



WORTHINGTON PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

Minutes of the Tuesday, July 21, 2020 Meeting

Note – This meeting was conducted virtually via Microsoft Teams.

Members Present - The members present were Laura Ball, Rachel DeNoewer, Alan McKnight, and Michele Miller. City support staff Darren Hurley, Parks & Recreation Director, and Celia Thornton, Recorder, were also present.

The minutes from the June 16, 2020 meeting were approved.

COVID-19 Updates – Mr. Hurley gave a status update on each of the areas below.

- a. Park Openings** – Almost everything is open again at park locations, including playgrounds and basketball courts. Drinking fountains are still turned off due to transmission concerns and not all the portable toilets have been put back because daily cleaning wasn't feasible. Since the department has not hired seasonal help this summer, full time parks staff are stretched in their ability to keep up with all regular tasks. Crews have been asked to help with road closures during recent protests and we have had some related graffiti to remove in addition to a spike in graffiti along the Olentangy Trail. We are trying to stick to our policy to remove all graffiti within 24 hours but are more challenged than usual. There is limited use of ball fields by Worthington Youth Boosters, a local church league, and senior citizen league teams, but they are not open for general rentals or any non-resident rentals. Restrooms are being cleaned multiple times a day and users seem to be adhering to the guidelines as we have not received many complaints. While difficult to track, Mr. Hurley is only aware of one complaint about lack of compliance at the fields. As far as crowding on the Olentangy Trail, Mr. Hurley took the Commission's concerns to the Bike & Pedestrian Advisory Board and they are preparing to put COVID specific signage along the trail as well as paint general etiquette tattoos along Worthington's section of trail. They are also investigating the possibility of a Bike Ambassador Program.
- b. Community Center Re-Opening Progress** – Initially Community Center patrons had to reserve time slots to use the facility, but the volume was low enough that staff determined specific time slots were not necessary. The total number of people is tracked through our

check-in procedure and we have not exceeded the mandated amount of people. The mask policy has also changed. Patrons are required to wear masks while in the building except when actively working out. There are a few patrons who feel strongly that masks should always be worn, or that a specific time be designated for masks only. Science doesn't seem to support the use of masks during physical exercise (damp masks don't prevent spread and concerns about breathing during high exertion), so currently we aren't changing our policy. Staff have been very frugal with budgets and have started some in-person programming (fitness classes, crafts, pottery and a few kid's camps). These have generally gone well. A partnership with Kemper House allows us to continue virtual recreation using Zoom. The pool pipe repair project is in process and staff hopes to open the pool in early August. Initially patrons will need to reserve time slots to use lap lanes or walk in the lazy river. Staff will wait and see how an adult only reopening goes prior to considering opening pool times to families or children.

- c. **Griswold Center Status** - The Griswold Center is still closed to the public. Griswold staff is regularly reaching out to participants, making contact, continuing virtual programming and helping to keep the Community Center operational. We have not received any updates on a timeline for reopening.
- d. **Programming & Events** – Staff is doing what they can to program and run events, but the maximum gathering of 10 people limits many options. Staff was working on the possibility of doing a drive-in movie series in partnership with the library, but number limiting requirements are problematic. Ms. Miller asked about moving the Concert on the Green series to a parking lot where people could sit in their cars and listen. Mr. Hurley said the challenge is in getting the spacing right (special events are still limited to 10 participants) and making sure safety is the first consideration. Mr. Knight asked if there have been any issues with staff testing positive. Mr. Hurley said that a few individual staff were tested and quarantined due to secondary tracing, but that so far, we've been fortunate and have had no positive COVID cases reported in the building. The fire department is the department's liaison with the Columbus Public Health Department.

Budget and Operations and Project Impacts – Mr. Hurley shared that the City is starting to work on the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget. The big question in the process for the Board is if the McCord Park planning process gets funded and continues to move ahead, particularly the playground. The City has so many playgrounds that if a playground is replaced every other year a playground must last 28 years, which is a long time from a maintenance standpoint. The other discussion that should interest the Commission is the question of whether to continue planning around the Selby Shelter House renovation or replacement. There was also some discussion about the possibility of a three-season shelter at the United Methodist Children Home location. It's probably time for the Commission to revisit the Parks Master Plan since there has been some turnover in members. Mr. Knight asked what the timing was for the CIP and annual budget. Mr. Hurley replied that the City Manager must submit the budget to City Council in early October. Staff works backwards and tries to submit our budgets to the City Manager by the end of August, at which point department negotiations begin. In October and November City Council discusses the budget and it is passed for the new year in early December.

Mr. Hurley reminded the Commission that they typically don't have a meeting the month of August. Mr. Knight suggested that they keep it on the calendar and then decide closer to the meeting date. Mr. Hurley agreed and said he'd cancel the meeting a week out if there was nothing pressing to discuss.

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