



## **WORTHINGTON PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION**

### **Minutes of the Tuesday, December 15, 2020 Meeting**

**Note** – This meeting was conducted virtually via Microsoft Teams.

**Members Present** - The members present were Dan Armitage, Laura Ball, Rachel DeNoewer, David Kessler, Alan McKnight, and Michele Miller. City support staff Darren Hurley (Parks & Recreation Director), Celia Thornton (Recorder) and Julie Sergent (Marketing & Outreach Coordinator) were also present, along with guest presenters Ryan Young and Steve Kolwicz (POD Design) and Kelly Shaw (7<sup>th</sup> grade Phoenix Middle School Student).

The minutes from the November 17, 2020 meeting were approved.

**McCord Park Renovations – Phase 1 Update** – Mr. Hurley reminded members that the department had applied for state capital bill funding and had received \$400,000 towards Phase One of the renovation project. The city has budgeted \$1.8 million towards phase one but no money had been set aside yet for phase two which is expected to be at least another million. These funds will help bridge the gap and move us towards phase two. POD Design then gave a presentation on phase one design and construction document preparations that encompassed the current timeline, progress, and requested PRC input on shelter design elements. Phase One has been broken into sub-phases for bidding purposes. The first sub-phase included the existing parking lot, walking path and rentable shelter houses. The second sub-phase includes the playground and train depot. Bidding on these phases should be completed and accepted by City Council by March, 2021 with work beginning in spring or early summer. POD asked for opinions on three shelter options. Mr. McKnight asked who the shelters were being constructed for. Mr. Hurley said that while these are reservable shelters, they would also be used for programming and special event purposes, as well as by the general public. Mr. Kessler asked if electric outlets would be included and Mr. Hurley replied that they would. He also asked if any of the roofs encouraged birds to nest and asked if that could be avoided. POD responded that options are available to help discourage birds. Mr. McKnight asked if the walkways tied into the shelter locations and was assured that they did from the north and south. The third style of shelter (Hip) was the most popular among the board, with a request that brick columns be added to better tie into the Community Center aesthetically.

**Selby Park Playground Renovation** – Mr. Hurley updated the PRC on the timeline indicating the project was on target to be completed in the spring. The initial community surveys are complete and have been given to the vendors. The next round of public input will occur after the holidays and will probably have in-person and online options to gather public reactions to three different design

options. Ms. Sergent shared that 200 surveys were returned by children from Colonial Hills. The children were asked to circle pictures of the types of play equipment they enjoy most.

**Mountain Biking Proposal / Presentation – Kelly Shaw** – Council Representative Dorothy had connected Mr. Hurley with a 7<sup>th</sup> grade student who had ideas about a mountain bike trail in Worthington. Mr. Hurley was so impressed by Mr. Shaw’s ideas and presentation that he wanted to share it with the PRC, get their thoughts, and if they approve discuss possible next steps. Mr. Shaw said that this presentation started out of a school assigned Discovery Day Project, where students are given two days to explore and follow their passions. Mr. Shaw’s research led him to “Project Free Ride” – a small, easily accessible mountain bike trail that kids in Worthington could ride to themselves. Mr. Shaw believes that the four acres of woods just south of the Skate Park might make an ideal location and could support three trail levels, starting with beginners and getting successively more difficult. He has researched funding options, from grants to local sponsors. He also spoke with representatives from the Central Ohio Mountain Biking Organization (COMBO). COMBO has built many of the mountain biking trails in Ohio and they are supportive of the idea and would help train volunteers to maintain the trails, once built. Maintenance is a big issue and trails need to be assessed every month and after storms. Mr. Shaw said if the City approves the land for this use, then he will start working on sponsors and funding. Trail design would be the last step. He then thanked the PRC for their time and consideration. Mr. Hurley asked if anyone had questions. Mr. Kessler thanked Mr. Shaw for a great presentation. He then asked if Mr. Shaw had any idea of maintenance costs. Mr. Shaw said he thinks they are generally low, as most work is performed by volunteers and supplies would mostly be dirt and minimal materials to create other obstacles. Mr. Kessler then asked if the eradication of honeysuckle could be worked into the equation. Mr. Shaw said yes. Ms. DeNoewer suggested that Mr. Shaw reach out to RideHome (the local bike shop). Mr. Shaw responded that he had spoken with them and liked the idea. However, they don’t sell mountain bikes and since they are smaller he thought it might be difficult for them to help with funding, rather than a bigger operation like REI, who has helped to sponsor many trails. Mr. McKnight suggested that thought be given to the impact on city resources since volunteer groups can change or disintegrate over time. Ms. Miller said this is where COMBO can be useful, they have a big volunteer base. Mr. Armitage said he loves the location and thinks the spot is perfect as it already has necessary infrastructure in place (parking, restrooms, not too close to residences). His question is whether Mr. Shaw thinks kids will ride their bikes to the trail, or if people will drive there, which would impact parking. Mr. Shaw thinks most users would bike to the trail, mostly kids from Worthington neighborhoods. Mr. Hurley added he shares the concern about parking and just park capacity in general at the Parklands since it is so heavily used. Mr. McKnight asked if Mr. Shaw knew who needed to apply for grants. Mr. Shaw wasn’t sure. Ms. Thornton shared that some of the grants Mr. Shaw had mentioned (ODNR grants) had to be applied for by government entities or 501c3 organizations. She also said they typically required 20% matching funds. Mr. Hurley said that if the PRC agrees, he would like to keep working with Mr. Shaw to frame what can be done, without funding, for the January meeting. Mr. Kessler asked Mr. Hurley to check with the police and fire departments to assess how accidents would be handled. Mr. Hurley agreed and said that he would also check with the City attorney regarding liability.

**COVID-19 Updates** – Mr. Hurley shared that as a result of the Franklin County Stay at Home Advisory, all in-person programming for the Department had been suspended, but online programming continues and the Community Center will stay open at this time. Staff will continue to prepare for in-person programming. The Griswold Center is still closed. Mr. Armitage asked if there had been complaints about the early closing time on Fridays at the Community Center as he had heard some. Mr. Hurley indicated there had not and that staff would be reassessing around the first of the year. Ms. Ball asked if the fence at the dog park had been repaired and Mr. Hurley said that the work has been scheduled.

**Other** – Ms. Miller shared with the PRC that since the deer culling conversation she noticed that many neighbors put their pumpkins in the woods and all along the Olentangy Trail for the deer after Halloween and Thanksgiving.

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