

MINUTES

PARK ADVISORY COMMISSION

4:00 p.m. -- September 21, 2004

Time: Satarino called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m.

Place: Council Chamber, Second Floor, 100 North Fifth Avenue, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Berla, DeLone, Macomber, Reneaud, Riseng, Rodgers, Satarino

Members Absent: Berauer, Cohen

Ex-Officio Members Present: Henderson, Johnson, Woods

Ex-Officio Members Absent: Aeschbach

Staff Present: Bemish, Borneman, Clark, Kuras, Rynard, St. John

Others Present: Julie Kruze, 200 Briarcrest #120, 761-5860
Peter Allen, 2224 Applewood, 996-8821
Glenn Thompson, 100 Longman, 995-2761
Bill Oliver, 2892 Bay Ridge, 761-5169

PUBLIC COMMENTARY

Bill Oliver, said he and his wife were customers of the Farmers Market and his wife, Margaret, had served as a market commissioner for 18 years. He said they had attended the meeting held on June 17 regarding the proposed renovations to the Farmers Market. He said the consultant, Johnson Hill, presented its recommendations and proposed plans for renovation of the Farmers Market. He said it was evident that many of the vendors attending the meeting felt that the direction that the consultant took was 180 degrees different from what the vendors wanted to occur. After the meeting, he developed a survey and submitted it to several of the vendors for their suggestions and then on July 14, the survey was circulated by him and some of the vendors. He said an attempt was made by the vendors circulating the survey to reach all the other vendors, both the annuals (assigned a stall) and dailies (do not have an assigned stall). He received all the finished forms from the vendors, signed by the vendors, and tabulated the results himself. He said the tabulated results were split into two groups, one group representing the annuals and the second representing the dailies. He called attention to two items in the survey: (1) on the first page, at the bottom, the first priority identified by the annual vendors was to increase the total number of stalls. He said the consultant proposed adding five stalls, which he felt was not much of an expansion. He said there were 144 stalls now; so adding five stalls would be only increasing the number by about

three percent. (2) On the second page, regarding the reconfiguration of the layout of stalls, the majority of annual vendors felt the short central aisle should be expanded, increasing number of stalls. He said the purpose of the survey was to try to get a consensus from the vendors. He said the citizens input signed a petition supporting maintaining the physical structure of the market as it is today, but with the extension of stalls, and updating the water retention system, electrical and painting.

Riseng asked what “citizen input” meant.

Oliver replied that citizen input was received from about 750 Farmers Market customers. He added that the PAC Chair had the full packet of information.

Satarino noted that the information was available to all PAC members.

Berla asked what specifically was not liked about the consultant’s proposed plan.

One of the vendors responded that they did not want the central aisle taken down and removal of some of the parking, and that changing the flow of the market would change the atmosphere that the customers like.

Henderson said a special meeting for PAC would be scheduled in October regarding the proposed renovation plan for the Farmers Market.

Peter Allen, said he had been involved in the development of a bicycle pathway/walkway along North Main Street. He said about three years ago they tried to organize all the property owners along North Main Street from M-14 to Depot Street to improve North Main Street. He said they had reached a consensus regarding what would be the right way to handle the upgrading of North Main Street to make an appropriate first impression for people coming in off the expressway, what would be the right way to improve the sidewalk, and how to take advantage of the work that was done in 1988. He said he was involved with the redevelopment of the Robe Tire and Canoe Sport sites. He said he had seen the enormous effect the existing pathway to the edge of Argo Pond had on the number of people who now use it from senior citizens walking to rollerbladers. He said Peter Pollack was hired to help put together the right imaging, lighting, and plant materials. He said the whole process fell off the tracks with 9/11 and they were just starting back up again. He thought the worst problem along North Main Street was the inaccessibility of Bluffs Park. He said he had talked with John Chepala from the Ann Arbor Railroad who said he would very open to providing a pathway along the railroad tracks where it goes up to Summit Street to provide pedestrian access from North Main Street down along Allen Creek. He said he wanted to present two major points to PAC to think about and he would work out more details and come back to another meeting with more information. He thought two things could be achievable: a pathway along North Main Street and a pathway along Allen Creek. He said three years ago, the idea was to take the sidewalk along the east side of the street and double its width and go along the frontage of all the industrial buildings to begin a pathway. He said a new approach was now being considered that would be simpler, faster and cheaper to accomplish: to construct the pathway on the west side of the street. He said there was an existing sidewalk that starts at Depot Street, continues under the railroad tracks, and goes in front of the four homes and then it ends. He said it would have to be

