



WORTHINGTON PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

Minutes of the Tuesday, February 16, 2021 Meeting

Note – This meeting was conducted virtually via Microsoft Teams.

Members Present - The members present were Dan Armitage, Laura Ball, Rachel DeNoewer, Alan McKnight, Michele Miller, and Rob Wendling. City support staff Darren Hurley (Parks & Recreation Director) and Celia Thornton (Recorder) were also present, along with guest presenter Grant Greiwe from DWA Recreation.

The minutes from the January 19, 2021 meeting were approved unanimously.

Selby Park Playground Renovation Final Recommendation – Mr. Hurley said that a final playground design has been created and he hopes that the Parks & Recreation Commission (PRC) will make a recommendation for City Council approval. Playground designs were available to the public for feedback both online and in person. The online feedback had been forwarded to PRC members. Option One was preferred by the public in a two to one ratio. Option Three was also highly rated but the comments seemed to reflect that it was the swings that were the draw, so DWA incorporated the swings into Option One. A slide and a more neutral earth tone color scheme were also added to Option One due to overall public comments. Mr. Hurley also wanted to make the PRC aware that a very large oak tree (just west of the playground) will be taken out during the playground demolition due to safety concerns. Five new trees will be planted in front of the parking area, though it will take time for them to provide playground shade. Staff have been monitoring the split trunk tree for many years and other trees have been planted in the area in anticipation of its eventual removal. During the process there were many comments regarding Selby Shelter House. Mr. Hurley said that funding has been set aside in 2022 to study and decide the future of the shelter house. Mr. Hurley said that since DWA holds a playground contract through U.S. Communities, a competitively bid contract clearing house utilized by government entities, the city can enter into an agreement for the work upon Council approval without a bidding process. The timeline is six to eight weeks to manufacture and ship the equipment, and DWA is ready to install, weather permitting, when it arrives. The Parks Crew will complete the demolition of the existing playground. During the public feedback process Julie Sargent (staff) became aware of various special needs children in the area, so staff are researching a communications board element that may be added to the playground. Mr. McKnight asked if trees and pavers were included in the DWA contract. Mr. Hurley said they were not and that these components would be installed by parks staff. The members unanimously recommended that the City enter into an agreement with DWA Recreation to construct the Option One playground and have it installed this spring.

McCord Park Phase 1 Renovations Finalization – Mr. Hurley said that tonight he expected City Council to give permission to bid Phase One of the McCord Park project. Mr. McKnight asked if renovations would be done to the caboose to make it more accessible? Mr. Hurley said yes, likely the south door will be widened and modified, though there will also be an effort to keep the caboose as historically accurate as possible. Ms. Miller asked if the plantings in the design drawing were accurate? Mr. Hurley said to some extent although staff will be working on some of the specific plant types throughout construction. Mr. Wendling asked what was being done with the fence line all along the railroad track. Mr. Hurley said it will be cleared of vegetation and replaced in Phase Two. Mr. Armitage shared some concerns regarding the caboose blocking the view of actual trains, expense and asked why the observation deck was so low. Mr. Hurley said that it is less expensive to leave the caboose at grade than to raise it and shared that eventually an observation tower is planned in one of the grassy areas that would get viewers a better view of the train tracks. The tower is expensive, estimated at \$50,000, so it is being deferred to a future phase and may be dependent on fund-raising efforts. Mr. Hurley added POD Design feels good about the various views and opportunities to view the trains, especially given the elevation of the tracks relative to grade. Another piece that will be added over time is signage telling the stories about the caboose and the trains on the tracks. Ms. Ball raised a concern that it looked like a good area for skate boarders and hopes that POD is taking the necessary precautions to prevent that. Mr. Hurley assured he would discuss further with the design team. He then shared some changes to the McCord Park shelters, including the addition of a short brick wall for seating rather than enclosing the four corner posts in brick. There were concerns that children would climb the brick and access the shelter roofs. The wall also allows more separation between the shelters and pool patio and trail. PRC members liked the changes, but did ask about the addition of trash cans, etc. Mr. Hurley said those items are in the budget, but staff hasn't finished working through all the details yet. Mr. Hurley also said that he's asking City Council for permission to bid the project this evening and is hopeful that construction will occur this summer and fall. Mr. Armitage made the recommendation to move forward to bid, and all approved.

Mountain Biking Proposal Follow Up – Mr. Hurley apologized that he hadn't made as much progress as he'd wanted to on this agenda item, due to extensive work on the first two agenda items over the past several weeks. He did speak with Columbus about the mountain bike track at Berliner and received very positive feedback about their experience with Central Ohio Mountain Biking Organization (COMBO). He hasn't had the chance to speak with the Metroparks staff yet. He thinks the next step is for the PRC to recommend the utilization of the land in an agreement with COMBO with specific limitations outlined and asked if there were any questions before bringing this back to the commission in March. Mr. Wendling expressed concern about the soil compaction and its effect on existing trees. He says that can be avoided with a careful trail layout. The PRC discussed how to prioritize needs that may come up from this project versus other projects, additional parking options, funding needs (Columbus spent \$188,000 on theirs and it's getting heavy use), impact on parks maintenance workload, and design. Mr. Hurley said that his vision at this point is to have the City approve the land for this use and see how COMBO and volunteers can progress without dedicated funding for a period of time. If there is success and interest generated future considerations could be made for funding. If it doesn't pick up momentum, the site could be restored to a natural state. He would like the board to consider a recommendation from the PRC in the future giving permission to enter into an agreement with COMBO and dedicating the use of the land to that purpose.

COVID-19 Updates – Mr. Hurley shared that some in-person programming has resumed, and that staff is gradually bringing back some activities while following current guidelines. The Griswold Center has not re-opened yet but are providing "drive through" soup and still offer many online program opportunities. Mr. Armitage asked about increasing Friday hours. Mr. Hurley said that staff haven't received any push from the public to do so and that it is largely dependent on full-time staff's

ability to manage additional hours. Since revenues from memberships are still lagging, we have based open hours largely on the utilization of existing full-time staff instead of recalling many of our furloughed part-time staff. The building has been a bit busier lately, which helps justify the need to bring back part-time staff. The department needs revenue increases to rebuild staffing levels. Mr. Armitage complimented the staff he sees working daily and says they're doing a good job.

Other – Mr. Armitage asked for an update on what is happening at Huntley Bowl Park. Mr. Hurley said that it is a Service Department project to improve the current function of water retention. Service is clearing out drains and deepening the basin. There may be some impact to recreation functions at Huntley Bowl, but it will help residents of the Rush Run corridor. Mr. Armitage asked if making it a fishery was a possibility. Mr. Hurley said he can ask the City Engineer if that would be problematic for the intended use. Mr. Wendling brought up that the concrete plant next door drains into the area which could hurt the fish. Mr. Armitage said they should be remediating those issues. Mr. Hurley said there is an environmental and water quality component to this project. Mr. Wendling noted that Hartford Park is being used as a staging area for the Kilbourne Middle School construction and asked when it would be back to its original function. Mr. Hurley said he could try and find out but noted that Hartford Park is school property and not City property. Ms. Miller said that the Kilbourne PTA had requested a walking track around the park and benches, and that at the end of the project it be made more “park like.” Ms. DeNoewer then suggested that at a future meeting the PRC circle back to the deer issue and consider making a recommendation around a feeding ordinance.

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