

Date: March 15, 2023  
To: NWSRA, Board of Directors  
From: Tracey Crawford, Executive Director  
Jan Buchs, Board Member  
Re: What are the governance principles and best practices of an SRA?

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In 2022, The Board of Directors asked the executive director to work with legal counsel to address the question, "What is an SRA?" and to potentially gather best practices that would govern an SRA.

On February 24, 2023, the Task Force Chair, Jan Buchs, the Chairman of the NWSRA Board of Directors, Christina Ferraro and the Executive Director, Tracey Crawford met and developed the following:

### **Action Steps**

- Crafting the defining purpose of - What are the governance principles and best practices of an SRA? by addressing the question– What is an SRA?
- Get purpose of the Task Force and present an update to the Board at the March 15.
- Will meet again end of March beginning of April to discuss next steps.

Upon conclusion of the meeting, the following resources were gathered and reviewed:

- Just What is an SRA by John McGovern, Illinois Parks and Recreation Magazine July/August 1999\*\*
- Histories of SRA's by Larry Reiner, [www.lib.niu.edu/1997/ip970945.html](http://www.lib.niu.edu/1997/ip970945.html) \*\*
- Special Circumstances by John McGovern, Illinois Parks and Recreation Magazine September/October 2002\*\*
- The Park District Code, IAPD

In the article written by John McGovern and published in the in the Illinois Park and Recreation magazine from July/August 1999, "What is an SRA", the definition and overview of an SRA was stated as, "A special recreation association or SRA is a partnership of two or more park districts or municipalities formed to provide recreation for adults and children with disabilities and authorized by the park district code." The first SRA, Northern Suburban Special Recreation Association (NSSRA) was formed in 1970 to reduce duplicate supervisory costs allowing tax dollars to go to qualified staff to conduct the programs and services for individuals with disabilities in the communities.

### **The Park District Code states:**

Sec. 8-10a.- Every Park District is authorized to establish, maintain and manage recreational programs for the handicapped, including both mentally and physically handicapped, to provide transportation for the handicapped to and from such programs, to provide for such examination of participants in such programs as may be deemed necessary, to charge fees for participating in such programs, the fee charged for non-residents of such district need not be the same as the fees charged the residents of the district, and to charge fees for transportation furnished to participants.

(Source: P. A. 76-805.) (70 ILCS 1205/8-10a) (from Ch. 105, par. 8-10.1)

Sec. 8-10b. Joint recreational programs for the handicapped. Any 2 or more park districts, or in counties with a population of 300,000 or less, a single park district and another unit of local government, are authorized to take any action jointly relating to recreational programs for the handicapped that could be taken individually and to enter into agreements with other park districts and recreation boards and the corporate authorities of cities, villages and incorporated towns specified in Sections 11-95-2 and 11-95-3 of the "Illinois Municipal Code", approved May 29, 1961, as amended, or any combination thereof, for the purpose of providing for the establishment, maintenance and management of joint recreational programs for the handicapped of all the participating districts and municipal areas, including provisions for transportation of participants, procedures for approval of budgets, authorization of expenditures and sharing of expenses, location of recreational areas in the area of any of the participating districts and municipalities, acquisition of real estate by gift, legacy, grant, or purchase, employment of a director and other professional workers for such program who may be employed by one participating district, municipality or board which shall be reimbursed on a mutually agreed basis by the other districts, municipalities and boards that are parties to the joint agreement, authorization for one municipality, board or district to supply professional workers for a joint program conducted in another municipality or district and to provide other requirements for operation of such joint program as may be desirable.

(Source: P.A. 92-230, eff. 1-1-02.) (70 ILCS 1205/8-10b) (from Ch. 105, par. 8-10.2)

“The statutes offer the incentive of a funding vehicle for local governments that join, a property tax can be levied for joint agreement purposes. Without a joint agreement a park district cannot levy this tax.” (What is an SRA)

Although the materials gathered have been insightful regarding the SRA Model establishment, there is very little outside of the Park District Code that governing principles and best practices of an SRA. Since the inception of the first SRA, the Special Recreation Associations have used the Park District Code as the “best practice” benchmark to follow as served as an extension of park districts and municipalities.

As more and more SRA’s are being recognized by IPRA/IAPD as Distinguished Agencies, it is becoming more and more apparent that the Park District Code does not address all of the governance principles and best practices of an SRA. In the past 10 years, there has been legislation affecting health care for employees (the ACA), the posting of salaries and benefits, the Open Meetings Act, the Freedom of Information Act, the HB 162 Committee on Local Consolidation, the pandemic grants and funding associated with COVID Relief, and numerous risk management and cyber security regulations.

Each individual SRA, and their perspective boards, have had to navigate how the SRA should address ever changing legislation and regulations. The issue that arises surrounds the SRA governance principles and what are best practices of an SRA.

Is an SRA a park district? Is an SRA a non-profit? What does an SRA do when they cannot follow the Park District Code to the letter? How do they address the legislation and regulations mentioned above? Is it okay for each SRA to adapt and address them individually? Does their need to be an SRA Code outlining the governance principles and best practices for all SRA's in a document enough to address these challenges?

The purpose of the SRA Governance Task Force is to address the overarching question:

- What are the governing principles for a Special Recreation Association?
- Design an SRA code/best practice model for SRA's to follow and can be used by the SRA's and their park district members and municipalities.

\*\*Documents can be found on the directors site under Meeting Info.