constructed in front of the city-owned property, which is quite level, and continue beyond that in front of other private property owners' parcels, one of which has a stone wall close to the street that might have to be moved back, then in front of the Huronview Commerce Park (now called North Main Research Park), then come to the corner owned by MDOT. He said there was a lot of space between Huron River Drive and first set of pillars that hold up the M-14 bridge. He said you would then be at Kuebler Langford Park, then the pathway could continue through that park to along the front of Bird Park to Newport Road and then across Newport Road to the new high school site. He estimated that cost to accomplish this pathway was between \$100,000 and \$200,000. He thought several sites along North Main Street might come before the Planning Commission and City Council for redevelopment and that might be an opportunity to have them contribute to the construction of a pathway in front of those sites. He said constructing this pathway could be the beginnings of a pathway from North Main Street along the railroad tracks, through to Felch Street, through to Miller Avenue, through and around the area where Maynard Battery is located, and over to the YMCA site, then to the city yard at 415 West Washington Street, then to Liberty Street, then to the Eaton site, then to the First and William site, and then to the University of Michigan golf course. He thought the pathway was feasible.

Satarino thought this was very exciting proposal and was encouraged that there was more community involvement with this idea.

Glenn Thompson thought the Johnson Hill Farmers Market redevelopment plan should be rejected and he explained why. He said citizens did not support the plan and the market vendors opposed it. He said the plan eliminates all vendor and customer parking at the market, and customer parking on Detroit Street would also be eliminated. He thought this would destroy the market. He said the citizens and vendors are willing to work with a consultant and the City to develop appropriate changes. He said one such plan had already been proposed by Professor Joseph Lee. He said three surveys were conducted by Johnson Hill to establish the basis for its proposed plan. He said, at the recent Cobblestone Farm meeting, it was asserted that 82 percent of people surveyed wanted a change, but considering the raw data, included in the 82 percent were all the respondents who left the question "what changes would you like" blank. He said this 82 percent also included respondents who requested simple procedural changes, such better pricing. He said if we considered the respondents that answered the question with a comment that indicated a desire for physical changes, the overwhelming majority, approximately 70 percent, either specifically did not want any change or wanted more parking. He said the proposed plan is in direct opposition to the majority of the respondents. He thought the opposition by the public was not even greater because it was still unaware of the plan. He said the August 29 Ann Arbor News article describing the public meeting held at the Cobblestone Farm reported that the plan was unveiled at this meeting, yet the article did not discuss the details of the meeting. He said the Johnson Hill representative at the meeting said that this would be the last public comment meeting. He said when he requested more information on the Johnson Hill proposal, he was told Parks and Recreation Services did not have the information. He requested that the Johnson Hill proposed plan be put on Parks and Recreation website and should ask for comments by the public.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Minutes of August 3, 2004 – Moved by Rodgers, supported by Riseng, and approved as presented by voice vote.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Satarino was nominated by Riseng, seconded by Macomber, as chair. No other members expressed interest in being chair. Satarino was unanimously elected as chair.

Henderson said that she had talked with Berauer, who was not at this meeting, and reported that Berauer would like to continue as vice chair. No other members expressed interest in being vice chair. Berauer was nominated by Satarino, seconded by Macomber, as vice chair. Berauer was unanimously elected as vice chair.

