and opinions directly opposing the views of the Park District.

Subject's direct reports have detailed Subject making "off-color" comments and making fun of their race or ethnicity within the last five years and by Subject's own admission, he has made inappropriate comments while "shooting the breeze at the water cooler" in a role responsible for putting an end to what was previously normalized as "locker room" talk.

2. Failure to Cooperate with OPA's Investigation

During Subject's compelled administrative interview with OPA, Subject failed to provide truthful information by initially denying facts that were well-documented and later admitted to by Subject, by providing inconsistent statements, and by providing answers to certain questions only after being reminded of his duty to fully cooperate with OPA's investigation. Subject was given three separate compelled warnings during his interview and was informed that failing to provide full, truthful, and accurate information would be a separate violation.

During Subject's October 2, 2025 interview with OPA, Subject and his attorney were informed that Subject would be required to attend a follow up interview with OPA due to the time restriction that his attorney had. Both Subject and his attorney acknowledged that failure to attend the follow up interview would be viewed as non-cooperation. OPA, Subject and Subject's attorney agreed that the compelled interview would resume on October 7, 2025. Instead, Subject resigned and, through his legal counsel, declined to participate in the second part of the OPA interview and respond to the remainder of OPA's questions.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

3. Hazing and Harassment

During Subject's subject interview, he admitted to hazing behavior including "shake and bakes." Subject stated that he was unable to recall the timeframe that he participated in these activities but admitted to OPA that he may have engaged in hazing conduct while he was in a supervisory position.

In 2021, Arnold & Porter Kaye Scholer LLP Partner Valerie Hays issued a 43-page report to the Park District Board of Commissioners which detailed a history of Park District employee misconduct, including instances of underage sexual abuse, as well as improper training and the Park District's failure to properly investigate. The report highlights hazing conduct including "shake and bakes." The report reads in part: "Additionally, she complained about the practice of the 'shake and bake.' ...dug a giant hole and filled it partly with water. The other lifeguards would pick up one lifeguard and throw that lifeguard into the hole 'extremely hard' and then kick sand in that person's face while calling them a 'bitch' or a 'pussy' and screaming the fight song in their face."

During its investigation, OPA also interviewed individuals who provided details about Subject making sexual or otherwise inappropriate comments and on at least one occasion "flirting" or making sexual advances with a direct report. While that individual was friends with Subject and did not personally find his conduct offensive, the information they provided OPA was consistent with other accounts and strengthened the credibility of the interviewees who provided the information.

4. Knowledge of Misconduct

Subject not only admitted to engaging in this conduct in the past, but also admitted to possessing knowledge of other Park District employees engaging in hazing and concerning sexual conduct. Subject informed OPA that he learned of some of these incidents as recently as "post-Covid" while an upper-management level employee and did not report the information or take any action. Subject not only failed to act, he also promoted at least one of these individuals despite knowledge of their concerning behavior.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

5. *Amazon Firesticks and Dual Employment*

Only after being confronted with evidence, Subject admitted to selling Amazon Firesticks for a profit for multiple years including while he was in upper-management level positions.

Subject admitted to secondary employment without a form or approval as recently as 2024 while holding a position within upper-management. While reviewing Subject's Facebook account, OPA found at least 10 separate instances from 2020 through 2024 of Subject soliciting users to purchase the firestick(s) from him. He also included the monetary cost to purchase, which varied. Subject's most recent post on March 10, 2024 lists the price point as "\$200 for fire stick with 1 year cable with 6500+ channels." On December 23, 2023, Subject posted advertising a "fully loaded" Firestick. In the comments, a Facebook user asked what fully loaded meant, and Subject responded "Movies, tv shows, and 400 live tv channels. If you want the premium live tv with 6500 channels, sports league passes and adult channels, it's another fee for that. 3 months \$24 6 months \$45 1 year \$80." On December 12, 2023 Subject posted another post advertising "Fully loaded fire sticks" and wrote "Hit me up!" On this post, the price he quoted another Facebook user was "\$100 with 400 channels, all movies and tv shows. \$180 with 6500 HD channels, adult channel, pay per view, and all league passes for one year, all movies and all tv shows."

While Subject did not submit a dual employment, had Subject submitted a form requesting approval for this secondary source of income, Subject would have had to acknowledge the understanding that "[o]utside employment should not impair the employee's efficiency or interfere with the ability to satisfactorily perform their duties. The outside employment should not impair or reflect upon the reputation of the Chicago Park District." Arguably, had Subject submitted said form, the Park District would have denied his request.

6. *Relationships with Subordinates*

OPA interviews, as well as prior OIG interviews⁶, provide consistent and credible evidence regarding Subject engaging in sexual conduct with subordinate employees. Additionally, one

⁶ OIG's investigation and findings narrowly focused on the allegation that the individuals were underage at the time they engaged in sexual relations with Subject. OIG did not opine on Subject's position of authority; there is no evidence that the OIG was aware of sexual acts occurring on Park District property.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

of those former employees informed OPA that they engaged in sexual activity with Subject on Park District property on more than one occasion.

While Subject denied engaging in sexual activity with the employees while they reported to him, Subject did corroborate key details and admitted to dating the individuals in question. Subject informed OPA he supervised those individuals before or after dating them, but never during their relationship. He stated that he never disclosed those relationships to anyone at the Park District. In addition to interviews with the individuals who admitted to a sexual relationship with Subject, a monthly natatorium instructor also provided other credible details regarding Subject dating his subordinates and engaging in concerning conduct, including witnessing Subject engaging in time theft by leaving work and drinking at an establishment during the workday.

OPA was unable to fully confront Subject with these allegations because he did not appear for the second portion of his interview.

Subject was investigated for a sexual harassment complaint in 2010. At the time, the complainant submitted a written narrative detailing Subject making inappropriate comments to her, cornering her, grabbing her face, kissing her without consent, and joking about his conduct. When she told him to stop and give her space, he told her to “shut up” and sent her back out to work. Subject was initially put on emergency suspension June 10, 2010. Human Resources reinstated Subject with 67.5 hours of back pay and the complaint was “not sustained” on August 25, 2010. While OPA recognizes that the Park District’s record keeping has historically been inconsistent, based on OPA’s review of the limited information available (the written narrative and notes from Subject’s corrective action meeting) raises serious questions about the handling of these allegations.

Several employees informed OPA of an incident involving Witness 18 threatening a female employee who filed a sexual harassment complaint against Subject. One employee, a current monthly natatorium instructor provided details confirming that the female employee was the complainant in the 2010 sexual harassment complaint against Subject. The employees consistently reported that the complainant was threatened by Witness 18 and then resigned. While OPA was unable to reach the complainant, Park District records indicate that the

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

complainant's employment ended August 24, 2010, and Subject was reinstated August 25, 2010.

On February 7, 2020, a complainant, (named as Complainant One in the Arnold and Porter report and referred to as Complainant One hereafter) emailed then Superintendent Michael Kelly as well as Witness 18. In the email, Complainant One alleged that during her time as a lifeguard at Oak Street Beach she was subjected to sexual harassment, assault, hazing, bullying, retaliation, and related misconduct. Witness 18 not only failed to respond to the complainant, but he also failed to report her complaint to Human Resources or take any corrective action. In fact, the investigation found that the first time Witness 18 told anyone about the complaint was in August 2020 when the Park District OIG requested that Witness 18 conduct a search of their emails for Complainant One's name. It is important to note that during the course of several OPA investigations, current and former employees have raised alarming ethical concerns regarding Witness 18's involvement or knowledge of serious misconduct. Due to the findings in the Arnold and Porter report, Witness 18's termination, and Witness 18's designation as permanently ineligible for rehire, OPA has refrained from initiating an investigation into Witness 18 and instead has reserved its resources to focus on current employees or former employees without a permanent ineligible for rehire designation currently assigned.

CONCLUSION

FINDINGS

Based on the evidence detailed above, OPA has made the following determinations and recommendations:

Subject violated the Park District's Sexual Harassment Policy, Chapter 4 of the Park District Code (Code), and the Park District's Code of Conduct, and the Dual Employment Policy by engaging in sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, hazing, unethical behavior, and unapproved dual employment. Additionally, Subject failed to provide truthful information during his compelled subject interview and failed to fully cooperate by declining to participate in his follow-up subject interview.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

OPA's investigation uncovered multiple instances of sexual misconduct during the course of Subject's Park District employment including engaging in sexual conduct with a subordinate and engaging in sexual conduct on Park District property. At least one employee also reported Subject making sexual jokes in front of them and commenting on their physical appearance while they reported to Subject. Additionally, OPA identified evidence that Subject made questionable and concerning public jokes about domestic violence and migrants, engaged in hazing behavior and failed to report hazing behavior, made inappropriate comments to employees about their ethnicity, engaged in ongoing secondary employment including unethical and possibly illegal activity for at least five years, and failed to follow the Park District's dual employment policy.

The Park District's Code of Conduct Section D.1 states "An employee shall not engage in sexual conduct while on duty or on park property." Witness 3 provided credible information that she engaged in sexual activity with Subject on Park District property, including in restricted staff only areas, on multiple occasions. Despite being informed that a failure to participate in the follow-up interview would be viewed as non-cooperation, Subject failed to appear for the second day of his compelled subject interview. Due to his failure to appear, OPA was unable to question Subject about these allegations. Weighing the totality of evidence and Witness 3's credibility, OPA has concluded that the allegation that Subject engaged in sexual misconduct by having sex on Park District property is **SUBSTANTIATED**.

The Park District's Sexual Harassment Policy and Chapter 4 of the Park District Code prohibits using "one's position or authority to engage in sexual harassment or conduct of a sexual nature[.]" The allegation that Subject violated these policies by engaging in a sexual relationship with at least one subordinate (Witness 3) as well as by making sexual jokes and advances to a second subordinate (Witness 12) is **SUBSTANTIATED**.

