



WORTHINGTON PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

Minutes of the Tuesday, February 16, 2016 Meeting

Members Present - The members present were Dan Armitage, Ethan Black, Bob Burpee, Peter Calamari, Dave Kessler, Michelle Miller, Rob Wendling, and Darren Hurley, Director of Parks & Recreation.

The minutes from the January 19, 2016 meeting were approved.

Prior to the start of the agenda, Chair Dan Armitage noted a guest present, Judy Hagar of 306 E. New England Avenue, and invited her to speak prior to the agenda items. Ms. Hagar shared that she is a neighbor of East Granville Road Park and complimented the members and staff on the nice job they are doing with the parks. She proceeded to describe a recent incident where she was driving by the park and noticed two people in the park with large clippers removing vegetation from the park. She stopped to question them, and since they had no identification or no evidence of any authorization to be in the park, she asked them to stop what they were doing. When they declined, she went home and called the police who showed up and talked to the men. Ms. Hagar said she had appreciated in the past when volunteer efforts in the parks were more tightly supervised and managed such as our annual earth day clean up event with Sustainable Worthington. She also shared part of our park ordinances which state that no one shall injure, deface, or remove vegetation without authorization from any park.

Mr. Hurley shared with members that Ms. Hagar had contacted him soon after the incident and he had looked into it with staff. It seems, in this case, that two volunteers had approached staff interested in helping eradicate these vines growing around trees and that staff had indicated a willingness to work with them. However, it appears the volunteers, with good intentions, had taken it upon themselves to begin working without coordination of dates/times or specific work instructions. He had spoken with staff regarding the incident and made them aware of the need to be more specific, if necessary. Ms. Hagar seemed content with that explanation and dismissed herself from the meeting.

Park Planning Process – Park by Park Improvement Prioritization –

Mr. Hurley outlined the process from here which included:

- a. Review general list/no-park specific items.
- b. Review removed due to low scoring or member consensus list.
- c. Discuss overall top priorities and create a list.
- d. Review text and drafts prepared by staff.
- e. Consider additional public input/has there been enough public input

Members discussed whether there was a need for further public feedback. A suggestion was made to provide an overview of public feedback taken to date and present it to Council as a part of the update being given to them in the next 1-2 months and gauge their contentment with our current public feedback.

Members reviewed the General/Non-Park Specific project listing. There was discussion regarding a second Community Garden site and Mr. Hurley reported that while we do typically keep a waiting list at this point, the demand in terms of wait lists was not what it was when the garden first opened. However, he was unsure whether that revealed less interest or whether the word had spread it was full and people had quit coming forward knowing a wait list existed. The next discussion lead to the safety of the playground equipment and surfacing that is in need of repair or replacement. It was agreed that this item should remain as a top priority for safety reasons and less importantly for aesthetic reasons. Mr. Burpee pointed out that much attention should be given to our playgrounds because they are aging faster than we can replace them. Mr. Hurley agreed that playground maintenance would be discussed in detail in the final plan. There was also discussion regarding the possibility of a three season shelter. There were mixed feelings on whether it was a need or just a wish list type of item. Mr. Wendling pointed out that there may be an opportunity to have one provided by development on the UMCH site. The decision was made to keep it on the list but to likely not prioritize it as one of our most pressing improvements. Finally, the group decided to add "Find a location to establish dedicated pickle ball courts." This led to some discussion about the best location for pickle ball courts in Worthington. The group agreed that a community park where people could park and not disturb neighbors would be ideal. Linworth and Indianola were both discussed as possible alternatives to the current location of temporary courts at Wilson Hill.

Next the group discussed items removed as maintenance and items removed due to low scoring or member consensus. It was determined everything in these categories was slotted appropriately. Mr. Hurley indicated that maintenance items would be consolidated and reported on as a part of the final document. He stated that the other low scoring or removed for member consensus items would now be taken off of the working list to avoid confusion. There were no other recommended changes to either list.

Mr. Hurley indicated staff would begin drafting language in the document and would provide some draft language for members to review prior to the next meeting. He asked members for homework to review the park by park projects and identify 5-10 projects that can be put into a top overall priority listing. The group can compare notes and attempt to reach consensus at the next meeting.