UPDATE ON ARGO PROJECT

Kuras reported that three or four public meetings had been held and the Argo Livery plan had been changed substantially. She said a new canoe livery; a fenced in storage area for canoes, kayaks and vans; and a picnic shelter would be constructed. She said the fishing dock was still there, left over from the old livery that was torn down, and parking would be located in the same place as before the renovation, except in the area closest to the railroad where the new livery would be located. She said that recently it had been reported to staff that on weekends the parking was overflowing into the surrounding streets, so they are going to discuss locating additional parking on private land on Longshore Drive and establishing a trail to the canoe livery. She said there had been several requests to add a third dock for those who have their own canoes/kayaks to access with their own vehicles, so a third dock was added. She said shoreline restoration would occur as well as the installation of a woodchip path through the Argo Nature Area since it is off limits to bicycles.

Satarino asked if trees would be impacted with the renovations.

Kuras replied that some trees would be impacted, but no landmark trees.

Macomber complimented the design, especially the walking trail along the river.

UPDATE ON PROS PLAN AND TELEPHONE SURVEY

Kuras reported that in another week the telephone survey would be completed and then the tabulation of the results would begin. She said a public meeting would be held next Tuesday, September 28, between 5:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m., at Cobblestone Farm. She said this meeting would be held to gather information and receive comments from citizens regarding the PROS Plan. She added that additional focus groups would occur in couple of weeks. She said individual interviews would occur as well.

UPDATE ON FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR GALLUP/NICHOLS ARBORETUM
AND BANDEMER/BARTON PEDESTRIAN TUNNELS

Kuras reported that six months ago an engineering consulting firm was hired to look at the feasibility of constructing one tunnel between the Gallup Trail and Nichols Arboretum under the railroad tracks. She said the reason this location was selected was because it had the greatest difference in grade and there already was a very well worn pathway. She said the other site being looked at was a connection between Bandemer Park and Barton Park under the railroad tracks to the existing pedestrian bridge that crosses the Huron River that crosses to the Barton Oxbow. She said they were looking for a safer way to get people from one side of the railroad tracks to the other side. She said the location of this tunnel was also selected because it had the greatest difference in grade and there already was a very well worn pathway. She said because the Norfolk Southern Railroad was looking at re-establishing the tracks that were taken out many years ago and they wanted to reserve the potential to put in high speed rail, a tunnel would have to be much longer than most would feel safe walking through; thus, many different ideas were looked at with regard to how to get people from one side of the railroad tracks to the other side. She said one idea was constructing a bridge at grade, which would mean you would not have to dig down as far as you would for a tunnel. She said she presented this idea to a group (the county and other municipalities) she meets with once a month and the county was very excited about partnering with the city because it would help the connections to the border to border trail, which would provide a greenway through the entire county and she said others at this meeting made some recommendations for grant possibilities. She said once she received cost estimates, she would pursue grant applications, but unfortunately, from the research she had done so far, she did not think even one tunnel could be constructed for less than \$1½ million. She said the consultant had prepared an extensive survey with topography, natural features, and soil data so there would be good background material to work with so when bids were requested, there would be good data available to use. She said the T-21 Fund has some money available that she would pursue. She thought the Gallup/Arboretum project should not be considered now because financially it was not feasible now nor did she think the city would want to finance it since it would be connecting into a University property, unless the University changed its policy to allow bicycles in the Arboretum.

Woods asked if the University of Michigan was talking with the city about a Gallup/Arboretum tunnel.

Kuras replied that she had been meeting with Bob Grese, the Director of the Arboretum, and he was very enthusiastic about the idea. She said through the years she had met

with various offices in the University Administration, such as the public safety personnel, and it depended on who was in charge at the time whether the idea was supported or opposed. She thought Mr. Grese would have to convince the Administration to move forward with the project. She thought other changes would have to happen in the Arboretum to have the city pursuing that project be a more compelling case. She said a safety issue had been brought up related to people crossing the railroad tracks. She thought if we encourage people to go into the parks, a safe access should be provided.