The allegation that Subject sold modified Amazon Firesticks used to circumvent legitimate paid subscription services at times during work and on Park District property is **SUBSTANTIATED**.

The allegation that Subject made offensive jokes and comments based on actual or perceived race, ethnicity, or national origin is **SUBSTANTIATED**.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The allegation that Subject participated in and had knowledge of hazing and other prohibited conduct is **SUBSTANTIATED**.

Additionally, Subject violated Chapter 4, Section A(4)(h) of the Park District Code by failing to provide truthful information during his compelled administrative interview with OPA.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of its investigation, and in accordance with the Park District's Ineligible for Rehire Policy, OPA strongly recommends that a permanent ineligible for rehire designation be placed in Subject's personnel file.

Additionally, OPA recommends that Management and Human Resources take any other remedial or disciplinary action deemed appropriate.

OPA is aware that the Park District is currently in the process of drafting a Social Media Policy. As part of that effort, OPA recommends that the Park District consider the ways in which Park District employees use the Park District's image, employment vacancies, etc. on their personal publicly accessible social media platforms.

Since its inception, OPA has substantiated cases against several middle and upper management employees within the Aquatics Department. For a unit so historically plagued with a well-documented culture of harassment, hazing, and retaliatory behavior, the staff should be reminded that the Park District takes complaints seriously and that such conduct is strictly prohibited in the Park District Code and Park District policy.

The Park District's Dual Employment Form and the Park District's Code of Conduct both include information about when and how secondary employment is allowed; however, there is a consistent indication that staff would benefit from additional training and guidance regarding Dual Employment procedures, including: when to complete the form, what constitutes as employment, and whether there are any exceptions. OPA also recommends that the policy itself be updated to more clearly define what is categorized as employment and should specifically address contractual work with hours that may vary week to week.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

In order to enhance accountability and preserve potential evidence, the Park District should consider creating a policy prohibiting employees from destroying evidence or deleting data from Park District property (laptops, cell phones, tablets, etc.) while under investigation.

24-0357

An OPA investigation found sufficient evidence to support allegations that a Park Supervisor of Recreation (Subject) created an offensive and hostile work environment by engaging in acts of harassment against multiple employees based on race or ethnicity.

Additionally, through the course of its investigation, OPA also found that over the course of years, Subject's conduct likely constituted multiple violations of the Employee Code of Conduct (ECOC) and other policies and protocols, including: performance of job duties such as failure to appropriately direct, supervise, and provide leadership to staff; favoritism of one employee over others; failure to report facility hazards; failing to be present for duty at assigned times and places and/or failing to report not being present; and, doing "favors" for some patrons over others.

Furthermore, OPA's investigation found that Subject's conduct has been long-term and ongoing, yet no appropriate step discipline was implemented, allowing Subject's conduct to continue unchecked.

COMPLAINTS

1. FIRST COMPLAINT

On April 3, 2024, OPA received a complaint from a Park District employee (Complainant 1) that working conditions at the park were unfair and hazardous due to Subject's mismanagement of staff and the building. During an intake interview with OPA, Complainant 1 related that Subject favored a non-Black/African-American employee (Employee 1), over Black/African-American employees.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

2. SECOND COMPLAINT

On October 3, 2024, Complainant 1 again contacted OPA and during a second OPA interview, Complainant 1 related the following, in summary:

- Subject continued to favor Employee 1, treated Black/ African-American employees differently than non-Black/ African-American employees, and made “everything a race issue.” Subject would always talk about his own family’s white European ethnic background.
- Neither Complainant 1 nor another monthly attendant (Complainant 2) had keys to some fieldhouse spaces, including supply storage. When they needed supplies, they could not access the supplies themselves; they had to go through Employee 1.
- Subject would tell only Complainant 1 and Complainant 2 that supplies would “walk off.” Since the supplies were in locked spaces, and, other than Subject, only Employee 1 had keys, Complainant 1 concluded that Subject was talking about Complainant 1 and Complainant 2 stealing because they were both Black/ African-American. Neither Subject or Employee 1 are Black/ African-American.
- Complainant 1 questioned why Subject left Employee 1 in charge of the park while Subject was away.
- Subject would tell Complainant 1 that he knew Complainant 1 would be leaving Subject’s park for another location. Combined with Subject’s conduct, such comments made Complainant 1 feel they were unwanted at the park.

3. THIRD COMPLAINT/EMPLOYEE WRITTEN STATEMENTS

On November 26, 2024, OPA received an email from a Human Resources (HR) Manager with an attached document. The document had also been sent to then Superintendent Rosa Escareño and several members of the leadership team in the Park District’s Community Recreation department. OPA reviewed the document, hereinafter Employee Statements, and noted the following, in summary:

- The document contained the written statements of five employees who worked at Subject’s park and outlined concerns and issues at that park attributed to Subject.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- Under OPA's purview were allegations of Subject treating Black/African-American employees differently and favoritism of Employee 1 based on race.
- Additional concerns and allegations included: mismanagement of programming and scheduling; impolite and unprofessional conduct towards employees, patrons, and participants; poor and no communication; being unavailable and/or not on site; obstructing the line of site by covering the office window; and abuse of power.

REVIEW OF SUBJECT'S PARK DISTRICT RECORDS

OPA requested and reviewed Subject's personnel and disciplinary records, which showed the following:

- On May 15, 2023, Subject signed Policy Acknowledgement Forms for the Equal Employment Opportunity Policy.
- A series of emails from November 2021 related that Subject was inappropriately micromanaging an employee's work emails.
- On December 27, 2005, Subject was disciplined for violating the ECOC by failing to complete the requirements of his job by not providing appropriate direction to staff.
- Additional undated documents showed Subject failed to follow multiple policies regarding child sports programming.

A review of Success Center Training records confirmed that Subject completed the 2024 and 2025 Preventing Workplace Harassment - Leadership training.

INTERVIEWS

A. INTERVIEWS OF COMPLAINANT 2

During its investigation, OPA conducted multiple interviews of Complainant 2. Unless otherwise noted, Complainant 2 related the following, in summary:

- Subject favored Employee 1, who was a monthly attendant and was not Black/African-American. Complainant 2 was a monthly attendant and identified as

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Black/African-American. Complainant 2 believed race was the reason Subject treated Employee 1 better than himself and other employees.

- Subject would not allow Complainant 2 or Complainant 1 to use office supplies, even when needed for their job duties, such as a stapler when posting something on the notice board. Subject would say to Complainant 1 and Complainant 2 but not Employee 1 that such items would go missing.
- Subject gave Employee 1 keys to all areas of the building but did not give Complainant 2 the same keys. Although their shifts only overlapped by about 30 minutes, Complainant 2 had to go through Employee 1 to gain access to some areas and supplies.
- Subject did not hold Employee 1 to the same work performance standards as he required for Complainant 2. For example, when Complainant 2 arrived at 3:00 p.m., Employee 1 was supposed to have done certain cleaning duties, such as removing hair from locker room and bathroom drains. Complainant 2 would arrive to find the bathrooms and locker rooms uncleaned with hair in the sinks and drains.⁷
- Subject mismanaged event schedules and would go back on his word. For example, Subject said a pickleball reservation was canceled and he had called the team. The team said they were not notified. Subject told Complainant 2 to let the team play even past the park's closing time of 9:00 p.m. and that any cleaning tasks Complainant 2 could not complete would be done by Employee 1 the next morning. One of the players showered at approximately 9:20 p.m., after the locker room had already been cleaned. When Complainant 2 arrived the next day, Subject told Complainant 2 the locker room had not been cleaned and showed Complainant 2 a picture of hair in the drain. This was also an example of ongoing inconsistencies with program scheduling and facility use based on Subject's favors for some groups, which also impacted employees.

⁷ Complainant 2 sent multiple date- and time-stamped pictures that showed that just after 3:00 p.m. and on dates that corresponded to Employee 1's work days, there was hair in multiple sinks and drains, and unflushed and uncleaned toilets.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- Subject would exclusively communicate with Employee 1 and neither would pass on pertinent information, such as programming, to Complainant 2.
- Due to the lack of communication and not having all of the keys, Complainant 2 often had to call Subject. Subject usually did not answer and Complainant 2 would call Subject's supervisor. Only after Complainant 2 talked to Subject's supervisor did Subject respond to the issues. For example, the field lights were needed for scheduled programs and Complainant 2 did not have the ability to turn on the lights.
- Subject often "disappeared" and no one knew where he was. When Subject was in the office, he kept his door closed and the window covered.⁸
- Multiple patrons of all races would complain to Complainant 2 that Subject was rude. Multiple Black/African-American parents told Complainant 2 that they believed that their children were not able to be enrolled in programming due to Subject being racist.
- Complainant 2 recently observed a Black/African-American male approximately 15-years-old waiting for a ride at the front doors. Subject told the minor child that he could not stand at the door because "it was not a good look." Complainant 2 had witnessed other teenage males who were not Black/African-American waiting at the doors; when Subject observed those minor children, Subject did not say anything. Complainant 2 interpreted the interaction as Subject saying that a young Black/African--American male seemingly hanging around the park was "not a good look" because of his race.
- Approximately 20 years ago, Complainant 2 had been a patron at the park. Once when Subject and his minor child were in the weight room, Subject approached Complainant 2 and said they had to leave. Subject did not say why. There was another young father with his son who appeared to be Asian. The other child was jumping on equipment and playing in the weight room, yet Subject did not tell that patron they needed to leave. As a result, Complainant 2 stopped going to the park as a patron.

