

PARK AND RECREATION COMMITTEE

March 13, 2013
Council Chambers

Park and Recreation Committee met at 7:00 pm. In attendance: Laura Wassmer, Chair, Ashley Weaver, Vice-Chair, Diane Mares, Eric Blevins, Kevin Letourneau, Maggie Swartz, Joe Nolte and Dan Searles. Staff: Quinn Bennion & Keith Bredehoeft. Also present: Tom O'Brien and five individuals with interest in the community garden expansion.

Laura called the meeting to order at 7PM.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

CONSENT AGENDA

The consent agenda was approved unanimously as submitted.

1. Minutes from February 13, 2013

REPORTS

1. Community Garden Update

Laura called on Tom O'Brien to update the committee on this year's community garden and plans for expansion for the 2013 season. Tom introduced the five gardeners accompanying him. The group offered to help spruce up and maintain the sculpture garden area if the irrigation system is turned back on. The existing and new garden plots were made available for lease in January. Tom assured the committee that an active responsible team of gardeners are involved to make sure that plots are not abandoned, vegetables are picked on time and the garden is well maintained.

Tom made available a garden plot map for 2013 and pointed out the proposed new plots for the coming year. The Tree Board reviewed the new plans and concurred that the two smaller trees can be removed to make room for the 12 new plots. The largest tree, the elm, will not be removed as part of the expansion. The community garden group will donate two trees to replace those removed.

Laura opened the discussion up for questions from the committee. Dan Searles recalled previously approving a smaller area for expansion. Tom explained that four areas of expansion were identified during the last visit with the committee. He stated that he may not have been clear last time so he brought the plot plan with him this meeting. He shared the process that the garden committee worked through to expand the park including visits with the Parks and Rec Committee and the Tree Board. Dan expressed concern about the garden expansion being so close to the tennis courts. There was a question if the garden plots are leased to nonresidents. The Harmon Park garden plots are only leased to Prairie Village residents. The Cherokee Church community garden site is leased to nonresidents, with preference to residents. Tom reported that the grant for the community garden is still active and the grant funds will be spent down during the season. For the community garden program to "break even" and be self-sustaining there needs to be about 35 plots sold.

Diane expressed concern that the community garden effort may be a trend and may not be a long-lived venture so at some point the fencing and other materials will need to be removed. Tom responded that the community garden members will clean up the garden if it is returned to green space. There are no permanent structures in the garden except for the irrigation system. Laura shared her views of the

expansion and is comfortable with the 3 plot expansion to the east and three plot expansion to the west, but she is hesitant with the six on the south side of the garden next to the large elm tree.

Tom mentioned that all the plots have been rented for 2013, but if the number of plots are reduced, the money could be refunded. Several members of the committee shared their opinion about the process of expanding the garden and expressed hesitation of the expansion, especially to the south. Keith Bredehoeft of Public Works said that he isn't too concerned about the expansion from a operations viewpoint. Last year, the gardeners were good stewards of the area. Tom mentioned that the plots have all been leased for 2013 and the demand appears to be close to the number of plots available. The lease amount is \$40 for a large plot and \$25 for a small plot. Both individuals and families have leased the plots.

Diane asked who paid for the water last year. Tom responded that the City currently pays for the water, but the City keeps the lease fees the past two years to pay for the water. At the Cherokee site, the annual water bill was about \$200 for the water to the garden.

Laura stated that she would like to see the garden remain at its current extent to the south with only expansion to the east and west. Tom suggested a compromise that the garden plots would not extend further than the large elm tree. A fence would need to be negotiated around the tree. Dan asked about an exit strategy for the garden, if needed. The fear is that the garden will become unkept in the future and then who cleans up the property.

Laura asked about the proposed compromise to clarify the location and orientation of the expanded plots. Tom walked through the plot plan and stated that proposed plots 27-32 will be eliminated, with two plots added on each side of the tree for a total of 13 additional plots (versus the 15 proposed). Diane moved that the expansion include the compromise plots extending east and west and the expansion does not extend beyond the large elm tree (see attached plot sheet). The committee approved the motion.

2. Public Works Report

Keith, the Interim Public Works Director, provided the Public Works Report to the committee. He reported that the crews have been busy with snow removal operations and the tree limb cleanup at Porter Park. The debris removal operation includes hauling and chipping depending on how compact the material is. The crews are getting ready for the weekend when more debris will arrive. The crews are trying to get it out of the park as soon as possible to return the park to normal use.

Laura questioned how the crews are monitoring that just Prairie Village residents dump debris at the park. Public Works is not monitoring or policing the dumping. There is likely some abuse by nonresidents and contractors, but it appears that a majority of the users are residents. There was a discussion about placing the debris drop-off operation in a different location in the City such as at the pool.

Keith reported that the Franklin Park trail was cleared off of snow once the priority snow routes were complete. He also reported on Public Work's efforts to increase the number of recycling containers in the park. The status of the Franklin Park trail was then summarized by Keith. The significant cracks in the trail have developed during the first and second year of use. The trail was built to high standard with aggregate base and asphalt. The contractor for the Franklin Park project went out of business and a claim has been filed with the bonding company. The bonding company has selected another contractor to do the repairs and they are in negotiations right now for the scope of the repairs. The plan is to place a new seal over the trail after the repairs are made.

3. Recreation Report

Quinn provided a short report of recreation programs. The hiring process continues for the Assistant to the City Administrator position to replace Chris Engel. If all goes well, the new hire will be in attendance at the next Parks & Recreation meeting on April 10th. The pool managers are picking up some of the tasks to ensure the pool staff is trained and ready to operate. Pool passes will go on sale April 1st.

