



## **WORTHINGTON PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION**

### **Minutes of the Tuesday, June 15, 2021, Meeting**

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

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

The minutes from the May 18, 2021, meeting were approved unanimously.

**Parks & Recreation Staffing and Structure Changes** – The retirement of Holly Keller (previous Superintendent) gave the department the chance to reassess staffing levels and structure, particularly how the Community and Griswold Centers interact and are utilized. The open superintendent position went to Colleen Light, and she has been made the manager over both buildings. Rather than rehiring a Griswold Manager I decided to put someone in charge of department programming at both buildings, and someone in charge of facility management at both buildings. The end goal is to try and bring two buildings that function separately together. This shouldn't create big changes for users and the department doesn't intend to get rid of anything that is loved. The hope is to create more opportunities for all users. Due to its proximity to the middle and high schools, perhaps there is a space for teen activities at the Griswold Center for example. Current seniors have expressed different wants and needs, and we hope to accommodate their, as well as other, community needs. The department is starting with staffing structures and will then work on adding services. Mr. McKnight asked what the Griswold pre-COVID hours were. Mr. Hurley said typically 8am-5pm Monday through Friday, with occasional weekend rentals. Ms. Miller said she loved the idea of activating that space for younger people and that she'd never felt welcome there before. Mr. Hurley added that he hopes these changes will increase revenue streams.

**Park Project Updates** – Mr. Hurley shared that the department is close to being under contract with Builderscape for the first phase of McCord Park renovations and that construction should be underway by the end of summer. The bridge at Park Boulevard Park has been redone, though there is still some paver work that needs finished on the approach to the bridge. The Selby Park playground renovation has gone slower than hoped. The contractor has been on time and good, but three pieces of equipment received were damaged and had to be shipped back and replaced. The turf installation starts Monday, along with some paver and tree installation. Even though things are proceeding slower than hoped, there has been a lot of good neighborhood feedback. The Mountain Bike project is also proceeding much more slowly than hoped. Mr. Hurley said he touches base with

COMBO regularly but has had difficulty in finalizing the contract due to their previous involvement with Columbus's Berliner project and their focus there. He still hopes to get volunteer work underway yet this year.

**COVID-19 Updates** – Since almost all COVID restrictions have been lifted the department has been adding back hours and programs. Staffing shortages are our biggest challenge, particularly in the pool area, so we're keeping pool reservations for the time being. The reservations are frustrating for some patrons, though overall lap lane swimmers seem to like them. The Griswold Center is also re-opening slowly and the fitness room is open from 8am till Noon and some programs are switching to in-person. Concerts on the Green and summer camps are back, though camp numbers are deliberately smaller for safety. Safety City is running this week and softball leagues are going. In the building staff has asked unvaccinated users to continue to wear masks. Mr. McKnight asked if meetings were switching from online to in-person. Mr. Hurley said yes, that in July City Council will start meeting in-person and that all the other commissions and boards will follow.

**Other** – Mr. Hurley said that traditionally the PRC takes the month of August off, like City Council, but he's been asked about changing the month off to July, for vacations. This decision is up to the PRC. He asked members to think about it and let Ms. Thornton or himself know.

Ms. Miller asked if there was any discussion or progress on deer solutions at the city level. Mr. Hurley said he believes staff are working on education pieces for the public and signage options. There was also some discussion on City Council about holding some public forums to get the discussion started.

Ms. Miller said she is also seeing lots of signage in the parks (that isn't City signage). Mr. Hurley had noticed that as well and is reviewing signage policies with the Planning Department, which will probably come back to the PRC in a future agenda. Mr. McKnight said that Columbus only allowed partner organizations to put up signs, and those had to go in designated mulched areas, otherwise it can get out of hand. Ms. Ball said Westerville also only allows partner organizations to put up signs and that all others are quickly removed. Ms. Miller said signs should be used to advertise Parks & Recreation initiatives, and what she's seeing aren't partners. Mr. Hurley said staff would try to draft some language to bring back to a future meeting. Ms. Miller said a related item is that she's also seeing lots of stickers on park signs throughout the Parklands, and they seem political. Mr. Hurley said to send him a picture of them, and locations, so he can try and find who's putting them up and ask them to stop and remove them. In the future the stickers can be reported and treated as graffiti.

Mr. Hurley reminded the PRC to let him know if anyone can't attend the July meeting. Unless he hears otherwise, he will plan on sticking with the usual July meeting and August recess.

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