⁸ OPA reviewed date- and time-stamped photos submitted by Complainant 2 in which an office door with a window had the window covered with miscellaneous papers.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

INTERVIEW OF FORMER EMPLOYEE 1

During an interview with OPA, Former Employee 1 related the following, in summary:

- Subject created an “uncomfortable” work environment with his comments, racial “implicit bias,” and racial “microaggressions.” Subject appeared unaware of the fact that he was a white supervisor of employees of color. After 11 years at the Park District, Former Employee 1 resigned without notice due to the toxic and stressful work environment created by Subject.
- In 2024, Subject commented about the Juneteenth holiday. Former Employee 1 remembered feeling upset by Subject’s comment and recalled that the comment was about the holiday not being necessary but Subject was glad for the day off. Former Employee 1 and the other employee present were both Black/African- American.
- Subject told recreation employees they could not wear their ballcaps with the bill toward the back because “we don’t do that here.” Wearing caps at different angles signified gang affiliations. The employees were all Black/African-American and Hispanic. Former Employee 1 understood Subject to be making a connection between gangs and race and/or ethnicity.
- Former Employee 1 heard Subject say to Complainant 1 and Complainant 2 that he did not want supplies to “walk.”
- Subject favored Employee 1. Employee 1 would be the only attendant present at recreation staff meetings. Subject said Employee 1 was present as a “witness.” Subject also had employees sign documents or contracts and did not give employees copies of the documents or explain where the documents went.
- Employee 1 would tell Former Employee 1 how to run their programs. Subject never addressed such issues with Employee 1.
- Subject would have Former Employee 1 do Subject’s supervisor duties. Subject would not interact with patrons and typically stayed in his office with the door closed or was not at the park. Subject directed everyone to Former Employee 1, even when Former Employee 1 was in the middle of teaching. Subject was unable to manage employee

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

scheduling; for example, he had simultaneously scheduled Former Employee 1 to teach and to meet with a patron.

C. INTERVIEW OF EMPLOYEE 2

During an OPA interview, Employee 2 related the following, in summary:

- Subject told Employee 2 that a playground park was always kept locked because people were trying to “protect their community” and “very important people” had a key to the park. The community members who had keys were white. Employee 2 was concerned that the effect, if not the intent, was to keep children of color out of the park.
- Employee 2 would hear Subject tell Black/African-American attendants that they could not have a key or supplies because the items would “walk away.”
- Subject favored Employee 1 over all other employees. Subject would say Employee 1 was present as a “witness” during recreation meetings.
- Employee 2 would overhear Subject and Employee 1 speaking negatively about other employees. On one such occasion, Subject and Employee 1 were talking about Employee 2, which created an uncomfortable environment for Employee 2.
- Subject put all duties including supervisory ones on Former Employee 1 and would interrupt Former Employee 1 during teaching to do tasks. Former Employee 1 was the “roots” of programming and the park community. It should have raised concerns when Former Employee 1 suddenly resigned.
- Subject was unaware of the racial dynamics posed by being the white supervisor of employees of color. Subject’s favoritism of Employee 1, treatment of employees, and conduct created an unhealthy work environment.

INTERVIEW OF EMPLOYEE 3

During an interview with OPA, Employee 3 related the following, in summary:

- Employees who had quit said it was because of Subject, leading Employee 3 to believe that the park was often short staffed as a result of Subject.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- There were programming issues following Former Employee 1's resignation, including canceled programs. Subject instructed Employee 3 and another recreation leader to run child sports programs even though they were not physical instructors and, in some cases, had no knowledge of the sport. Employee 3 was paid the same salary despite doing the tasks of a physical instructor.
- Employee 3's morale was further reduced by Complainant 1 stating they overheard Subject and Employee 1 speaking negatively about another recreation leader. Subject favored Employee 1 and Employee 3 would observe Subject and Employee 1 in one-on-one meetings together.
- Subject constantly changed the rules, prevented the use of facilities seemingly on a whim, and did favors for some recreation groups. For example, Subject cut open gym time and designated the time as "community family time" for children under the age of 17. However, pickleball players could use the courts whenever they wanted regardless of the time or their ages.
- Employee 3 could not say that Subject's behavior was due to race, color, ethnicity, or economic status; it appeared to be dependent on Subject's mood.

INTERVIEW OF EMPLOYEE 4

During an interview with OPA, Employee 4 related the following, in summary:

- Subject had been mispronouncing Complainant 2's name for as long as Employee 4 had been at the park. Employee 4 overheard Complainant 2 tell Subject how to correctly pronounce Complainant 2's name. Complainant 2 and Employee 4 were Black/African-American, and hearing Subject continue to mispronounce Complainant 2's name made Employee 4 feel uncomfortable and disrespected.
- There were no physical instructors when Employee 4 started and Subject directed Employee 4 to run a sports program for children. Employee 4 knew nothing about the sport and it was not in his job description to teach classes. Subject told Employee 4 to have the children stretch for 10 minutes, run for 10 minutes, and then the class would almost be over. Participants withdrew from the soccer program. Employee 4 was paid for the additional hours worked, compensated at the same pay rate, even though he was doing the job of a physical instructor.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

INTERVIEW OF EMPLOYEE 5

During an OPA interview, Employee 5 related the following, in summary:

- Subject threw out Employee 5's hot sauce and did not allow employees to wear baseball hats. Employee 5 identified as Black/ African-American.
- Subject favored Employee 1. Employee 5's shift had over-lapped with Employee 1 and when Employee 5 would arrive, Employee 1 had not cleaned the bathrooms. Employee 1 said Subject said it was fine if Employee 1 did not clean something.

INTERVIEW OF FORMER EMPLOYEE 2

During an OPA interview, Former Employee 2 related the following, in summary:

- Subject would call Former Employee 2 by the name of another Black/ African-American employee of the same sex. There was approximately 14 years difference between the employees' ages, one employee wore glasses and the other did not, and the two employees had "different complexions."
- Subject favored Employee 1. For example, Employee 1 followed Former Employee 2 around work and said Subject had told Employee 1 to follow her.
- Former Employee 2 reported the working conditions to Subject's supervisor, who told Former Employee 2 to request a location transfer. Former Employee 2 ultimately resigned because of Subject.

INTERVIEW OF FORMER EMPLOYEE 3

During an interview with OPA, Former Employee 3 related the following, in summary:

- Former Employee 3 observed Subject favor Employee 1 over other employees and it created a work imbalance amongst attendants. Subject was more lenient with Employee 1 than other employees, especially attendants. Employee 1 would tell physical instructors how to conduct programming, creating tension.
- Subject's preferential treatment of Employee 1 appeared to be due to Employee 1 being at the park for over 20 years.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

INTERVIEW OF WITNESS 1

During an interview with OPA, an employee who worked at another park (Witness 1) related the following, in summary:⁹

- While the other park's supervisor of recreation was on leave in 2020 or 2021, Subject was acting supervisor. Witness 1 asked Subject if he and a co-worker could go to lunch. Subject asked where they were going and Witness 1 said "Church's Chicken." Subject replied, "You people sure do like your chicken" and laughed.
- Witness 1 told the co-worker what Subject said. Later, that co-worker told Witness 1 about confronting Subject about his comment and said Subject "downplayed" it.
- Both Witness 1 and the co-worker were Black/African- American. Employees and patrons at that park were also majority Black/African- American.
- Witness 1 reported Subject's comment to a former supervisor at that park (Supervisor). A meeting was held with Supervisor, Subject, Witness 1 and other employees. Witness 1 clearly remembered Subject saying that, "if" he made the statement, "then I apologize" and another employee saying "if" was not an apology. Subject never apologized nor did he seem to understand why it was necessary. Witness 1 felt uncomfortable around Subject and has avoided him since.

INTERVIEW OF SUPERVISOR

During an interview with OPA, Supervisor said the following, in summary:

- In 2021, Supervisor was asked by a former Area Manager to assist at the park while Subject was the covering supervisor. An employee told Supervisor that Subject had said "oh you people really love fried chicken" and then Subject laughed. Several employees were offended by Subject's comment. The reporting employee and the recreation staff were all Black/African-American.
- Supervisor reported the incident to the former Area Manager and the former Region Manager. Both responded that race was not Subject's "intention." To the best of

⁹ The pertinent details of Witness 1's account were consistent with information provided by other current or former employees interviewed by OPA.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Supervisor's knowledge, neither addressed the situation or issued Subject any discipline.

- Supervisor took it upon herself to hold a meeting with Subject and employees. Throughout the meeting, Subject repeatedly said "if" and made excuses. Subject never apologized, which one employee pointed out. Employees told Subject that as a white supervisor, the comment was "racially driven" and disrespectful. Supervisor explained to Subject about privilege and the racial dynamics of being a white supervisor of Black/African-American employees.
- Supervisor worked in the Central Area for years and was aware of well-known concerns about Subject's treatment of employees. Subject "micromanaged" employees, spoke to them disrespectfully, and would write-up employees in-lieu of training, mentoring or otherwise working with employees to grow and excel.
- Supervisor was familiar with Former Employee 1 and was surprised his sudden resignation did not raise red flags.

INTERVIEW OF MANAGER

During an interview with OPA, one of Subject's former supervisors (Manager) related the following, in summary:

- There had been some concerns about Subject's treatment of employees. Former Employee 1's sudden resignation was concerning but it was not until the Employee Statements that Manager became aware of the extent of the issue with Subject's treatment of employees.
- There was high employee turnover at the park, which had resulted in canceled programming and a loss of patrons and community trust.
- There were ongoing concerns that Subject did not follow Park District policies or protocol, did not report health and safety issues, had poor customer service, lied, and favored Employee 1. The following were reported examples:
 - a. In or around November 2024, Subject was not at the park. Subject said there was no electricity at the park, so he had to work at a different location. Manager did not know if it was true and was upset that Subject had not reported it if there

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- was no electricity, that Subject left his staff at the park with no electricity, and that Subject did not go to the next park location per protocol.
- b. Subject had relationships with the community and there were many incidents. For example, there was an incident with volleyball when a neighbor came out, said he was the overseer of the neighborhood, and Subject allowed neighbors to do that.
 - c. Another time, a patron yelled at a lifeguard and Subject failed to handle it appropriately; Subject had the patron's child swim at another time instead of addressing it. Manager told Subject he instead had to enforce the Facility Users Code of Conduct.