Rodgers asked which was more expensive: construction of a tunnel or a bridge.

Kuras replied that the engineers thought it would about the same or less expensive to construct a bridge because of the difference in the amount of excavation needed, the potential for having to pump water out of the site, and the ease of construction. She said once she had better examples of pictures and she had cost estimates, she would provide PAC with more information and let them know if grants were available as well.

UPDATE AND DISCUSSION ON AQUATIC VEGETATION HARVESTING

Borneman reported that aquatic vegetation harvesting had been an ongoing issue for a long time. He said staff had been dealing with it on a case-by-case basis and had not found an effective solution yet. He said a more comprehensive strategy was needed. He said he was working with Matt Naud, the City's Environmental Coordinator, and the Washtenaw Development Council, to develop a more comprehensive plan for how to deal with surface waters in the City. He invited everyone to participate in these discussions.

DeLone asked what type of vegetation was being harvested.

Borneman replied that it was underwater vegetation. He said the vegetation was mowed with an underwater mower and then the vegetation was placed on shore to dry, and then it was collected and disposed of.

DeLone asked what triggered the vegetation growth.

Borneman replied it was a natural process that ponds fill in over time (thousands of years) and turn into bogs and upland areas.

Macomber asked why mowing was not sufficient.

Borneman replied that one issue with mowing was it could make invasive plant problems worse. He said they were looking at other ways to deal with vegetation growth, such as using beetles/herbicides, but both could have problems too.

Macomber asked if dredging had been considered.

Borneman replied that dredging might be used as a long-term approach. He said it might be decided to let some areas fill in over time and, in areas with high recreation

use, dredging might be considered. He said they would be looking at the whole system as a whole to determine what the best overall strategy might be.

Berla asked what were advantages of clearing out the vegetation or letting it grow.

Borneman replied that it depended on the area. He said the use of some areas would change over time when the area fills in.

Berla asked if a barrier placed on bottom of a body water had been considered for some areas.

Borneman replied yes, but it would be very expensive to use a barrier for a large body of water, such as Argo Pond.

Johnson added that the river would never disappear; nature keeps moving on and changing.

Borneman thought this issue needed a broader discussion. He said the watershed council had proposed convene the stakeholders, members from City Council, PAC and staff to come up with a more comprehensive strategy.

Macomber and Woods expressed interest in the issue and wanted to attend the meetings when they start.

Borneman said he would notify PAC when the meetings start so interested members could attend.

UPDATE ON MAYOR'S PARK MAINTENANCE TASK FORCE

Borneman appreciated the PAC members who volunteered to be on this task force. He felt good progress had been made. He said the Mayor clarified the recreation facilities would be included in the study, and the group was putting together a citizen survey to find out their perceptions of how staff is doing with park maintenance, how important different aspects are and how good of a job staff is doing on them. He said they were looking at past surveys to see if anything in them was useful to ask again. He said they would do benchmarking with peer communities; how the city compares to other cities around the country. He said they would be looking into an "Adopt a Park" program. He said a lot of communities are doing this already. He said NAP had a park steward program that might be used as model for an expanded adopt a park program. He said the Mayor said he had an intern working in his office that might be able to help research and develop the adopt-a-park program. He said the Mayor wanted a report from the task force by January 1, 2005.

Berla asked what questions were trying to be answered by this task force.

Satarino replied the task force would be trying to see how the changes that were occurring because of the reorganization affected the park system; asking was the

system working, providing the users with they need, or has there been a decline in the quality of the parks.

Berla thought it would be nice if a statement could be made regarding what staff was doing at the various parks and if expectations were being met.

Exit Johnson.

Borneman replied that staff can say this is what it costs for us to deliver this level of service and this is how this level of service compares with some other cities that are doing similar things, and here is what the public tells us about their satisfaction with that level of service, those are the kind of questions they would be looking at. He said two millages would expire within a year and next fall they would have to go before the voters again to extend them and he thought the information gathered from this process could be helpful.

