



## **WORTHINGTON PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION**

### **Minutes of the Tuesday, August 24, 2021, Meeting**

**Members Present** - The members present were 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. City Council President Bonnie Michael joined the meeting using Microsoft Teams virtually.

The minutes from the June 15, 2021, meeting were approved unanimously.

**Parks Foundation Research Presentation** – Mr. Hurley introduced the topic of a foundation saying that it was an idea City Council President Bonnie Michael had a background in and had brought up. It also is referenced in the Parks Master Plan to fund recommended projects. Ms. Thornton, with the help of Ms. DeNoewer and Ms. Michael, have been doing some research and would like to present current findings to the Commission for questions, concerns, and their thoughts on moving this forward as a recommendation to City Council. Ms. Michael stressed that this is an opportunity and vehicle for people to donate to projects outlined in the Parks and Bike & Pedestrian Master Plans. It's also a good way to advocate and raise money for department needs. Ms. Thornton then showed a PowerPoint presentation that overviewed the vision, benefits, current department funding challenges and the way a foundation can help meet those needs. At the end of the presentation, Mr. Hurley asked for questions and comments. Ms. Miller asked whether foundation money was kept separate from city funds and how that worked. Ms. Thornton said that as a 501c3, the money would be separate and would have its own auditing and oversight processes. It's important that the Articles of Incorporation and Memorandum of Understanding with the City clearly outline this separation, but also state that if the foundation should dissolve, that all revenue would be given to the city for parks and recreation improvements. Ms. Miller then asked how the department would make sure that they had some control over what projects the foundation was pursuing, and make sure that the department and foundation's vision and priorities aligned. Ms. Thornton said that the staff liaison, along with a City Council representative on the foundation board, would help make sure that this happened. Mr. McKnight said that another way to ensure that the foundation works hand in hand with the department is to make sure that the by-laws are well written and that they give some control to the department. He also said that it would be important to add a member or multiple members of the Parks and Recreation Commission to the board, along with a City Council member. He said a foundation can bring the department to a new level. He then asked if Ms. Thornton had reached out to the corporate community to see what level of support was available there. Ms. Thornton said she had not done that yet. Ms. Michael emphasized that she would like to expedite this process, does not think we need to beat it to death before presenting it to City Council and

would like this to happen before the end of the year as she feels there is support on the current City Council.

**McCord Park Phase One Renovations Walking Tour** – Mr. Hurley took Commission members on a walking tour of the McCord Park Phase One Renovations Project. Members toured the layout of the new multi-use trail areas, the two shelters, playground renovations, and full-size soccer field. Members asked various questions about the project timeline and what to expect with construction along the way. It was also pointed out that the Community Garden did not look as neat as it had recently in terms of appearance and Mr. Hurley explained that construction is making access more challenging for gardeners but that he would pass along the concern and ask gardeners to do their best to keep their plots cleaned up throughout construction.

**Other** – Ms. Miller expressed concern again over the deer population and asked if City Council had made progress in deciding how to handle this problem. Mr. Hurley said that the city had contacted Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) and that they were going to do a deer inventory this winter after the first snow fall, to get a population count. Mr. Hurley said that staff could proceed by putting out education pieces to the public. Ms. Miller requested that Mr. Hurley keep pressing City Council, at the request of the commission, to take more action as the issue is getting worse.

Mr. Hurley updated members on his progress with COMBO, which is slow because they currently have so many other projects they are focused on, specifically the Columbus Berliner Park course. However, they are still going back and forth and working toward an agreement and making some progress.

Mr. Wendling had inspected the new Selby Park playground and said that it was getting heavy use and neighbors were very happy to have it open. He asked Mr. Hurley to pass on to the Parks Crew that the musical equipment piece has loose screws, that in areas the turf is uneven (there seem to be holes in the ground underneath the artificial turf) and that he's also observed that a bike rack is badly needed.

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