



WORTHINGTON PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

Minutes of the Tuesday, February 19, 2019 Meeting

Members Present - The members present were Dan Armitage, Laura Ball, Bob Burpee, Rachel DeNoewer, and Rob Wendling. City support staff Darren Hurley, Parks & Recreation Director, Michael Burgdorfer, Recreation Supervisor, Julie Sergent, Marketing & Outreach Coordinator, and Lauren Lange, Recorder were also present.

The minutes from the January 15, 2019 meeting were approved.

Community Center Game Room – Mr. Hurley introduced Mr. Burgdorfer and Ms. Sergent recognized Mr. Cooper, who was not in attendance. Mr. Hurley explained the background behind the upcoming proposed change happening to the Game Room at the Community Center. He described the Game Room as a prime location in the facility and is the first impression to patrons. Staff have always noticed the lack of usage in the space and that it often sits empty. There have been many efforts to transition the room, but concerns about changing from the existing model has always halted any suggested plan. There has been money set aside in the CIP on several occasions for a bigger renovation of the room to another use but have been hesitant to invest without a better understanding of the tradeoff of removing the existing use for one of the many new ideas.

Recently, another group of staff volunteered to do an assessment and make recommendations with a slightly new approach. One that would create recommendations for changes that could be done on a trial basis, without a commitment of significant funds and without major cosmetic changes to the room as it is. This would allow for us to try something different on a trial basis without major investments to the room or changes to the infrastructure, obtain feedback on the new idea being tried, hear from those who might not be happy that the room is being considered for change, and then make a more educated decision at the conclusion of the trial.

Mr. Burgdorfer introduced himself and further explained that he has been involved with over-seeing the Game Room since its inception. The first approach this new team took was tracking the use of the room displaying a color coded spreadsheet of times the room is used and how long it sits empty. He listed the current usage situations and scenarios, including the group of gentlemen that play ping-pong a few nights a week. He explained the criteria the team developed for a new concept, and why a trial period is important to them. Mr. Burgdorfer introduced the Snug Play concept, passed around a few pictures, and listed the opportunities the room would create (open play, rentals, parent/young child, and supervised playtime).

Mr. Wendling asked if the equipment purchased could be used for other programming if this does not work out. Mr. Hurley responded positively that it can be used elsewhere in the building for other

purposes. Mr. Armitage commented that he appreciated the room for what it currently is. He raised his kid here and enjoyed playing games with him in that room for many years, giving them the opportunity to have special conversations. He added that the location, right inside the main lobby, is a great spot to meet or wait for a ride. Mr. Armitage described the room like a park or woods, just because nobody is in there doesn't mean it's not available for use. Mr. Hurley replied that while that concept is desirable, it just isn't regularly utilized like that in the observance of staff.

Ms. Ball complimented the Snug Play designs, being brilliant and thinks so many kids will use it. She also asked if there were opportunities for drop-in ping-pong play. Mr. Hurley replied that they discussed that option but space is limited to hang on to the tables. It had been offered at the Griswold Center. It could be possible to look at rooms on the south end for occasional ping-pong play or setting up a game room for special occasions. Mr. Burpee was supportive of the change. Ms. DeNoewer also voiced her support of the trial. Ms. Sergent added she is excited to put a new face on the entrance with bright new equipment that looks fun and inviting. Mr. Armitage continued that he loves the openness and availability of the current room status. It is unstructured, multi-generational, but it could use some improvements, dress it up and make what is there more inviting. Mr. Hurley mentioned some of those things could be achieved with a more inviting lounge area and will continue to be discussed. Mr. Burgdorfer concluded that the trial period will go through May and the team will report back with an update.

Parks & Recreation Cost Study – Mr. Hurley stated that the department is working with Finance to perform a cost study of parks and recreation services this year. A consultant has been secured to come and work with staff to review department costs and revenues and do some analysis as it relates to cost recovery and overall subsidization of services. For example, when the Community Center opened there was a directive to recover 85% of the operating costs of the facility. This was based on a budget structure that included some costs but did not include some others like staff benefits or building utilities. That has since been changed and our cost recovery has changed to reflect the new costs and is something closer to 65%. The overall cost recovery will be assessed along with more specific things like program costing, facility rentals, field rentals, memberships, day passes, etc. This will be across the department to include parks, the Community Center, and Griswold Center. Once the analysis is complete the results will be presented to the Commission and then ultimately City Council who may wish to set cost recovery standards or who may take it as an FYI.

Mr. Burpee asked when the last time the costs of the department had been looked at. Mr. Hurley replied that it has been several years since membership and rental fees have been addressed. In addition, Dublin and Westerville are both increasing their membership costs this next year so there may be an opportunity to consider an increase without becoming more expensive than our benchmark neighbors.

Olentangy Parklands Restrooms – The new restroom structure is in place at the park. Staff is working to finalize utility connections and necessary inspections. The goal is to open the facility by April 1 if not sooner. This new installation will result in the removal of the existing Port-A-Johns.

Other – Mr. Armitage asked if the caboose doors were locked while it sits in the parking lot. Mr. Hurley replied that they are not locked as parks crew is waiting to receive the keys from the owner who is spending the winter in Florida. Rotary will be handling the work on the renovations prior to its placement this fall.

Mr. Wendling relayed a concern from a neighbor about the snow removal on the Olentangy trail. It had not been cleared after one of the recent snow storms. Mr. Hurley replied that the trail is a priority 2, meaning if it is not cleared the first day, it will be the 2nd day. Metro Park does help with clearing as well.

Mr. Wendling asked about the status of the Selby Park Shelter House renovation. Mr. Hurley said that shelter house is in the 5 year CIP budget, however McCord Park took priority. Mr. Wendling added that the most important thing with that renovation would be making the restrooms ADA compliant.

Mr. Wendling provided an update to members from the Arbor Advisory Committee about the replanting that will be taking place this spring at Snouffer and Perry Parks. Mr. Hurley verified and updated members about the invasive removal project that is on-going between the parks.

Mr. Wendling inquired about the status of the Parks Improvement Fund. Mr. Hurley confirmed that the reveal is almost ready for the website. There are still some things being worked out with Finance to get

established. Ms. DeNoewer added a bit about her experience with donations received by the Friends of Metro Parks non-profit organization.

Ms. Lange recalled the November meeting topic discussed in regards to an interest for a summer outdoor special event held in one of our parks. She stated that she will be the point person for this event and is taking suggestions on activities to offer, possible sponsors, and other groups that could get involved. Many members provided suggestions she noted. The event is being planned for the Olentangy Parklands in the summer.

Mr. Burpee inquired about the Monarch Waystation located in Linworth Park not having milkweed. Mr. Hurley said he would share with Shawn Daugherty, Parks Supervisor, who coordinated installation. Mr. Wendling added that the new planting in Snouffer Road Park will be supportive of Monarch butterflies.

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