INTERVIEW OF PATRON

During an OPA interview, Patron related the following, in summary:

- Patron was formerly a Park District vendor and had known Subject for over 20 years. Subject never greeted Patron and was not welcoming or professional. Patron witnessed Subject discipline employees in public, which made her feel uncomfortable.
- Patron and her family had been repeatedly told by Subject that his park did not accept Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) vouchers. Patron's family members attended a nearby school whose student body majority was Black/African-American, Hispanic, and lower income; Patron identified as Black/African- American. Other school parents told Patron that their children had not been accepted at the park programming.
- Patron believed that Subject actively tried to keep the school's children out of the park due to their race, ethnicity, and economic status.
- Subject appeared to be overly harsh with Black/ African-American male children and treated white children differently; for example, "scold[ing]" Black or African American boys and not white boys.
- Due to Subject's conduct, Patron and her extended family left the park.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

INTERVIEW OF SUBJECT

During an interview with OPA, Subject was represented by an SEIU Local 73 representative, and related the following, in summary:

Subject has worked at the same park for 22 of the 27 years he has worked for the Park District. Subject also supervised three nearby unstaffed parks.

Subject was familiar with the Employee Handbook, the ECOC, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Policy. Subject had never been told that he had violated a Park District policy. Approximately 23 years ago, Subject received formal discipline for failing to inform his supervisor that he was going from one park to another.

Subject believed he was interviewing with OPA due to issues with Complainant 1's job duties, which Subject's supervisor was aware. Complainant 1 had concerns about the large size of the fieldhouse and the amount of custodial work. During a staff meeting, Complainant 1 became "loud," "rude," and "violent." By "violent" Subject meant Complainant 1's demeanor and body language, such as leaning forward. Subject believed Complainant 1 instigated the Employee Statements.

Subject was "shocked" by the Employee Statements and believed it was done "purposely and maliciously." Subject had an "excellent record" and had never had any discipline.

Discrimination and/or Harassment

- Subject admitted he often told employees that things "walked away"; he believed it was teenagers. Subject failed to answer why he made the statement to two Black/African-American attendants or why they could not use certain supplies. Subject stated that he told all of the attendants not to put out so much paper towel or toilet paper rolls at a time because they would be stolen. Subject asked Complainant 1 and Complainant 2 if they needed keys; they said no.
- Subject did not say Complainant 2's name correctly but it was not on purpose. Complainant 2 "only" corrected Complainant 2 once.¹⁰

¹⁰ OPA investigators noted that despite being repeatedly corrected, Subject continued to mispronounce Complainant 2's name throughout the interview.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- Subject admitted to throwing out a Black/African-American employee's hot sauce because it has been there "a few days."
- Subject did not recall his exact comment to Witness 1 in 2021 but they had been talking about food and chicken. The employee got up and left - but "not mad" or "door slamming." Another employee "mentioned" to Subject that his comment to Witness 1 "might" have been wrong.
- The matter was "cleared up" through a meeting with supervisors and employees. Subject did not recall saying "if I said it, then I apologize;" he said he apologized to the employee.
- Subject admitted he could understand how this behavior, when taken together, could be perceived as targeting Black/African-American employees. He continued to say he treated everyone equally regardless of race, ethnicity, color, gender, or economic status.
- No vendor or patron had ever told Subject he was racist or unfair. No one said anything regarding race and Park Kids programing; there was a "wide range of cultural activities."
- Subject's park accepted CHA vouchers, scholarships, and medical cards. Subject did not reject CHA vouchers or registrants based on economic status, race, or ethnicity.
- Subject's park had a policy about minors hanging out at the park "called loitering." Subject told all minors regardless of race, ethnicity or color to move their bags or wait outside because it was a tripping hazard.
- Subject was not racist and had many Black/African-American friends; he could provide OPA a list of those friends. Subject's wife was Pilipino.
- Subject had driven one of the employees, who was Black/African-American, to another Park District location, allowed the employee to go to two trainings, bought the employee Dunkin' Donuts, and gave the employee Park District sweatshirts.
- No one ever had a conversation with Subject regarding the racial dynamics of being a white supervisor of Black/African-American and Hispanic employees. Subject "learned" from the situation at the other park; "even if it's a joking manner, you can't

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

say things; I'm very mindful now." Subject then stated, "200% I have never been talked to about this issue again."

Favoritism

- Subject denied that he gave Employee 1 any preferential treatment.
- Subject denied he ever asked Employee 1 to follow another employee and report back to him.
- Subject has taken pictures of hair in the drains and sent them to HR due to patron complaints. Subject questioned the dates and times of the pictures OPA had regarding dirty sinks, drains, and bathrooms timestamped during Employee 1's shifts. Subject speculated Employee 1 was not there on those dates or times.
- There were problems between Employee 1, Complainant 1, and Complainant 2 from the beginning. It was now "night and day" between Employee 1 and Complainant 2 since Complainant 1 had resigned.

Employee Turnover

- There was employee turnover at his park because people were promoted, the schedule did not work for them, or they left for other employment opportunities. Former Employee 1 resigned to accept another job.

POST-INTERVIEW STATEMENT - SUBJECT

On March 18, 2025, OPA received a written statement from Subject through his union representative. OPA reviewed Subject's statement in full and noted that it was consistent with statements Subject made to OPA during his interview.

ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Harassment

The evidence showed, and OPA found, that Subject's racially loaded comments and actions were unwelcome, persistent, and had the effect of creating an uncomfortable and offensive

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

work environment. Multiple current and former employees credibly and consistently testified that Subject had been making racially and ethnically charged comments and actions for years. When such conduct was brought to his attention, most notably while he was filling in at another park, Subject not only failed to take responsibility for his own conduct but then continued his behavior and/or downplayed the impact his actions had on those around him.

During his interview with OPA, Subject talked about his own self-reflection regarding his privilege and power as a white supervisor of Black/African-American and Hispanic employees, yet Subject's written statement following the OPA interview – along with continued reports from employees – demonstrated Subject's complete lack of self-awareness, personal accountability, and understanding of the serious impact of his conduct.

Furthermore, despite being informed by OPA that the allegations against him pre-dated the arrival of Complainant 1 and that multiple employees going back to before 2020 credibly and consistently testified they either requested a location transfer and/or quit the Park District entirely as a result of Subject's conduct and mismanagement, Subject continued to blame other employees for employees' concerns and discontent.

Finally, Subject was current with mandatory harassment and bystander training, was spoken to by Supervisor in 2020 or 2021, and, in 2025, by OPA investigators, yet his harassing comments and behavior have continued. It is thus clear to OPA that additional training for Subject would likely be ineffective. OPA therefore recommends that HR discipline Subject as it deems appropriate in light of Subject's participation in relevant training and his complete failure to modify his behavior.

Favoritism

It should be noted that OPA found insufficient evidence to determine that Subject's favoritism toward Employee 1 was motivated by race, ethnicity, color, or any other protected category. The evidence heavily indicated that Subject's preferential treatment of Employee 1 was largely due to their long-term professional relationship. OPA notes that it previously referred the matter of favoritism to HR Labor Relations and continues to recommend that HR take any action it deems appropriate.

Similarly, OPA found insufficient evidence to support the allegation that Subject discriminated against CHA voucher registrants based on race, ethnicity or another category.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Additional Concerns

During OPA's investigation, multiple former and current employee witnesses up and down the chain of command expressed concerns about whether Subject satisfactorily performed the duties of his job and whether he adhered to Park District policy and procedure, including: failure to appropriately direct, supervise, and provide leadership to staff; lack of communication; instructing new recreation leaders to teach sports programs; threatening to write-up employees; failing to report serious facility health and safety concerns; following protocol regarding his whereabouts; failing to properly manage registration and scheduling; knowledge of a patron having a key to a playground; and, providing some community members with favors and not others.

As these allegations do not fall under OPA's purview, OPA recommends that HR review the matter and take any disciplinary and/or other action it deems appropriate.

25-0042

OPA received a complaint from a Park Supervisor of Recreation (Complainant) related to an email received from one of the employees Complainant supervises (Employee). In the email, the Employee discussed being offended by a note posted in a park office.

OPA interviewed the Employee, who described receiving a text message with a photograph of a note posted in the office. The note read: "March 17, 2025 Slavery Day Era." The image was sent to the Employee in a group text with two coworkers who expressed that they were offended by the note. The note's reference to slavery also was offensive to Employee, who is African-American. During an interview with OPA, Employee stated that they have not experienced any discrimination by any of the employees who work at the park.

Complainant told OPA that the note may have been in reference to some schedule changes at the park where more classes and sessions were being added to the schedule. Many of the staff members were upset that they would have to work additional hours. Complainant said the note's author may have been protesting the increased workload but might not have understood that referencing slavery could be offensive.

OPA interviewed several other employees at the park. They stated that they also believed the note was in protest to the increased workload.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

25-0114

OPA received a complaint from a Park District employee (Complainant) who alleged they were being harassed and retaliated against by another employee (Employee).

During an initial interview with OPA, Complainant stated they believed an argument with Employee was harassment and retaliation because of the timing of the argument. Complainant, however, was unable to articulate any behavior that met the legal definition of harassment or that was indicative of retaliation for reporting conduct.

Based on the facts gathered, OPA found that the situations described appeared to be personality conflicts exacerbated by workplace gossip. OPA, therefore, closed this matter as not falling under its purview.

25-0128

OPA received a complaint from a Park District employee (Complainant) who alleged that a Park Supervisor of Recreation (Subject) discriminated against Complainant based on disability.