Woods asked if the task force's report was going to the City Council.

Borneman replied that the Mayor wanted the report submitted to him, and he thought then the Mayor would forward it to City Council.

Woods thought the report was to be presented to City Council and asked staff to clarify whether it would go to the Mayor first or Council. She thought the report would be very valuable to everyone.

Borneman said he would get further clarification.

Macomber asked when they look at other cities, would they also be looking at the structure of those cities and the structure of their park systems and their services.

Borneman said they would try to compare apples with apples. He thought it would be hard to benchmark some things.

Macomber thought basic questions could be asked, such as how many staff do you have performing these functions, are they centralized in one department, what is their budget.

Borneman replied that in their discussions so far, they had not focused on that, but instead, they focused on measuring the outcomes; for example, at what height do you try to maintain your turf grass, and how often do you mow it, do you have a trimming cycle for trees, how often do you empty trash cans. He thought it would be easier to compare those outcomes rather than trying to look the whole parks structure.

Riseng thought getting the information Macomber mentioned was important too so we would have a better idea what kinds of communities we are comparing ourselves to.

DISCUSSION ON PAC PACKET DISTRIBUTION METHOD

Henderson asked if distribution of the PAC packet via email is still ok. She asked for suggestions.

Riseng thought that news releases could be made available at the meetings as a single copy to be passed around.

Berla asked that the packet be divided into smaller attachments and he also wanted it posted on the website before the meeting.

Satarino noted that the minutes would have to be approved before they could be placed on the website.

Henderson said she would verify the City's policy on what materials are allowed to be placed on the website.

Riseng asked if could have the packet sent on Friday morning so she can look at it on the weekend.

Henderson replied that staff would try to send the packets out on Friday mornings.

RESOLUTION TO RECOMMEND TO CITY COUNCIL
TO NAME DICKEN WOODS NATURE AREA

Henderson reported that on October 17 the Friends of Dicken Woods would present a \$50,000 donation to city of offset the millage funds used to acquire the parkland.

The resolution to name the parcel Dicken Woods Nature Area was passed unanimously.

RESOLUTION TO RECOMMEND TO CITY COUNCIL AN AMENDMENT
TO THE 2004 DNR-MNRTF ACQUISTION GRANT APPLICATION

Clark reported that the DNR reviewed the grant application submitted in April and scored it at 250 points, which was about the same score as when it was submitted last year. He said the only way to increase total by ten points was to increase the city's fund match. He proposed this to PAC and asked if PAC wanted to add another ten percent to the City's match, which would be about \$95,000, with the total purchase price being approximately \$950,000. He said the September 30 deadline could not be met so they would send the PAC resolution with a note attached stating that a City Council resolution would follow as soon as possible. He said this does not follow their rules, so if they choose to not accept the additional ten percent from the City, they can reject it.

Reneaud asked if the DNR gave any indication where the application was placed in relation to the other applications received.

Clark was not sure, but thought we were competitive, but they were reviewing about 70 across the state.

Macomber asked if Clark thought the change to the grant application should be made.

Clark replied yes.

The resolution amending the DNR-MNRTF acquisition Grant application was unanimously approved.

VOLUNTEERS FOR MILLAGE TASK FORCE MEMBERS

Henderson asked for volunteers from PAC for the Millage Task Force. She said there would be a representative from the environmental non-profits as well. She said the group would meet once a month at first and then more regularly.

REHABILITATION AND DEVELOPMENT MILLAGE PROJECT UPDATE

None.

CITY COUNCIL ITEMS UPDATE

Woods reported that at the last City Council meeting, Council approved the bylaws of the City Market Commission, purchased the Evergreen lot, and approved the bylaws of the Greenbelt Advisory Commission.

Enter Johnson.

Rodgers asked about the land south of Fuller Road.

