



WORTHINGTON PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

Minutes of the Tuesday, December 19, 2017 Meeting

Members Present - The members present were Laura Ball, Bob Burpee, Peter Calamari, Dave Kessler, Michele Miller, and Darren Hurley, Director of Parks & Recreation.

Paula Deming was also present representing the Worthington Arbor Advisory Committee.

The minutes from the November 21, 2017 meeting were approved with noted amendments.

Snouffer and Godown Park Improvement Updates – Mr. Hurley shared that the Snouffer Park mound removal project is going as scheduled and is near completion. The trees have been removed and the mounds mostly graded. New trees are in the process of being planted and the site will be cleaned up until sod can be put in place in the early spring. Mr. Burpee complemented Mr. Brown and staff for staying on their projected timeline.

Mr. Hurley also shared the parking lot construction at Godown Park is near completion. Staff completed a walk through with City of Columbus staff and the contractor and identified a few punch list items but the majority of the work is complete. The project added 33 parking spots to the park and addressed some runoff retention issues from the original construction. Mr. Hurley added that the project costs ended up in excess of \$200,000 and since Columbus agreed to pay Worthington's share of the construction costs in exchange for Worthington extending the agreement to perform maintenance for additional years, he expects to be discussing those details and bringing it back to the Commission in the first half of 2018. Worthington Organized Off-Leash Friends (W.O.O.F.) provided a little over \$30,000 towards the project.

Olentangy Parklands Restroom Project – Mr. Hurley informed members that the approved 2018 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) includes \$120,000 to add a restroom facility at the Olentangy Parklands. Staff will be looking at options and bringing a recommendation to the Commission. Ms. Ball indicated the City of Westerville, where she works, has been working on a project to install restrooms and she has some research and costing she could share. Mr. Hurley added he thinks the preferred location will be next to the tennis courts where the storage building is currently located but staff would review further. He also shared funds to convert the lower set of two tennis courts to permanent pickle ball courts had been approved by City Council and that work would occur in the spring as weather permits. This will remove the existing tennis courts and install six dedicated pickle ball courts with nets and painted lines and a divider fence in the middle. Staff are hoping to finish the beautification efforts around the lower parking area and continue to work on plans to improve the elevations and potentially pave the path coming from the lower lot

over to the tennis courts. Mr. Calamari suggested looking at river access around the parking lot again considering it has really opened up after the construction on the interchange. Mr. Burpee asked if the land around the parking lot belonged to the city and Mr. Hurley responded the parking lot and land immediately around belongs to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR). They may consider helping us with some funding since the land belongs to them. Mr. Hurley reminded members river access is one of the priority projects in the Master Plan and we can look at what type of process they would like to pursue in the upcoming year.

Other – Mr. Calamari acknowledged the multiple emails from the gardeners concerned about the relocation of the Community Garden to City Council members. He wondered if other commission members thought it was important to also contact council members to inform them of the details of the process so far and the reasons why the current recommendation was made. Ms. Deming, speaking as a member of Sustainable Worthington, stated she was recently at a Sustainable Worthington meeting where a few gardeners were discussing this situation and wanted to share the input of that group. Ms. Deming made it clear that she was not a gardener but is supportive of sustainable topics. She shared many of the same concerns stated in the letters from gardeners including the investment of time and resources into the existing garden soil, the concerns of whether a new location would be accessible and workable, and the benefits of the garden being visible at such a large community park. Since she had missed some recent meetings, commission members provided her an overview of their thought process leading up to their motion including that they value community gardening and want to have it in the park system and see it grow, but this particular location and the green space it occupies has a lot of viable demands to serve the community and many of those were of priority in the recent community input from the parks master planning survey. Those other uses include the addition of reservable shelters, green space for children using Community Center programming, thousands of people who attend events held in McCord Park each year, and families in the neighborhood and attending sporting events. In addition, adding a circular multi-use trail, an outfield fence on the ball diamond adjacent to the garden, and enlarging the current field hockey/soccer field to a full size field requiring the existing playground to move to the east had all added pressure on the existing space and trying to keep all of those things including the garden like they did in their first plan resulted in a cluttered layout and a design they didn't feel good about for the long term. Their recommendation isn't a slight to gardening as much as a prioritization of the long term use of this green space and the many activities already housed in the park and Community Center. For example, camps and special events do not currently have an adequate allotment of open green space to go outside. Currently, camps and programs either huddle under the overhang on the north end of the Community Center or play games in the small green space next to the public pool patio which can lead to conflicts at times. After much discussion, members agreed to individually engage Council members to initiate dialogue on the topic and to better explain their current thought process. Mr. Hurley passed around documents reviewing the McCord Park master planning process to date and some data that had been previously discussed regarding park usage and program participation numbers.

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