The complaint alleged Subject instructed Complainant to turn over their keys when Complainant refused to instruct a class. Complainant reported not feeling well while on duty and that they felt they were in a stressful and pressured situation.

OPA asked Complainant for any information related to any actions taken that Complainant believed were based on a documented disability or any other protected category. Complainant declined, stating that there was nothing further to add outside of what was in the written complaint that was submitted. Complainant stated that the disability referenced was not feeling well and having a headache.

Based on the information available, OPA found no substantial, credible, and corroborated evidence to establish that Complainant has a disability or that that Complainant was discriminated against based on any protected category in violation of Chapter IV of the Park District Code and Park District policy.

For these reasons, OPA closed this case as **UNSUBSTANTIATED**.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

25-0158

OPA received a complaint alleging that a Park District Attendant (Subject) made threatening statements in violation of Park District policies, including the Violence in the Workplace Policy.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

OPA's investigation found substantial credible evidence to support the allegations that Subject violated the District's Violence in the Workplace Policy, by making threatening statements. Specifically, OPA found the comments made by Subject to be deemed as threats.

Additionally, OPA's investigation established that Subject violated additional Park District policies by intimidating staff and being insubordinate.

For these reasons, OPA recommends that the Park District evaluate these findings, along with the seriousness of the statements made by Subject and take any disciplinary action it deems appropriate, up to and including termination of employment and an "Ineligible for Rehire" designation in Subject's personnel file.

INVESTIGATION

A. Interview with Supervisor

Supervisor has been Subject's supervisor since August 2024. She has never given Subject a formal reprimand but has on multiple occasions had conversations with the employee about her behavior, including interactions with colleagues and patrons.

Patrons have expressed concern about Subject's rude behavior, saying their children are afraid of her. Supervisor has requested parents and nannies write a complaint to the Park District about their interactions, but no one wanted to get involved.

Supervisor took a week off after summer camp finished. In her absence, another supervisor was overseeing the park and staff. Prior to leaving, Supervisor had a staff meeting explaining that if there were any issues or emergencies, they should contact the other supervisor.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Supervisor said Subject repeatedly reached out to her with issues that were not important, that could have waited until she returned or that could have been handled by the other supervisor. When Supervisor returned, she held another staff meeting to stress that staff must follow directives and that the behavior cannot continue.

Supervisor also shared that she sometimes takes approved leave to care for a family member and cannot be disturbed. Subject has repeatedly contacted her on those off days. Supervisor again held a staff meeting to let them know if they continued not listening to her directive she would move to discipline. Supervisor feels Subject is being insubordinate and purposely disobeying directives.

During her interview with OPA, Supervisor stated that Subject was overheard by another employee (Witness 1) making extremely inappropriate and alarming comments while talking on her personal phone. Witness 1 recorded Subject. At the time, Subject and Witness 1 were both sitting in the art room with the door open. Participants, parents and nannies were in the hallway near the room, and it is possible they overheard Subject.

Supervisor listened to the recording and was stunned when she heard Subject talking about rape, her shooting aim and that she was going to go after someone's kids. These were only a few of the alarming comments. Supervisor found the comments to be deeply disturbing and inappropriate for the workplace. Supervisor viewed the comments as threats. Supervisor was instructed to share the recorded statements by Subject with OPA.

Supervisor said Subject is very abrasive, racist and unprofessional. The staff feels uneasy, paranoid and even fearful when Subject is around. Subject is always telling everyone she is going to sue people. Supervisor described interacting with Subject like walking on eggshells.

Subject talks about being the only African-American working at the park and that most of the participants are white. Supervisor explained the demographics of the neighborhood to Subject, and also pointed out there are only four employees at the park. Supervisor has encouraged Subject to be welcoming and pleasant to the park's visitors.

Another employee (Witness 2) told Supervisor that when he was working with Subject over the summer, Subject refused to let a father and the man's autistic child into the park so the child could use the bathroom. Witness 2 said Subject was rude and yelling at the father.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Supervisor stated that Witness 2's account was credible and Witness 2 was deeply hurt by what Subject did.

Subject has expressed wanting to work closer to where she lives, and Supervisor has shown her multiple times how to apply for a transfer. In the end, Subject does not follow through.

Supervisor described Subject's personality as erratic and inconsistent, saying she can walk in at the start of her shift and be friendly, then suddenly her demeanor and attitude change.

Supervisor stated that she worries that Subject may retaliate against Park District employees if she is disciplined. Supervisor ended by saying she feels fearful for herself and her staff.

B. Interview with Subject

Subject started with the Park District in a seasonal position at a service yard before moving to the park as an Attendant, where she has been for the past two years.

Subject doesn't get along with Witness 1, and they don't talk much. She said Witness 1 is a bragger and thinks he knows everything. She had to report Witness 2 for smoking once but said she doesn't have any issues with him.

Subject acknowledged having completed the Park District's required trainings related to harassment and workplace violence, in addition to other trainings. Subject said she has never violated any policies and has not been disciplined.

When asked if she has had any bad interactions with park patrons, Subject responded that one time there was a group of five aggressive people in the park, but it was handled. Subject said she gets along well with all the mothers and nannies; she has never had any issues.

When asked if she has ever had a verbal altercation with a patron or had to refuse entry to the fieldhouse, Subject responded that she had not. When asked if she recalled refusing to let a father and child into the fieldhouse to use the restroom, Subject said she never did that. When asked why someone would say otherwise, Subject did not have a response.

Subject said she has never exchanged curse words with coworkers or yelled at a coworker. She said one time Witness 1 got loud and yelled at her, but she didn't say anything back to him.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

During her interview with OPA, Subject was asked if she ever made the following statements while at work, either to someone at the park or while talking on the phone.

- “Let me see your ass on the Red Line. Folks and them will rape your ass.”
- “I do what the fuck I want.”
- “I’m coming for your kids.”
- “They are going to kill me if I start doing it, because they are going to kill my black ass.”
- “I’m coming with bullets.”
- “You are not just going to hang me; we’re going to have to fight.”
- “My aim is precise.”
- “I will nail someone.”
- “That’s why you don’t have to fight; you have to be a shooter.”

Subject’s response to each was that she never made the statement.

When asked why people would report they overheard her making these statements, Subject responded that she does not use profanity. She said she has had plenty of conversations on her phone and does not recall making any of the statements. When asked if it is possible she made these statements and does not recall, Subject said no.

When asked if she is familiar with the art room, Subject said she goes in the room to clean. When asked if she makes personal calls while in the art room, Subject said no and it is not possible that she ever did. She added that she has a designated space outside where she takes phone calls and smokes cigarettes.

Subject said the nannies and mothers hang out in the park and talk, almost like they are friends. Witness 1 has been at the park a long time and likes to call the park “his park” and says that he knows a lot of the nannies. Subject said most of the people are white. When asked if being the only African-American employee at the park bothers her, Subject said she

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

previously worked in the Gold Coast, so it doesn't bother her. She added that her mother is Caucasian.

Subject said she owns a gun, which is registered, and she has a current and active FOID card. She said she has never brought the gun into work. When asked if she has left the gun in her car while she was at work, she responded she leaves the gun in a safe at home.

Subject said she was arrested for retail theft five or six years ago. The case was thrown out by the judge; she did not recall the reason. When asked about any other arrests, Subject said she couldn't recall, saying she did things in high school, so it is possible.

Subject said she is not stressed out; she loves and needs her job. She said she meditates and has paperwork about her therapy. She ended by saying she just does her job and goes home.

ANALYSIS

Making direct or implied threats is prohibited conduct under the Park District's Violence in the Workplace Policy. Additionally, the Policy prohibits exhibiting hostile behavior that creates a reasonable fear of injury or subjects another individual to emotional distress.

OPA's investigation found consistent and credible evidence to support the allegation that Subject made threatening statements in the workplace that were overheard by a co-worker and could potentially have been heard by Park District patrons.

Subject's blanket denial of the allegations - given the audio recording of her making the threatening comments - was not credible and called into question the veracity of other statements made during her interview with OPA. Additionally, during her interview with OPA, Subject was found to make several statements that were deceptive, which further undermined her credibility.

Subject's conduct and the alarming nature of the comments made clearly qualify as threatening behavior, and therefore a violation of the Violence in the Workplace Policy that left the employees fearful and concerned that she may retaliate.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

CONCLUSION

For these reasons, this investigation is **SUBSTANTIATED**. OPA recommends that the Park District evaluate these findings and discipline Subject as deemed appropriate.

25-0173

An OPA investigation found insufficient evidence to support allegations that the Park District discriminated against a former employee based on her race and disability in violation of Chapter IV of the Chicago Park District Code and related policies.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

OPA closed this matter as **UNSUBSTANTIATED** with no recommendations for further action. No response from Park District management is required.

INVESTIGATION OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

A. Complaint

The OIG forwarded to OPA a complaint the OIG received from a former employee (Complainant).

In the complaint emailed to the OIG, Park District leadership and others, Complainant alleged that the Park District was discriminating against her based on her race and that related actions against her were based on her disability as well. Complainant also emailed several attachments that were part of her complaint and which she indicated were for “edification and response.”

The June 12, 2025, emails were sent on the day Complainant’s employment with the Park District was terminated but prior to her receiving her termination notice. Shortly thereafter, Complainant filed a Charge of Discrimination with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission alleging discrimination based on her race and disability. She also alleged that she requested a reasonable accommodation, which was denied, and that she was terminated after complaining to the Park District about the denial.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Complainant specifically alleged that managers in the Park District's administration subjected her to discrimination during her tenure at the Park District, and she cited that as evidence that her termination was also motivated by discrimination.

B. Review of Evidence and Interview of Complainant

OPA reviewed the documents Complainant submitted, which included her response to a pre-disciplinary meeting she attended, her job description, and email threads between Complainant and her managers.

