



WORTHINGTON PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

Minutes of the Tuesday, March 15, 2022, Meeting

Note – This meeting was conducted virtually via Microsoft Teams.

Members Present - The members present were Rachel DeNoewer, Dave Kessler, Alan McKnight, Michele Miller, and Rob Wendling. City support staff Darren Hurley (Parks & Recreation Director) and Colleen Light (Assistant Parks & Recreation Director) were also present.

The minutes from the February 15, 2022, meeting were approved unanimously.

Village Green Drinking Fountain Bottle Filler Project – Mr. Hurley shared he had been approached by the Worthington Partnership's Green Team about the possibility of adding a water bottle filler on the Village Green. Staff researched options including upgrading the only existing drinking fountain on the Village Green which is located on the southwest quadrant. He explained initially staff preferred a new location and additional fountain as the existing fountain was a part of the Village Green Veteran's Memorial Project and it was unclear if donors or other groups might have ownership of the existing fountain, but after more research it became clear the existing fountain was purchased directly by the city and a new placement given all the backflow and other add-ons would be very expensive and intrusive on the green.

As a result, staff are recommending the replacement of the existing fountain which was installed in 2005. It would be replaced with a combination drinking fountain, bottle filler, and include a dog bowl fountain. He showed a black, vintage coloration and an illustration of the fountain set-up. He also shared plans by the Arbor Committee to replace the landscaping around the seating area.

Mr. Wendling asked if the fountain was made of aluminum. Mr. Hurley indicated it was steel or iron. Mr. McKnight asked if the Worthington Partnership initiated the discussion. Mr. Hurley replied they did approach the city initially about adding the bottle filler somewhere downtown. Mr. Wendling commented he likes the partnership aspect and would like to see more of that moving forward. Mr. Wendling asked if it would be frostless. Mr. Hurley indicated at this point we plan to shut it off in winter.

Mr. Wendling motioned we accept the donation of the fountain and replace the existing fountain on the southwest Village Green as illustrated. Mr. Kessler seconded. All in attendance approved.

Train Observation Area Fund-Raising – Mr. Hurley explained that as part of the McCord Park Phase One Renovations the donated cabooses which will be in the Train Observation Area need to be renovated. The project paid for the area around the cabooses and the placement of the cabooses in the area. The actual renovation of the exterior and interior was not included because the team working on it including the rotary club and other experts had hoped to put a volunteer project in place to do the work. However, COVID and other factors have impacted that and now staff have changed approach to fund-raising for the project to have an expert come in and do the renovation. Staff expect the cost to be around \$45,000. Fund-raising efforts are underway to help offset the costs. If any members know people who might be interested, please advise staff. The Worthington A.M. Rotary is planning to fund-raise. FC Bank has been a sponsor and supporter of many programs and has indicated they may have an interest. Others are being approached. We will recognize donors somewhere in the exhibit with signage.

Parks and Recreation Department Staffing Updates – Mr. Hurley shared a staffing update with the members to overview some structural changes and some vacant and recently filled positions. He highlighted the recreation side of the department and introduced Colleen Light as the Assistant Director/Superintendent of Parks & Recreation. Mr. McKnight asked if staff had been receptive. Mr. Hurley said change is always difficult, but overall staff have been very supportive and responsive. Ms. Light indicated she is excited for her new role, and she is looking forward to getting the new staff team organized and heading in the same direction. Mr. Hurley indicated the part-time staff have been excellent during this period, stepping up to support many roles including our full-time vacancies.

Project Updates – McCord Park Renovations scheduled to resume around the beginning of April. All the equipment including the shelters and playground are on site. Weather will determine timeline, but work should begin soon after April 1.

Perry Park playground survey response has been positive with over 100 responses so far. The next step is the vendor would provide designs for an open house for the community.

Indianola Park playground equipment is ordered, waiting on timeline for its delivery.

Future Meeting Format – Mr. Hurley indicated the city-wide mask mandate had been lifted and meetings could resume in person if the board desires. Staff are happy to support either method. Mr. McKnight indicated he would like to return to in person. Mr. Wendling agreed he prefers in person. Mr. McKnight asked if anyone objects to returning in person. Ms. Miller indicated she likes the flexibility and wondered about the option of hybrid. Mr. Hurley said progress has been made and he'll let everyone know if we can provide that option. Mr. McKnight stated we would try in person for April and then go from there.

Other – Mr. McKnight listened to the City Council deer discussion last night. He noted there seemed to be some reluctance to passing a feeding ordinance amongst members. Mr. Hurley stated they did discuss it and they asked staff to draft a more detailed ordinance that more specifically addressed some of the Council concerns and comments. It isn't clear whether Council would fully support the feeding ordinance at this point or not. Mr. McKnight indicated there was a question about a deer count and he recalled there being some discussion about that. Mr. Hurley stated staff have tried to coordinate that with Metroparks a couple times but to this point have not connected. Ms. Miller asked if there was any talk about any action beyond the feeding ordinance. Mr. Hurley stated it was more informational with all the research being updated and the only topic approached by Council was the feeding ordinance. Mr. Hurley indicated Mr. Barnhart has created a page on the website with information and for public input which will get reviewed by staff. Mr. Hurley will share it with the members. Mr. Wendling asked if Mr. Daugherty and Mr. Brown had shared tree damage with Mr. Barnhart. Mr. Hurley indicated staff had provided that data.

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