Woods replied that City Council approved a resolution that the Mayor had put forward to have staff look at the possibility of developing the small triangular-shaped parcel on Fuller Road, directly between Fuller Road backing up to the hospital, between the railroad tracks, to see if it would be a suitable area for affordable housing.

Johnson added that the resolution asked for an RFP for affordable housing.

Satarino noted that it had not yet been determined if the site was a park area. He was assured that if the site were determined to be a park area, PAC would be included in the development process.

Woods added that currently the land was being leased by the University of Michigan and used as a parking lot. She added that Council had asked how that land had been originally purchased, whether it had been purchased with parks money. Her understanding was that no park money was used to purchase the site originally.

Johnson thought it was generally understood that the site was purchased with general fund monies, but further clarification was needed.

Henderson said she had been directed to verify where the funds came from and if it was a park site.

Johnson asked if there was a list that showed this site as part of the park system or was every parcel designated for one use or another.

Henderson replied there was a list of parcels considered part of the park system. She added that the revenue currently received from the lease goes to Parks and Recreation.

Bemish added that the site once was part of the Ann Arbor Municipal Golf Course and a remnant of a tee could still be seen up on Mitchell Field behind the Veterans Administration Hospital. She said, historically, since 1926, in City Council resolutions, the site had been part of the park system. She said the City Attorney's Office was doing a title search.

Rodgers said, regardless of its history, the site was along the Huron River and consistent with the PROS Plan, so he thought it was strange it would not be considered by PAC first as parkland before any other type of development would be considered.

Satarino thought it was a very sensitive piece of land and hoped that it was considered very carefully. He hoped PAC would be included in the decision-making regarding this site.

Exit Woods.

REPORT FROM MANAGER OF PARKS AND RECREATION SERVICES

Henderson thanked the dozens of Parks staff that helped at the Stapp Nature Area dedication last Friday.

She reported that Gallup Park was acknowledged as one of the best community parks and there would be a special reception on October 27.

REPORT FROM COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND RECREATION

None.

REPORT FROM RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION

None.

REPORT FROM ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

None.

PUBLIC COMMENTARY

None.

COMMISSION PROPOSED BUSINESS

Satarino asked staff if PAC could get the capital budget projection. He also wanted to finish the proposed changes to the land acquisition/purchasing process and asked staff to pursue this.

Riseng suggested that another item be added to the PAC agenda – Report from Greenbelt Advisory Commission. PAC supported her suggestion.

Johnson reported that GAC talked about criteria at the last meeting. He said GAC thought some type of rating scale for the different categories needed to present. He said the Ordinance was very specific on what things a parcel must have to be considered for GAC review. He said at the next GAC meeting, they would discuss a scoring system that would be more objective and quantitative. He thought the other two issues that also would need to be dealt at the next meeting with were: (1) creating some kind of catalog or survey of potentially available parcels and (2) recommending to City Council what kind of staffing was needed for GAC.

Berla asked for more information at the next meeting on playing fields, Olson Park, Swift Run Park, and the property on Lohr Road.

Riseng asked if there was more information on the City/MDOT pathway under M-14.

Clark replied that he had a conversation with the MDOT real estate staff regarding the future plans for those parcels. He indicated to MDOT the City's interest in preserving the pathway system to get from Pontiac Trail to Whitmore Lake Road and down to the Huron River. He said MDOT had no plans for the property. The real estate staff told him that

the City could pursue an easement for a bicycle path by obtaining a legal description of those parcels and presenting it to MDOT, and more than likely MDOT would approve the use of a bicycle path because there was an existing underpass to accommodate bicycles and pedestrians. He thought the pathway was doable if the City chooses to pursue it. He thought the expense would be minimal, just legal work and a survey.

CLOSED SESSION TO DEAL WITH LAND ACQUISITION ISSUES

Moved by Berla, supported by Riseng, that PAC hold a closed session to discuss land acquisition issues. Unanimously approved.

ADJOURNMENT

Satarino declared the meeting adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

Jill St. John, Secretary
10/15/04