After a review of Complainant's submitted documents, OPA conducted a follow-up interview with Complainant and obtained additional information related to her complaint.

During her interview with OPA, Complainant recounted the following, in part:

Complainant's work location was moved in March 2024. Because of that move, she went from having a private office to a cubicle.

She informed her supervisors that her new workspace did not provide the privacy she needed and she requested a new location. However, she was told she could not be treated more favorably by not having to work at her assigned location or by not having to work in a cubicle.

Complainant stated that she has had anxiety and has managed it her whole life. She informally notified her supervisors of that during approximately April 2024 and told them that her new seating arrangement and the resulting exposure was causing additional anxiety.

Complainant then went through the Park District's Disability Policy Office to request a reasonable accommodation, but she did not file the official paperwork until August or September 2024. Complainant also suffers with migraines and around April or May 2024, she submitted paperwork to request intermittent leave.

In the accommodation request, Complainant asked for a private office. Complainant's request was denied by the Disability Office, and she was informed of the denial. In its response to her request, the Disability Office explained that there were no available offices for the foreseeable future. Complainant was also provided options for privacy to conduct her day-to-day duties including the use of available conference rooms and use of noise-cancelling

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

headphones for virtual meetings, online seminars, etc. at her desk. Complainant also was told that equipment was available upon request; if additional desktop equipment could help alleviate high stress situations in her job duties, she was instructed to inform the Disability Office so that it could be resourced for her use.

Complainant is Black/African American. In support of her allegation of race discrimination she named two employees who also work in Human Resources as examples of non-Black/African American employees who were treated more favorably.¹¹ Both comparator employees cited by Complainant identified their race as White in personnel records.

The first example Complainant cited is Employee 1. Complainant stated that Employee 1 is never required to report to the office. She stated that Employee 1 only comes in periodically for meetings and would leave afterward, stating she has other meetings to attend elsewhere.

The second example Complainant cited is Employee 2. Complainant described Employee 2 as being given significant autonomy in her work, stating that “she is free to be.” But Complainant did acknowledge that Employee 2 also does not have an office and regularly works in a cubicle.

Complainant stated that the seating arrangement exacerbated her anxiety and removed her ability to manage her symptoms. Further, she questioned the motivation of her supervisors, stating that she does “not believe their actions were made in good faith, but in response to a personal dislike or discomfort.” Additionally, Complainant stated that the supervisors are seen as “unsupportive, unhelpful, and subject to favoritism or preference practices.”

C. Interviews with the Supervisors

OPA conducted separate interviews with the three supervisors identified by Complainant. During their interviews, all three provided consistent information and made similar comments related to the incidents involving Complainant during her employment.

The information below is a summary of the information provided by the Supervisors:

¹¹ Complainant did not provide any comparators to support her allegation of disability discrimination.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Complainant was required to move work locations when her position was reassigned. A huge part of Complainant's role was for her to be accessible to employees.

Complainant, like other employees in her department, was assigned to a cubicle, as opposed to an office due to the limited number of offices available. Most employees at the location work in cubicles and favoritism could not be shown to Complainant because she was accustomed to having an office prior to being moved.

Complainant did request that she have an office. When she was told there was no office for her to occupy, she expressed her displeasure with working in a cubicle and related it more to the privacy of her work.

When Complainant mentioned her concern about working in a cubicle, she was provided with options including working from the available conference rooms and other flexible work spaces. Because Complainant had a work cellphone, she could also take and make calls outside of her cubicle area.

Any decisions regarding accommodation requests at the Chicago Park District, including any requests made by Complainant, are made by the Disability Policy Officer, not the Supervisors.

Several other employees have requested to have a personal office, and they were also told there were no offices available, including Complainant's named comparator Employee 2.

Complainant's other named comparator, Employee 1, worked in a very different role and many of her duties involve data entry. There was, therefore, not the same necessity for Employee 1 to come into the office, and the Park District really did not have the space at Complainant's location. For that reason, Employee 1 and Complainant had completely different roles and were not similarly situated.

The Supervisors all stated that Complainant was made aware of her performance issues throughout 2024 and 2025 and never showed any accountability. They conducted numerous check-ins with Complainant to show support and offer her assistance in her role. Her performance, however, did not improve despite those efforts.

Additionally, numerous complaints were received regarding Complainant's performance and lackluster responses. Complainant was not meeting the expectations for her position.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Complainant's discharge was based upon a culmination of events that led to a final decision to terminate her employment with the Park District.

The Supervisors stated that Complainant's termination was based on performance, not her race, her disability or any other protected category.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

OPA's investigation found no substantial, credible, or corroborated testimonial or documented evidence to support Complainant's allegation that the Park District and managers in the Human Resources Department discriminated against Complainant based on her race or disability. Specifically, OPA's investigation found no evidence to support a finding that the Supervisors discriminated against Complainant or violated the Park District Code or any related policies.

OPA found significant evidence that the Supervisors offered Complainant several alternatives that were available given the space limitations when Complainant requested an office instead of being assigned a cubicle.

OPA reviewed the documentation provided by Complainant and found that it did not substantiate her allegation that she was discriminated against during her employment, or ultimately discharged, based on her race or disability.

Complainant provided two comparators who are non-Black/ African-American but failed to show those individuals were treated more favorably based on their races. One of the comparators provided by Complainant was not similarly situated because of the difference in the duties assigned to Complainant and the comparator she named. Further, the other comparator Complainant cited, who is White and with no known disability, also requested an office and was also denied.

During their interviews with the Supervisors cited non-discriminatory reasons to support the decision to require Complainant to work at the location and from a cubicle, including the unavailability of space and the need for her to be accessible to employees given the duties of her position. Further, the Supervisors cited non-discriminatory reasons for Complainant's termination based on performance and not her race or disability status. The information cited

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

by the Supervisors showed that Complainant's deficiencies and failure to complete her duties as assigned added an undue burden on her supervisors and coworkers.

OPA's investigation, therefore, found no evidence to support Complainant's allegation that the Chicago Park District was subjected her to discrimination based on her race and disability.

For these reasons, OPA has closed this matter as **UNSUBSTANTIATED**.

25-0195

OPA received a complaint from a manager who stated that a Park District employee (Employee) reported that a co-worker (Subject) used inappropriate language and an offensive racial term.

OPA interviewed the Employee, who related that on one occasion Employee was engaging in conversation with Subject, who had just been hired. Subject used language that Employee deemed inappropriate for the workplace.

The Employee described being offended by the use of this language because Employee takes pride in being professional in the workplace. The Employee reported the incident to encourage the manager to have a conversation with Subject regarding what is and what is not appropriate language for the workplace. The Employee said Subject is young and might not understand that some language may be accepted when speaking with friends, but that it is not acceptable in the workplace.

The Employee had a conversation with Subject and explained why the language was not appropriate. Employee shared that it did not appear that Subject had any ill intent and stated that the Subject was receptive and apologetic during their conversation. The Employee further stated that there have been no other issues.

For these reasons, OPA has closed this matter.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

25-0228

An OPA investigation found insufficient evidence to support allegations that a Park District Supervisor of Recreation (Subject) harassed another employee in violation of Chapter IV of the Chicago Park District Code and related policies.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

OPA closed this matter as **UNSUBSTANTIATED** with no recommendations for further action. No response from Park District management is required.

INVESTIGATION OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

A. Complaint

OPA received an email complaint from a Park District employee (Complainant), who reported he received an inappropriate text message from a Park Supervisor of Recreation.

Complainant related it was not uncommon for him and Subject to exchange text messages related to work and schedules. He related he received a text from Subject in the late evening which read, "Good night handsome, hope you had a good day." The next day, Complainant went to the Subject's Area Manager and reported what occurred.

B. Interview of Complainant

On the same day Complainant reported the text message to his Area Manager, Complainant stated that Subject came to Complainant and apologized. Complainant said Subject told him he did not know he had sent the message to him, that it was meant for someone else, and that it was sent to him in error.

Complainant stated that, since receiving the text message, he does not feel comfortable working at that location any longer with Subject. He submitted a transfer request last year to be transferred to another work location. Complainant also stated that he has submitted eight transfer requests this year.

C. Interview of Area Manager

During an interview with OPA, Subject's Area Manager (Area Manager) confirmed that Complainant came to her and reported he did not feel comfortable working at that location

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

because he had received an inappropriate text message from Subject. Area Manager said she then called Subject into her office and informed him of what had been reported to her by Complainant.

According to Area Manager, Subject expressed that he was embarrassed and that he did not mean to send the text message to Complainant. She said Subject was very apologetic and informed her he was going to go to Complainant and apologize.

Area Manager added that Complainant came back to her after Subject apologized. She asked him if he felt Subject was truthful, and if his apology was sincere. Area Manager said Complainant told her he did feel Subject was truthful and his apology was sincere but that he still did not feel comfortable.

Area Manager told OPA that she believes the text message sent to Complainant by Subject was in error. Area Manager had never received any reports of Subject being inappropriate with employees.

Area Manager said Complainant came to her in June, which is Pride Month, and reported that a male patron talked to him in a restroom while the patron was not clothed. He also complained that people from the Pride events that were being held in the neighborhood were coming in and out of the park. She said she believes that Complainant did not feel comfortable working in the neighborhood where the park was located.

Area Manager stated that Complainant had requested to be transferred to another location prior to the text message incident. She said she does not have the authority to transfer Complainant and that she explained to him that he should go through the transfer process outlined in his collective bargaining agreement.

D. Interview of Subject

Subject stated that he was unaware the text message went to Complainant instead of its intended recipient until his Area Manager brought it to his attention. He said he was embarrassed about the mishap, and he explained to her that he wanted to apologize to Complainant.

Subject said he went to Complainant and explained to him the text message was not meant for him and apologized.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

After he apologized, Complainant told him that everything was okay. Subject stated that he had spoken with Complainant since the incident regarding a time off request. He said when the two of them met, he apologized again to Complainant and Complainant again said they were "cool."

