



Chicago Park District

Legislation Text

File #: 22-1127-1214, Version: 1

AMENDMENTS TO CHAPTER V OF THE CODE OF THE CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

To the Honorable Board of Commissioners of the Chicago Park District:

I. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Commissioners waive the 45-day notice period and approve the amendments to Chapter V of the Code of the Chicago Park District.

II. Explanation

Chapter 70 ILCS 1505/7.02, enables the Board of Commissioners to “establish by ordinance all needful rules and regulations for the government and protection of parks...” Therefore, it is recommended that the following sections of the Chicago Park District Code (“the Code”) be amended:

The Chicago Park District (“the Park District”) seeks to amend Chapter V of the Code to reflect the personnel policy changes reflected in the proposed 2023 budget and planned to be effective January 1, 2023. These amendments include: (1) the addition of Juneteenth as a paid holiday; (2) the allowance for employees to take earned sick leave within their 6-month probation period; and (3) an 8-week paid parental leave policy for non-union staff and for any union staff where the applicable Collective Bargaining Agreement also provides for paid parental leave.

The current employment climate reflects unpredictability, a tight labor market, and expectations of enhanced benefits, which continues to persist from COVID-19 shut-downs and record resignations. The Park District has been no less immune than other employers to these challenging conditions. We have a significant number of vacant positions to which these proposed enhanced benefits would apply if enacted, and it also expected that additional year end retirements will drive the vacancy numbers even higher.

The Park District currently does not have a specific paid parental leave policy. Rather, new parents must use their earned sick and/or vacation leave in order to have a paid leave. Alternatively, individuals giving birth may apply for six to eight weeks of disability pay through the District’s pension fund at 45% of pay rate. This leave policy is glaringly out of step with other surrounding units of local government and other employers, which offer more modernized and generous benefits for new parents.

As further incentive to attract candidates is a proposed change to clearly recognize service time worked at other eligible governmental units for purposes of calculating paid time off with the Park District. Employees will also be afforded the ability to use earned sick leave during their six-month probation period with the Park District.

Juneteenth commemorates the emancipation of the last enslaved Black Americans on June 19, 1865. The Park

District seeks to honor the historic significance of Juneteenth by adding it as a paid holiday. In addition, adopting Juneteenth as a paid holiday will better align with the policies of other employers

The enhanced personnel benefits including the addition of a paid parental leave policy, adding Juneteenth as a paid holiday, and removing a benefit barrier to joining the District from a sister agency will incentivize potential candidates to consider positions with the Park District. These changes will help the District remain competitive in hiring and retention efforts. This is especially important as job searching and hiring will begin again in earnest after the new year.

For these reasons, time is of the essence in implementing these enhanced personnel benefit policies. While ordinary circumstances dictate a 45-day notice period after presentation of the proposed Code amendments to the Board, in this case the waiting period would result in important changes not being effective until mid-February at the earliest, causing a loss of six weeks or more well into the post-holiday, new year hiring season.

In addition, the proposed amendments to employee benefits will serve the public interest by supporting the District's 2023 employee retention and recruitment efforts to allow the Park District to continue to develop and maintain more than 600 parks and offer sports and physical activities as well as cultural and environmental programs for youth, adults, and seniors.

Therefore, the General Superintendent finds that extraordinary circumstances exist such that waiver of the 45-day notice period pursuant to Chapter 1, Section B.2. of the Code is necessary to allow the Park District to implement the aforementioned personnel policy changes in connection with the Board's approval of the 2023 budget, which includes funding for a more attractive benefits plan for current employees and new hires.

The General Superintendent recommends that the Board of Commissioners approve the amendments to Chapter V of the Code as set forth in Exhibit A to the Ordinance.

Upon approval, the General Counsel shall review, prepare and publish electronic copies of the Code of the Chicago Park District that have been revised by reason of these amendments.