Other – Mr. Hurley shared with members the news that the board for W.O.O.F. (Worthington Organized Off-leash Friends) had announced their commitment to provide \$25,000 in funds to pay for parking lot expansion at the Godown Dog Park.

Mr. Hurley shared that concepts are being worked on for the Heischman Park playground replacement. Per the current direction in the Parks Planning process, staff intends to have 2-3 possibilities put together to take to the community that would reflect having a tot lot set up for younger kids while encouraging older children to go take advantage of the playgrounds at McCord Park.. Mr. Calamari was asked to be involved by Mr. Hurley as a neighbor in the park. Once the preliminary plans are submitted, a notice will be sent to neighbors of the park to invite them to a public meeting to review the concepts.

Mr. Hurley also shared an update on McCord Park. The Capital Improvements Program (CIP) for the city included a total of \$300,000 for the Heischman and McCord Park playgrounds. Mr. Hurley hopes to split the money in a way that provides more at McCord than Heischman due to its standing as a community park relative to the smaller Heischman Park which is a neighborhood park. Before proceeding with McCord Park playground planning, the current recommendations being drafted by the members include a possible redesign and renovation of the entire park. If this would be approved, it may or may not include a relocation of the playground, but moving forward with such a large playground renovation without knowing whether there might be a recommendation to have it in another location might not be the best approach. As a result, Mr. Hurley is seeking feedback on whether the Commission would like to move ahead with this in mind and replace the playground in its current location, put off the renovation until it is determined whether the redesign and renovation is going to occur in the near future, or seek a consultant to look at some initial design concepts and whether there are other desirable locations for the playground.

After some discussion, members agreed it would be best to do some design work prior to moving ahead on the playground replacement.

Mr. Hurley shared plans with members to resurface and repair various tennis courts around town. As a part of this project, he is recommending an assessment of whether pickle ball could find a permanent home in one of the parks and whether it would be wise to replace any of the existing tennis courts with pickle ball permanently. Currently, temporary lines have been added to tennis courts at Wilson Hill but there has been some push back from residents about the impact of the lines, pickle ball conflicts with tennis players, etc. Mr. Hurley indicated it is difficult to know the extent of usage of some of the tennis courts such as Linworth and Indianola. He gets some feedback from neighbors and from observation of staff, but overall it is tough to know the true usage. Members agreed it would be nice to convert an existing tennis court if a comfort level could be reached that some were under-utilized. They also indicated a desire to have the courts placed in a community park to avoid conflicts with neighbors and users that might result from placement at a neighborhood park.

Mr. Armitage asked Mr. Hurley how things went with the school weather cancellation and the new policy of not allowing gym rentals during the same day. Mr. Hurley indicated he was not aware of any issues and that the facility had been busy all day.

Mr. Armitage also asked about whether staff were getting complaints about the new key tags that were required for members to use to check into the Community Center. Mr. Hurley shared that the Department needed to upgrade software due to the original software, Class, no longer being supported and being phased out. The new software, and all of the other software staff had evaluated, did not provide the key pad option our members were used to. As a result, now it is required that members utilize the key tags to check in at the front desk. Several people have complained citing they don't like to carry their phones or keys or anything else. It is possible for users to get the barcode on their smart phones to avoid having to have the key tag or, if necessary, members have been allowed to check in manually with the front desk staff.

Mr. Armitage also inquired about the new sledding hill option at Huntley Bowl. Mr. Hurley replied that there had been some usage as was documented in a Facebook post on the City's page. The parks crew has also noted some usage but the amount is hard to determine in a year with light snowfall totals like this one.

Mr. Wendling shared a concern regarding the Indianola Park tennis court lights. A resident had pointed out to them that people push the manual timer and then leave with the lights remaining on for a long period of time after. He suggested staff looking into an option for manual turn off signage or perhaps an adjustment to the time period they remain on after manual push.

Ms. Miller asked about AEP working in the Olentangy Parklands and what options we might have to impact the impacts they are having to many of the trees. Mr. Hurley indicated that AEP has an aerial right of way and has the power to do as they wish along power lines, but that they are open in some cases to working with residents and staff and we do try to work with them as they come through town annually.

Being no further business, the motion for the meeting to adjourn was granted.