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

OPA's investigation found no substantial, credible, and corroborated evidence to show Subject harassed Complainant or created a hostile working environment for Complainant or any other employees at his work location. OPA's investigation did not find that Subject intentionally sent the text message to Complainant. Further, OPA's investigation found that, when Subject became aware that the message had been sent in error, he immediately took steps to address the situation by apologizing for the mistake.

Additionally, the Area Manager stated that Complainant had previously indicated his personal discomfort with his work location and had requested a transfer prior to receiving the text message from Subject. Subject was properly directed to follow the Park District's transfer request process, as provided in the collective bargaining agreement.

For these reasons, OPA has closed this matter as **UNSUBSTANTIATED**.

25-0277

A supervisor contacted OPA to relate that a Laborer (Complainant) had reported being harassed by multiple employees.

During an initial interview with OPA, Complainant repeated numerous interactions with a foreman spanning over 15 years, several of which were previously investigated by OPA.

The specific interaction that triggered the supervisor to contact OPA involved a different employee and was demonstrative of a personality conflict. Complainant related that the supervisor had a meeting with all involved parties and there were currently no issues.

During the interview with OPA, Complainant did not articulate any conduct that met the legal definition of harassment. Because the matter does not fall under its purview and had been addressed by the supervisor, OPA closed the matter.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

25-0300

OPA received a complaint alleging that a seasonal recreation leader (Subject) threw a day camp participant in a garbage can.

In an effort to gather details related to the allegation, OPA interviewed the participant's mother (Complainant). Complainant explained that Subject was criticizing her son and stated that the son was not obeying camp rules. Subject then picked up Complainant's son and held him over a garbage can, which the boy then fell into.

OPA spoke with the Park Supervisor of Recreation in charge of that location, who confirmed having spoken to Subject about these actions. Subject was issued a disciplinary reprimand, which included two days off work with no pay. The Park Supervisor also contacted Complainant to notify her that the situation had been addressed.

Because of this, OPA has closed this matter and deferred to the Park Supervisor's handling of the situation.

25-0375

OPA received a complaint from a seasonal lifeguard (Complainant) alleging another seasonal lifeguard (Subject) purposely grazed the top of his back to the bottom of his back with her hand, invading his personal space.

OPA interviewed Complainant, who said Subject walked up behind him and touched his back, then moved her hand down his back. Complainant did not feel Subject did this in a sexual manner, nor did Complainant feel threatened by this. Complainant explained he was having a conversation with another coworker, and it seemed as if Subject wanted to enter the conversation so she touched him in an awkward attempt to join in.

Complainant, however, said that if the roles were reversed and a male did this to a female it would be a big deal, and this is why he wanted to get this incident on the record.

OPA spoke with Park Supervisor of Recreation (Supervisor) about the incident. Supervisor confirmed he spoke to Subject about personal space and the importance of not touching anyone without their consent.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Because of this, OPA deferred to Supervisor and found no additional investigation was needed.

25-0437

OPA received a complaint from a parent (Complainant) alleging that a manager (Subject) angrily confronted her son during a NASCAR Chicago event.

To gather details related to the allegation, OPA interviewed Complainant, who said she was at a NASCAR event with her children who were helping with pushing Go-karts. Complainant said her 17-year-old son was leaning against one of the NASCAR vehicles because it was a very hot day. Subject approached her son and told him to get off the vehicle, which he did. Later, her son was again leaning against a NASCAR vehicle. Subject again came up to him and aggressively told him to get off the vehicle.

Complainant said Subject embarrassed her son in front of his friends and should have handled things differently. Complainant, however, stated that she did not feel Subject was going to harm her son.

OPA found that Complainant's description of the incident was insufficient to find that there was a violation of the Violence in the Workplace Policy. OPA, therefore, closed this matter as **UNSUBSTANTIATED**.

25-0459

OPA opened an investigation into a complaint in which a Laborer (Complainant) alleged that a manager (Subject) discriminated against Complainant by sending Complainant to another location to work.

Complainant stated that their supervisor (Supervisor) indicated that Subject gave the directive to send Complainant to another location. Complainant stated that they believe the Subject made that decision because Subject did not want to see Complainant on that day and that Subject does not like Complainant.

During an interview with OPA, Supervisor explained that Laborers who worked out of one service yard were being moved to work out of another location for a weekend due to a festival

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

in their area. Supervisor stated that Subject had decided to split a couple of Laborers up and have them report to different yards. Supervisor said Complainant just reported to the other location until Supervisor had a crew pick Subject up, and they continued with their assignments for that day.

Supervisor said the change to the reporting location was just for a specific Friday and then the employees returned to working out of their regular home base. Supervisor related that Complainant did not raise any concerns at the time about going to the other location for pick up.

OPA's investigation found no substantial, credible, and corroborated evidence to show that Complainant was discriminated against based on any protected category, in violation of any Chicago Park District policies. Complainant did not articulate anything to support the allegation that Complainant's work location was changed for a discriminatory reason. In contrast, OPA found that Supervisor provided a legitimate, non-discriminatory reason for the decision to send Complainant to the other location.

For this reason, OPA closed this matter as **UNSUBSTANTIATED**.

25-0472

OPA received a complaint alleging that an Hourly Attendant (Subject) inappropriately touched a minor.

On October 17, 2025, Subject was placed on emergency suspension.

An OPA investigation found insufficient evidence to establish that Subject violated Chapter 4, Section A(4)(a) of the Park District Code and found that the complainants exaggerated the interaction when reporting it to both the Park District and the Chicago Police Department (CPD).

Based on this unsubstantiated finding, OPA recommended that the Park District immediately reinstate Subject's employment with backpay. Furthermore, OPA recommended that the Park District provide Subject with any additional coaching, training, and/or support it deems appropriate in order to ensure Subject understands appropriate interactions with members of the public, particularly minors, and/or de-escalation skills.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Additionally, during the course of its investigation, OPA learned of excessive consumption of alcohol by a sports association that uses the park's sports facility (Association), placing employees, players and patrons at risk and violating Park District policy. Because the matter of patron alcohol consumption on Park District property does not fall under OPA's purview, OPA strongly recommends that the Park District examine this issue prior to the 2026 sports season and determine what if any action should be taken, including consequences for the Association, additional monitoring, and any other action it deems appropriate.

COMPLAINT

A. REPORT AND INTERVIEW OF SUPERVISOR OF RECREATION

OPA received a written report from Supervisor of Recreation (Supervisor) outlining her conversations with Subject and the mother and father (Complainant 1 and Complainant 2, respectively) of a 15-year-old female (Minor).

According to the report, Subject called Supervisor and informed her that the afternoon prior there was an unhoused male in one of the two bathrooms in the sports facility. Subject stated that when a minor female went to use the same bathroom, Subject touched the minor girl's hand and guided her towards an unoccupied bathroom. Subject said the minor girl's mother was outside the facility during the interaction. Later, a male told Subject that an unhoused male had touched his daughter inappropriately and later accused Subject of touching his daughter inappropriately. Subject asked the unhoused male to leave the facility.

The day after the incident, Complainant 1, Complainant 2, and Minor came to the park to ask for Subject's name to file a police report. Complainant 1 told Supervisor that she was with Minor inside the facility and she witnessed Subject touch Minor. Complainant 1 and Complainant 2 left a written narrative with Supervisor, which she submitted to OPA.

During an interview with OPA, Supervisor related the following, in summary:

There were two single, all-gender bathrooms and one shower in the sports facility, which was used for a private sporting association and was separate from the fieldhouse. There was a Park District security camera but Supervisor had no access to it. The facility was staffed by one employee during open hours.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Prior to the incident, Supervisor had no knowledge of employees allowing unhoused patrons to utilize that facility. She had learned that employees other than Subject also allowed an unhoused female to use the facility. Supervisor had since notified all employees verbally and via email that unhoused patrons were not to use the private facility and that they could use the fieldhouse facility during specific hours.

There had been issues with patrons and the members of the Association consuming alcohol on the sports facility premises, including on the day in question. Subject reported to Supervisor that unknown people were with the Association's players and that both players and the unknown patrons were consuming alcohol and were intoxicated. Subject told Supervisor that prior to the interaction, he had told the group they could not consume alcohol on the premises. Subject sent Supervisor videos and/or pictures of the incidents of alcohol on that date.

Supervisor had not received any prior reports or concerns about Subject nor had she had any issues or concerns about Subject.

B. REVIEW OF COMPLAINANTS' WRITTEN NARRATIVE

OPA reviewed the statement written and submitted by Complainant 1 and Complainant 2, and noted the following:

Complainants stated that as Complainant 1 and Minor were exiting the "field house," Subject "grabbed [Minor's] left arm as if attempting to pull her back with him as he was entering the field house." Complainant 1 saw it and "yelled at him: 'What are you doing?! She is a minor!! She is 15! Why would you do that!! What are you doing!! Don't you ever do that again!'" Complainant 1 and Minor told Complainant 2, and Complainant 2 "confronted" Subject. The complaint also stated that the interaction was "frightening and deeply inappropriate" and that Minor "has expressed fear and anxiety about returning."

REVIEW OF PARK DISTRICT RECORDS

OPA requested and reviewed Subject's personnel records. Subject started at the Park District on February 27, 2025. Human Resources confirmed that Subject had no disciplinary records. Subject was in compliance with mandated harassment and bystander training.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENT RECORDS & CORRESPONDENCE

OPA received and reviewed the CPD Original Incident Report. The Report was dated September 29, 2025, with the incident occurring on September 28, 2025.

