



Hales Corners Park has Benefited from the Support of its Friends Group; however, a Formal Agreement with the Organization is Needed to Achieve Adherence to Chapter 13 of the Milwaukee County Ordinances

ASD HIGHLIGHTS

Why We Did This Audit

The Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors adopted a resolution requesting that the Director of Audits conduct an audit of the Friends of Hales Corners Park and Pool. The audit was primarily focused on the time period of 2007 through 2017.

What We Recommended

ASD made 10 recommendations that, if implemented, will improve the partnership of Parks with the Friends Group. Parks management agreed to all of the concerns listed in our report. Key recommendations include:

- Parks management should establish a timeline for Friends to complete fundraising for the ice center and outdoor shelter.
- Parks management should establish proper controls regarding the disbursement of funds from the Parks Amenities Matching Fund and update all materials to clearly disclose funds are to be returned to Parks if the project does not proceed. Parks should formally document the return of the \$75,000 PAMF grant for the ice center and outdoor shelter should construction not occur.
- Parks management should enter into a written agreement with the Friends Group per Chapter 13 of the Milwaukee County Ordinances. The agreement should include language clarifying the roles and responsibilities of each party and address concerns related to proper storage and protocol for volunteer activities.
- Parks management should request submittal of periodic financial reports from the Friends Group.
- Parks management should work with the Friends Group to document efforts made to strengthen the internal controls of the Friends Group and report efforts in audit follow-up reports.
- Parks management should finish development and issue its Volunteer Handbook and include guidelines for friends groups based on Chapter 13.
- Parks should assign a County Coordinator for the Friends Group.

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BACKGROUND

The Hales Corners Park located in the Village of Hales Corners, WI. includes the following amenities:

- *Deep Well Outdoor Pool
- *Baseball Diamond
- *Basketball Court
- *Picnic Areas
- *Sledding Hill
- *Soccer Fields
- *Softball Diamond
- *Tennis Court
- *Tot Lot Play Areas
- *Volleyball Court
- *Wading Pool
- *Jake’s Climbing Rock
- * Veteran’s Memorial

In 2001, a Milwaukee County Aquatics master plan recommended the closure of the County’s deep well pools including the Hales Corners Pool. To help keep the Hales Corners pool open The Friends of Hales Corners Parks and Pools (Friends Group) assembled in 2002. The Friends Group is a nonprofit charitable organization and has been active in fundraising, sponsorship and volunteer efforts in support of the pool and other Hales Corners Park amenities.

OVERALL OBJECTIVE

Recognizing that Friends Groups creates a public/private partnership between Milwaukee County and private community organizations, the objective of the audit was to assess the operations of the Friends of the Hales Corners Park and Pool.

WHAT WE FOUND

- The Friends Group, initially organized in 2002 to keep the pool open, was incorporated as a nonprofit in 2007 and later expanded its mission to include all of Hales Corners Park.
- Friends of Hales Corners Park and Pool has raised \$388,788 in funds from 2007-2017 as is seen in the table below. Of those funds, \$75,000 was obtained through a matching grant from the Milwaukee County Parks Amenities Matching Fund program in 2015.

Friends of Hales Corners Park and Pool Funds Raised 2007-2017					
2007*	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
\$13,407	\$43,219	\$30,631	\$13,855	\$13,219	\$25,454
2013	2014	2015**	2016	2017	Total
\$99,563	\$23,857	\$99,958	\$8,898	\$16,727	\$388,788

*Partial year due to incorporation in October 2007.

** Includes \$75,000 Milwaukee County Parks Amenities Matching Fund Grant

- The Friends Group has stated it has raised approximately \$1.5 million in public and private funds to support its mission, however, the President of the Friends Group acknowledged that the figure included both direct and indirect funds, county funds and funds raised through the marketing of projects. Our review found the amount to be overstated.
- The Friends Group fundraising effort in recent years has been directed toward the creation of an ice rink and shelter designated to be named the Alyson Dudek International Ice Center and the Jerry and Dorothy Holz Family Outdoor Shelter. However, the Friends Group has yet to attain the level of funding needed to begin construction.
- Chapter 13 of the Milwaukee County Ordinances requires a written agreement with each friends group. Parks does not have an agreement with the Friends of Hales Corners Park and Pool and in the absence of the agreement we noted concerns about: open meetings, financial reporting and potential code of ethics/conflict of interest issues.
- We also noted a number of areas where internal controls of the Friends Group could be strengthened including: written policies and procedures for the handling of cash and disbursement of funds, proper record keeping, and established segregation of duties.
- Finally, we believe the many active friends groups in Milwaukee County would benefit from both a Volunteer Handbook, currently in production by Parks but not yet released, and the designation of a County Coordinator for the friends groups.