4. Chairperson's Report

The Chair moved straight to the other agenda items.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Discuss City owned island Statuary

Laura introduced the topic of the City owned statuarities in the islands. There is an inventory of the statuarities with pictures and general condition. The city owns the statues and insures them, however there is not a formal policy or protocol for maintenance of the statuarities. Laura asked if the committee wants an active role with the upkeep and maintenance of the statuarities.

Diane recounted the history of the statuary maintenance and mentioned that there are likely resources to help develop a plan. The committee members concurred that the island statuary maintenance is not the responsibility of the Parks and Recreation Committee.

2. Discussion regarding short-term special use permits in parks and process for approval

Quinn introduced that topic of short-term special use permits. Currently, city staff reviews and approves the special use permits, except with significant proposals. Most of the permits are routine in nature. In 2012, 18 permits were issued for special events within the city parks. Quinn asked for the committee's direction for future permit approvals and how active the committee wants to be in the approval process. He shared that staff desires a streamlined and efficient process for the applicants. Diane shared an idea that the special use permits could be a tiered approach with higher fees for the large events that take the whole park or a different type of event permit. There was discussion about the size of the event that would require a special process or permit. It was suggested that events with more than 50 people becomes an "event" or longer than 3 hours. The permit should include events that create too much wear and tear and displace too many other park users. Dan suggested that there could be a fee charged to the user to repair any damage or collect trash after the event. There was discussion about special approval for any event with over 100 people in attendance and they could be required to pay a trash fee. Laura sought closure to the discussion and it was the consensus of the committee members that a special use permit should be brought to the Parks & Recreation Committee if the event significantly inhibits use of the park or restricts access to a part of the public park.

3. Discussion regarding walk/run events in parks and process for approval

Quinn introduced a similar subject. He sought direction from the committee relating to walk/run events in parks and how involved the Committee wants to be in approving the events. The Parks & Recreation Committee concurred that if an event is out of the norm and is significant in nature, the item needs to be brought to the Parks & Recreation Committee for approval.

4. Consider donation of park bench memorial to Porter Park

Recently, a resident approached city staff with the desire to donate a bench or other item to be placed in Porter Park. The existing policy from the Municipal Foundation states that donations over \$500 will be recognized on a plaque in City Hall and only donations exceeding \$5,000 will be recognized with a plaque in the park. Quinn inquired if the committee is comfortable with the policy or if the amount should be a lesser amount.

Laura expressed concerns that if the amount was less, there could be too many memorials and recognition plaques resulting in clutter in the park and it would be more difficult to maintain. She advocated for keeping with the current policy. She also suggested that there could be a needs list created for equipment that is needed in specific parks. Dan mentioned that there is a donation plaque in the shelter at a park in Fairway listing contributors to the parks. A similar plaque could be placed in each park displaying names who donated. Diane mentioned that Loose Park has a memorial garden with plaque and names. Due to the time of the meeting, it was agreed that the item would be tabled to a future meeting for further discussion.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Park priorities and maintenance needs

Laura initiated a discussion about the park priorities and maintenance needs. The discussion is in preparation for the 2014 budget and CIP plan. The park plan will be presented to City Council at a meeting in May.

The committee was provided with a handout "Parks Master Plan Suggested Funding". The list was the result of the park tours in February and Public Works maintenance lists. The Parks Master Plan was also referenced in creating the list with Doug Pickert of Indigo Design. The revised list totals \$868,000 that could be funded over several years.

Keith explained that the existing CIP 4 yr current budget already includes the park reserve, aquatic center assessment plan and Harmon Park tennis courts replacement. The park improvements and maintenance items on the list would be in addition to what is already in last year's budget. Laura commented that the Committee should review the list and identify park improvements and priorities to be presented to Council in May.

The committee discussed the following park projects, funding and project years.

2014

- McCrum Park at \$123,800 and another \$20,000 for administration and inspection fees. The powerline burial or relocation are not included in the project costs.
- Prairie Park at \$5,000 for the addition toddler swings
- Taliaferro Park at \$27,000 for the nature play are (\$25k) and safety mat replacement (\$2k)
- Harmon Park at \$20,000 for the establishment of a 9-hole frisbee golf course

2015

- Taliaferro Park at \$50,000 to reconstruct the practice field and sand court
- Bennett Park at \$133,000 for multiple upgrades

2016

- Porter Park at \$165, 000

- Windsor Park at \$95,000

2017, 2018, 2019

- equipment replacement or north park development

The committee concurred and supported the list of park improvements and maintenance items.

Dan asked a question about Mission Road trail development from 71st & 75th. At the last Parks & Recreation meeting it was suggested that a trail could be included in the corridor if the road was narrowed to three lanes. Keith responded that a significant change such as narrowing from four lanes to three lanes requires significant consideration and examining the average daily traffic counts (ADT). The ADT range on Mission Road in this location is 22,000 and narrowing would have major impacts on traffic. Nall Avenue narrowing was recommended because of an ADT of 13,000. The narrowing on Nall and Somerset have been successful due to the lower ADT.

There was a question about tree trimming in parks. Keith stated that tree trimming should come from the Public Works operating budget and not the CIP. He will examine the amount set aside during the upcoming budget process.

Adjourned at 9:10PM

The next meeting will be Wednesday, April 10th, 2013.