

MINUTES

PARK ADVISORY COMMISSION

4:00 p.m. – February 17, 2004

Time: D'Anieri 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, Berauer, Cohen, D'Anieri, Macomber, Reneaud, Riseng, Rodgers, Satarino

Members Absent: None

Ex-Officio Members Present: Dishman, Henderson, Johnson, Miller

Ex-Officio Members Absent: Woods

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

Others Present: Denise Held, 3145 Baylis Drive, 971-0746

INTRODUCTIONS

Miller introduced the new Parks and Recreation Manager Karla Henderson.

PUBLIC COMMENTARY

Denise Held, 3145 Baylis Drive, hoped that Brookside pump house park would become a city park. She said the residents have used it as a park for over 50 years. She said the neighborhood has long history of maintaining the park and that the upkeep would continue, with tree trimming and removal, trash pick up and planting of flowers. She offered her husband's and her help as liaisons to coordinate between the Parks and Recreation Department and the Brookside neighborhood to help with planting, trimming and getting a group of neighbors together for specific projects. She said she already plants and maintains the flowerboxes located in the park.

Berla asked Held if she lobbied the township to donate the land to city for a park. She responded she had not.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

- a. Minutes of January 20, 2004 – Moved by Satarino, supported by Berla, and passed unanimously by voice vote.
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PUBLIC HEARING – 2004 MICHIGAN DNR GRANT APPLICATION

No speakers. Public Hearing Closed.

DISCUSSION ON PURCHASE OF BROOKSIDE WELL SITES

Sue McCormick said Pittsfield Township was the owner of the proposed park parcels. She said the township would be losing tax revenue for 55 parcels that would be annexed. She did not think it was usual to ask the township to donate land for a park. She said she did ask the township if it would donate the land to the city. She said the township wanted to sell the parcels to help offset the cost of the transition of the citizens from the township to the city. She said the township was willing to sell the land for less than market value if it would be used as a park. She said the township would dedicate the proceeds of the sale to the residents to help offset some of the costs of the city utilities.

Berauer asked why the township would do this.

McCormick said the township realizes it cannot guarantee that it will be able to provide water in the future because the well does not meet current requirements, so it wants to help residents make the transition now to the city before the well fails. She said the cost of providing city water and sewer to each parcel in the neighborhood was \$27,000 and that cost does not include the on-site costs associated with abandonment of the existing septic fields and construction of new sewer lines from the house to the street and those costs are estimated to be from \$3,000 to \$10,000 per parcel. She said the township had looked at ways it could ease the burden on the residents of transitioning from the township to the city. She said the county had allocated \$270,000 in CDBG funds toward this neighborhood for the on-site costs.

Satarino said another existing park was available for use by this neighborhood. He thought the parks funds were as precious as other funds. He thought purchasing the site would be setting a bad precedent. He said the city would have to spend \$50,000-\$70,000 for improvements after the land were purchased as park. He did not think the acquisition funds should be used to defer anyone's costs. He thought the township would get more from this than the city. He said the township would be getting many new residents in other parts of the township to replace these residents for tax purposes. He said if the property were donated, he would support its acceptance as a city park.

McCormick stated that the township residents currently paid all the utility charges and an assessment to keep the well in working order. She said the township would also be forgiving the assessment for all township residents that agree to annex to the city.

D'Anieri stated that most land acquisition discussions were done behind closed doors because dollar amounts were involved. He thought, since much discussion had already occurred at past meetings regarding the purchase of this site, PAC could now say no to its purchase, say yes to its purchase, or express an interest in having the site as a park, but not at the cost discussed. He thought that if a different course of action were desired than what had been decided, then a closed meeting should occur to discuss it.

Cohen asked how urgent a decision was needed.

Johnson replied that a vote of PAC was taken earlier in the week because City Council would be voting on this purchase tonight.

McCormick added that City Council also would be acting on approving the use of set aside monies to assist affordable housing to secure the County's CDBG funds that would help offset the utility costs for the neighborhood.

Riseng thought that most neighborhood parks cost more per acre than other types of parks. She supported the purchase of the land for a park. She noted that Parks staff had reported a need for a park in this area and it was already used as a park. She asked staff if the use of email by PAC members to vote was allowed under the open meetings act.

Miller said she would contact City Attorney's Office regarding this.

Berla would like the City Attorney's opinion on what were considered appropriate procedures. He wanted to hear from the City Attorney at the next PAC meeting. He did not think PAC should think about anything but whether this site should be purchased as a park or not. He would like PAC to decide now if it wanted the site to be a park and to make an offer.

D'Anieri thought PAC could write a resolution now and vote on it today. He suggested PAC continue with other items on the agenda and come back to this after a resolution has been written.

Satarino thought the neighbors should be officially asked what they wanted. He thought that should be the next step.