During ongoing communications with OPA, the assigned CPD detective related that he had conducted a photo lineup with Complainant 1 and Minor; they identified Subject. The detective obtained and reviewed Park District CCTV footage from the date and location of the incident. The detective told OPA he determined that what the Complainants told the detective had happened was not consistent with the video footage of the interaction. The matter was marked as Simple Battery.

CCTV VIDEO FOOTAGE REVIEW

Park District Security provided OPA with the same CCTV footage of the facility that it had provided to CPD. The footage OPA received was dated September 28, 2025, and was time stamped from 1:15 p.m. through 3:15 p.m. OPA reviewed the two hours of CCTV footage and noted the following:

The format of the time stamp on the video footage was hour, minute, second, and millisecond and the camera captured the front area, including the front door, of the facility. None of the bathrooms, the shower or the second door in and out of the facility was covered by this camera nor was any of the outside of the facility.

At approximately 1:41:21 p.m., Minor and Complainant 1 emerge from off camera and walk towards the front door. As they approach the front door, Subject walks into the facility from the same door. As Subject walks past them in the opposite direction, he looks at Minor and his left hand, palm side, touches Minor's left hand, which is at her side. Minor continues to walk outside without stopping and off camera while Complainant 1 stops and appears to be speaking to Subject, who stops and turns to respond. After they speak, Complainant 1 walks out the door and off camera. Subject stands, staring at the door Minor and Complainant 1 had just exited.

According to the CCTV timestamp, the Subject touched the hand of the Minor for less than one second.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

None of the two hours of footage showed any grabbing, pulling or any other physical touch of Minor by Subject.

Not long after, one white male¹² approaches Subject and only their legs can be seen. Three white males enter the facility from the front door, two of whom walk towards the first white male and surround Subject. The fourth male walks back outside.

The first male starts to leave and then turns around towards Subject, pointing at him. The male speaks to Subject and appears to be upset.

At approximately 2:17 p.m., a Black male who looked to be in his thirties and as if he may be unhoused enters the facility and walks out and then walks in with Subject approximately two minutes later.¹³ Not long after, a different and younger minor female (approximately 10-years-old) enters with a minor male and an adult female who appears to be their guardian or mother. Subject, minor female, minor male and their mother are off camera while Mark goes in and out of the facility and on/off camera as he goes down a hallway. The young female minor leaves the facility and then Mark leaves the facility. Not long after, Subject reappears and the minor male and the adult female also reappear and exit.

At approximately 2:27 p.m., a white male enters, walks up to Subject and they talk. The unknown male appears to be upset. Subject and the male go outside and Subject is seen to be going in and out of the facility.

OPA also noted that throughout the duration of the footage, a white male with a white or blond ponytail walks in and out of the facility and was often holding and drinking from a green glass bottle. Other players and patrons who were seen in the footage were holding and drinking from red cups and various cans.

INTERVIEW OF SUBJECT

During an interview with OPA, Subject was represented by a representative from SEIU Local 70. Subject related the following, in summary:

¹² Based on context and other evidence, this male is mostly likely Minor's father, Complainant 2.

¹³ The unhoused male was later positively identified by Subject as "Mark" and will be referred to as such for the remainder of this report.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Subject confirmed his Park District employment, that the sports facility was opened in July 2025, and that he had been scheduled to work at the sports facility on Sundays, including throughout September 2025.

On Sundays, the Association players often had people with them that Subject was not familiar with and they would often be consuming alcohol. While Subject did not recall the date of September 28th, he recalled the Sunday in which men and women told him that an unhoused male had inappropriately touched one of their daughters and then later said it was Subject who had touched her. That same day, the regular players and their friends were doing “excessive drinking” and there were many people present who Subject had never seen at the facility before or since.

A Black male who appeared to be in his early 30s often used the facilities; he’d spend a long time in the bathrooms and there had been ongoing problems with him, including exposing himself and touching himself in the bathrooms. The man also acted as if he suffered from mental illness and was unpredictable. Whenever the police were called, the man would take off. Employees did not know the man’s full name. Subject only knew that he went by the name “Mark.” The police did not make regular rounds of the park nor did they always show up when called.

On September 28th, Subject saw Mark inside using the facilities. At some point after he saw Mark go inside, Subject saw a young girl – younger than 13 – go to use one of the bathrooms. Subject did not know if Mark was still inside because Subject had stepped outside and back inside. To avoid Mark, Subject put his hand on the minor girl’s back to direct her to the other bathroom instead. The girl was alone. September 28th was the only day Subject ever saw the girl and he did not recall what she looked like.

While back outside, Subject overheard some men who he did not know – they were not regulars – and who appeared to be intoxicated, say “the homeless guy touched the girl” and then said Subject’s name and that Subject had touched the girl. Subject asked Mark to leave and he did. Subject tried to explain to the men involved that Mark left. Because Subject could not calm the situation, he told them that he was closing the facility early, which upset them. The facility usually closed at 4:00 p.m. on Sundays, and Subject said he thought he locked the door maybe an hour or so early that day.

Subject noted that Mark and Subject were the only Black males at the area that day.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Subject did not recall interacting with or touching any other minors.

Subject was shown three screenshots taken from the CCTV footage recorded on September 28, 2025:

Exhibit 1: Subject identified himself and Mark, who was entering the sports facility from the main door. (Timestamp: 14:19:48.7)

Exhibit 2: Subject identified himself and a Black female who was unhoused and who often utilized the facilities. Subject did not recognize the white male with tattoos who was pointing at Subject. Subject did not recall what the interaction was about, if the white male was upset, or if he was one of the males who said Subject had touched the minor girl. The white male was not a regular at the facility on Sundays. (Timestamp: 13:46:06.0)

Exhibit 3: Subject did not recognize any of the four people – one adult male, one adult female, one minor male (approximately seven-years-old), and one minor female (approximately 10-years-old). Subject did not recall speaking to either the minor girl or the adult female and he did not remember if the minor girl was the same as the minor girl he redirected to the bathroom. (Timestamp: 14:18:40:5)

Subject was then shown a portion of the CCTV footage dated September 28, 2025, and timestamped starting at approximately 13:41:14.

Subject did not recognize either Minor or Complainant 1 nor did he recall Complainant 1 yelling at him, telling him not to touch her daughter or anything else. Subject did not remember what the interaction between Complainant 1 and himself was about that date. Neither Minor or Complainant 1 were regular players at the sports facility.

Subject did not recall touching Minor's hand; he thought the touch captured by CCTV video was most likely accidental.

Alcohol

The doors at the back of the facility were not entrances/exits that were kept open. A regular player had a small fridge and BBQ at the back of the sports facility. Subject had a key and would unlock it for the player, who Subject described as a white male in his 60s with a white ponytail. Subject had seen the male put a paint can in the door and go in/out of the back of

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

the facility while he was barbequing. The small fridge was stocked with Heineken, which the man would consume while at the sports facility.

Subject would tell the players it was not permitted to drink alcohol on the premises, including on September 28th. They would always ignore him. There were also signs posted in the park that no alcohol was allowed on the premises¹⁴. Subject had reported the alcohol consumption to Supervisor, and he and his girlfriend, who had brought Subject lunch, had both taken pictures of the players drinking alcohol, including on September 28th. Subject sent the pictures to Supervisor from his personal cell phone.

ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

OPA found no evidence that Subject violated Chapter 4 of the Park District Code or that he violated the Park District's policy regarding appropriate boundaries with minor children.

Complainant 1 and Complainant 2 alleged that Subject touched their 15-year-old daughter "inappropriately" and "as if to pull her back inside." However, the CCTV footage failed to show any such conduct by Subject and instead showed a one second touch of hands when passing in close quarters. While accusations were made to Subject that he and/or Mark had touched a different minor girl, there was no evidence of such on the CCTV footage nor was OPA aware of any such reports being made to OPA or the Park District.

Further, Subject was consistent in his events of that chaotic day and those events were consistent with what was observed on the CCTV footage reviewed by OPA. Finally, OPA found that Subject to be credible.

What the evidence did show, and what Subject consistently related, was that members of the Association and their guests were consuming alcohol on Park District property that day and that some appeared to be intoxicated. Consistent with what the CCTV footage captured, a main member of the Association was consuming Heineken throughout the day and on Park District property while others were observed to be drinking from red plastic cups and various cans, which Subject credibly reported were beer cans.

¹⁴ An OPA investigator conducted a site visit and noted at least one large sign prohibiting alcohol on the premises and noted the outside layout of the sports facility, fieldhouse and park.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

OFFICE OF PREVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Furthermore, it did not go unnoticed that Complainants, who were reported not to be Sunday regular players, waited almost a full 24 hours after the alleged touch of their minor daughter to report to both the Park District and CPD. The evidence and sequence of events begs many questions as to the conduct and motives of the Association and Complainants, and the risk to Subject and Park District employees that such conduct may cause.

Because the conduct of the Association and their peers placed Park District employees and patrons at risk but does not fall under OPA's purview, OPA strongly recommends that the Park District examine the use, staffing, and security of this sports facility and the Association's members and take any action it deems appropriate.

As to Subject, because there is no actionable finding, OPA recommends no disciplinary or personnel action for Subject. OPA recommends that the Park District reinstate Subject to his employment immediately and provide Subject with any support, training and/or coaching for interacting with patrons and minors, including de-escalation skills, that it deems appropriate.

OPA closed this case as **UNSUBSTANTIATED**.

25-0474

OPA received an email from a Park District employee (Complainant) with the subject line "Sex Misconduct." The body of the email, however, was vague making references to "hate against the police comments" and "sexual innuendo comments." The email did not provide any details or allege misconduct by any specific individual.

OPA made several attempts to contact the author of the email via telephone, email, and the U.S. postal mail.

The letter mailed to the author asked for additional information and/or context for the email submitted. The letter, however, was returned to sender with a note that stated "attempted not known, unable to forward."

Because the Complainant failed to respond to OPA's repeated attempts to investigate, OPA is closing this matter.