Johnson thought PAC should decide if the parcel was worthy to be considered a park, not the neighbors.

PAC decided to discuss the matter later in the meeting after a resolution was developed by staff.

REHABILITATION AND DEVELOPMENT MILLAGE PROJECT UPDATE

Macomber asked if playground equipment was built with treated lumber. She said it had been determined that treated lumber leaches toxins throughout its life.

Kuras replied that the City did not use treated lumber for playground equipment anymore. She said there might be some treated lumber equipment still out there, but they would be replaced. She said the oldest are replaced first.

Berla asked about the proposed tunnel under the railroad tracks in the arboretum.

Kuras said a feasibility study would be done in the near future to see if two tunnels could be constructed. She said the greenway plan calls for connections at both ends of the City: one would connect the arboretum to Gallup Park and the other would connect Bandemer Park to Huron River Drive. She said this has been a goal for more than a decade. She thought she would have recommendations from a consultant by the fall.

Cohen asked if there would be a new map developed showing the new trails?

Kuras replied that it was something staff would like to do.

CITY COUNCIL ITEMS UPDATE

No questions.

DISCUSSION ON LAND ACQUISITION OPTIONS

Miller briefly reviewed the memorandum regarding acquisition options for PAC. She said it was a tool for PAC to use when looking at various options for land acquisitions.

Continuation of Discussion of Purchase of Brookside Well Sites:

The following resolution was moved by Berla and seconded by Riseng:

Whereas, PAC discussed the purchase of three parcels totaling .70 acres that are currently used as well sites for the Brookside neighborhood;

Whereas, the three parcels currently function as an open space/park;

Whereas, the three parcels meet the requirements in the existing PROS Plan for a neighborhood park;

Resolved, the PAC recommends purchase of these three parcels for use as a neighborhood park utilizing land acquisition funds for the amount for \$120,000.

Cohen suggested that PAC discuss the merits of site as a park first and then discuss its cost.

D'Anieri said the site was identified in the PROS Plan as the kind of parcel that should be acquired for recreation, it fit the kind of dedication of parkland that would be asked of a private developer, it fit the expectation of the PROS Plan that a neighborhood park be within ¼ mile of access to city residents, and the Parks staff recommendation had been that it was a parcel that should be acquired as a neighborhood park.

Macomber she said since Clinton Park was within ¼ mile of the neighborhood, maybe PAC should look into making that park more accessible to this neighborhood, maybe with the installation of a traffic light. She thought it might be more cost effective to make the other parks near this neighborhood more accessible than to purchase another park.

Miller said other city departments would have to be consulted to provide information regarding installation of a traffic light to make access to Clinton Park more accessible.

Johnson said traffic lights cost a lot and are hard to get approval to add.

Berauer asked if crosswalks cost a lot.

Rynard replied that a traffic signal would cost more than the \$120,000 price to purchase the land, that school zones get cross walks but it might be hard to get one at that location, and that traffic counts would have to be done to justify installation of both traffic signals or cross walks.

Cohen supported purchase of the land as a city park. She did not think crossing Stone School Road to go to Clinton Park was a wise thing to encourage.

Satarino did not think city should pay for the parcel. He did not support purchase of the site for parkland. He thought the township should donate the land to city for parkland. He felt Clinton Park was available to this neighborhood as a neighborhood park.

Riseng felt this park would be used a lot by the neighborhood.

Johnson said currently the land was not officially a park in the township; it was a part of the township's utilities department with a pumping station located on the site.

Berla wanted this land to be a park and he only needed to determine what it was worth.

Macomber said the site would be, per acre, one of the most expensive parcels the city would purchase. She wondered why it was so expensive and if it was not purchased by the city, what would occur with the site.

D'Anieri said \$120,000 was ½ the fair market value.

Berla said lots that are developable within the City and have utilities and roads to serve them are quite expensive.

Satarino said, based on the appraisal, the lots would be worth about \$70,000/lot if sold to be developed and that cost did not include the \$30,000/lot cost for city utilities. He felt the lots were overpriced.

Satarino proposed an amendment to the resolution to change the last resolved clause to read: "Resolved, the PAC recommends against purchase of these three parcels for use as a neighborhood park." There was no second to this proposed amendment.

Vote on proposed resolution: Berla, Cohen, D'Anieri, Macomber, Riseng – yeas; Berauer, Reneaud, Rodgers, Satarino – nays. Resolution passed.

DISCUSSION ON NAMING RECENTLY ACQUIRED PARK PROPERTY

Miller said she placed this item on the agenda so PAC would start thinking about what it wanted to name the recently purchased parks of Traverwood, Sunset Brooks, and Dicken Woods. She said that William Martin indicated that he wanted to name Traverwood after his parents, but he had not told her yet what that name would be.

RESOLUTION REGARDING 2004 MICHIGAN DNR GRANT APPLICATION

Miller said this grant application would be to re-apply for the purchase of land for park use adjacent to Dolph Park that had been denied last year. She said all indications suggest that it would be a strong candidate to receive funds this year. She said the new estimated cost of \$950,000 was based on a recent appraisal of a portion of the site.

Moved by Riseng, supported by Rodgers, and passed unanimously by a voice vote.

PROCLAMATION FOR JOE MUDAR, SR.

D'Anieri read the proclamation.

Steve Sheldon shared fond memories of Joe Mudar, Sr. and described his contribution to the adult hockey program and the Veterans Memorial Park Ice Arena.

REPORT ON CHANGES TO CHAPTER 40 OF CITY CODE

Borneman briefly described the proposed changes to Chapter 40. He said action by City Council had been postponed so enforcement of the new regulations would not occur until the summer of 2005. He said enforcement would be complaint driven and handled through Community Standards Unit in the Police Department.

REPORT ON OLSON PARK (FORMERLY NORTHEAST AREA PARK)

Dehring reported that the development of Olson Park was a joint project between the County Drain Commissioner's Office and the City Parks and Recreation Department. He said the existing pond was part of the storm water detention for Traver Creek, with the City owning the southern part and the County owning the northern part. He noted that development of the park started in May 2003, and the City had received a grant from MDNR and the county had received a grant from MDEQ to develop portions of the site. He said there would be a 14-space parking lot, 2 small-sized soccer fields, a basketball court, and existing mountain bike trails would be enhanced and new ones added. He said there would be a 54-foot diameter picnic shelter, which would be the largest in the City's park system. He said there would be paved pathways within the park, parallel to Dhu Varren Road, and around the existing pond; there would be an accessible fishing platform; and the installation of a recycled bridge across Traver Creek. He said a non-traditional playground would be constructed with a stone climbing wall and stone sculpture. He said about 53 different woody plant materials would be installed at the park.

Berla asked how large the soccer fields would be and when they would be ready.

Dehring said the fields would be 175 feet by 330 feet, which would meet the smaller size field criteria for adults and they will be irrigated by pumping water from the pond and may be available in the spring of 2005. He said portable toilets would be used until permanent facilities can be funded and constructed.

Riseng was concerned about possible conflicts between mountain bikers and hikers. She asked if having one trail dedicated to hikers only had been looked at.

Dehring said there would be 5 miles of trails total for multiple-use.

Riseng added sharing trails did not work on the Potawatomi Trail and hikers were not using the trail as much as in the past, but she did not know if it was possible to keep a trail system for just one type of use.

Dehring said that it could be considered as the plans develop for the trails.

REPORT ON ARGO PARK PROJECT

Postponed.

UPDATE ON PROS PLAN

Kuras reported that a consultant had been hired to conduct a telephone survey. She said an RFP would be sent out to select a consultant to update the PROS Plan.

Berauer informed PAC that there was an opportunity for members to be a part of the subcommittee.

Kuras said she would involve PAC members in specific areas of the PROS Plan later in the process.

REPORT FROM MANAGER OF PARKS AND RECREATION SERVICES

Miller reminded PAC members that part 2 of the PAC orientation was scheduled for Wednesday, March 10, at 5:30 p.m. and the park facilities tour was scheduled for Saturday, March 6, at 9:00 a.m. She announced that the first hour of the March 2 meeting would be a public meeting and the proposed 2004-05 parks budget reductions would be discussed and the second hour of the March 2 meeting would be a closed session of the LAC to discuss possible land acquisitions.

REPORT FROM COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND RECREATION

Larry Dishman announced that he had been asked by Sara Aeschbach to represent her for the next several months.

REPORT FROM RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION

None.

PUBLIC COMMENTARY

None.

COMMISSION PROPOSED BUSINESS

Berauer would like the City Attorney to address PAC regarding protocol and easement questions.

D'Anieri thought PAC members should forward questions to staff that they would like answered by the City Attorney prior to a meeting with him so he may prepare his answers.

Miller asked PAC to email its questions to her and she would forward them to the City Attorney either by email or a memorandum.

Satarino said the site plan for the redevelopment of the landfill site was not fixed in stone. He thought there still would be a choice regarding the location of active playfields.

Miller said a public meeting process and planning process would occur regarding the development of the active recreation uses. She said a meeting would occur tomorrow with the township regarding the maintenance facility, not the playfields.

Cohen asked if any parks-related questions have occurred at the budget meetings being held around town.

Miller replied that nothing specifically parks-related has been asked yet. She would inform PAC if any questions occur.

Cohen asked about ash tree removals.

Rynard said removal of ash trees was a big issue. She said grant money and private donations had been received and about 3,000 trees would need to be removed this year.

ADJOURNMENT

D'Anieri declared the meeting adjourned at 6:04 p.m.

Jill St. John, Secretary
3/10/04