



PARK ADVISORY COMMISSION

Minutes August 12, 2003

Members Present: C.Riseng R.Curry
 J.Satarino L.Langmore
 P.D'Anieri J.D'Amour

Members Absent: J.Cohen

Ex-officio Members Present: R.Johnson J.Miller
 S.Aeschbach

Ex-officio Members Absent: W.Woods

Staff Present: J.Dehring A.Kuras
 K.Bemish T.Rynard

Others Present: Susan Miller 205 Westover St., Ann Arbor

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:05 p.m. by Interim Chairperson Phil D'Anieri.

SECRETARY CALLS ROLL

The secretary called the roll, with results as shown above.

INTRODUCTION – Interim Chairperson Phil D'Anieri introduced new PAC member Linda Berauer.

PUBLIC COMMENTARY

Susan Miller of 205 Westover St., Ann Arbor addressed the Commission regarding re-introducing conversation of a City-owned off-leash area; either a separate park or within current parkland. A recommendation in the PROS Plan has not been pursued. The Canine Social Club has organized to work on this. There are a large number of dog owners whose use of city parks is only for exercising dogs and they feel their recreational needs are being ignored, even though they pay taxes. The liability issue is not persuasive. The city handles many issues with liabilities. Ms. Miller asked that PAC take serious look at this issue.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES OF JULY 15, 2003

Acceptance of minutes moved by Roy Curry, supported by John Satarino and passed unanimously by voice vote.

ADDED TO THE AGENDA: THE "GREENBELT" PROPOSAL – MAYOR JOHN HIEFTJE

Mayor Hieftje explained he is attending to get feedback on his Greenbelt proposal. Basically, the principal thing he works on is the quality of life in Ann Arbor, which includes many components; U of M, business, and a lot with citizens taking part in running the city. People love Ann Arbor for its parks and open space and come from all around to use them. Ann Arbor is one of the top-ranked cities in the country. Without this quality of life you cannot attract top people. We don't have an ocean or a mountain range, but to have great quality of life. Mr. Hieftje stated he sees two threats and the battle against sprawl is one. We want greenspace surrounding the city. Farming is still a very vibrant profession, as evidenced by visiting the Ann Arbor Farmers Market. There is also a threat to our watershed. Since the 1970's the improvement it has been dramatic, but recent years has leveled off due to sprawl and runoff. We are seeing a degradation of water supply. The best way to protect the watershed is to protect sensitive lands around it. Take a drive up Whitmore Lake Rd., there are 7,000 homes planned for that corridor, with no infrastructure and no utilities. He has been working with township leaders and talked about these issues and now see a recommendation coming down from Michigan's Governor to set some farmland aside. We must do this now or the horse is out of the barn. It may be our last chance to do something. We live in a larger region and we need to protect the watershed and greenspace around it. Back in 1988, voters passed the ballot issue of acquisition of parkland. In 1999, citizens gathered 10,000 signatures in 4-5 weeks and this was on the ballot again and supported (.5 mil). This proposal changes it by stretching it out for 30 years and allows us to buy the development rights of parcels in the townships. Development rights is the difference between development cost and agriculture cost. A lot of times farmers give something to make this happen because they don't want to be forced. The expectation would be that we would pay 1/3 of the price, along with a State program. We could put stipulations in, i.e. never factory-farmed, which is devastating on the watershed. We could buy land for a lot of uses. We could go anywhere; if we felt there is a piece of land that would affect us, we could buy that land. This would provide more funds for park acquisition. 2/3 of the funds would be targeted for out of the city purchases, 1/3 within the city. This stretches the millage out into the future and secures our park system. Mayor Hieftje stated he views this as one of not the most important things he has ever worked on. In Portland, Oregon, Boulder, Colorado and Lexington, Ky everyone marvels at the greenways they have carved out. This will leave a legacy for our children. No matter what we do with the density, if we don't buy the land, it will be developed into strip malls, housing, condominiums, etc. The Homebuilders Association is the only opponent that he can see. The townships, real estate agents and affordable housing representatives attended a meeting. No one is building affordable housing in the townships. There is a lot of synergy here. We do not consider this a land grab, but

an idea to work cooperatively to save some open space. Once this land is covered by pavement and sprawl, it will never come back. Linda Berauer stated she agrees with the goals of proposal, but wonders how the people of the townships are going to share in the funding of this. Mayor Hieftje added that the Governor wants to help fund this and would look for townships to help fund this. Pittsfield Township is already doing this. John Satarino stated he agrees with the proposal and views it as a historical, ground-saving opportunity and thinks if approved that it would be a gift to us all. Mr. Satarino commented further that the current Land Acquisition Millage has 2 years left so where would this proposal begin. Mayor Hieftje explained that this would terminate the current millage. Acquisitions made within the city will remain the same. The funding mechanism will stay the same via a tax bill. A new commission would be formed, similar to Washtenaw County's, to study the issues and make recommendations and very likely someone from PAC would be on it. James D'Amour asked if this would provide for passive and recreational needs. Mayor Hieftje responded that it would. It is a great opportunity in terms of some long-term acquisitions. Mr. D'Amour added that, as representative of the Recreation Advisory Commission, he view this as providing an opportunity to look at strategic recreational opportunities. Catherine Riseng stated the proposal is exciting far-reaching. She shares concerns about the townships' participation and it could be a weakness in the proposal if not worded correctly in the proposal and on the ballot. It is good to hear that the townships are changing. Mayor Hieftje commented that this only involves willing sellers. We can spend where we want to. We will be looking for the township match, but he is for it even if they weren't going to contribute a penny. Do we want to drive outside the limits and see another city? Mayor Hieftje stated he thinks people in the townships want the same thing we do. This is not much different than the county proposal. Roy Curry stated this is a very timely proposal, in what PAC has been doing over the years and suggested that guidelines need to be put in writing. Mayor Hieftje responded that we could prohibit construction of a factory farm and would be able to say that it needs to be open space of agriculture land forever. If we ever needed to vacate, we could sell those development rights. We could also put in some things for watershed protection by designating the land as important to preserve the watershed. Mr. Curry asked if PAC would be an advisory body and the Mayor responded that it would, as a member of PAC would be on the board. Linda Berauer commented that thinks it's a wonderful proposal, but she is anticipating some opposition by those that say they do a lot of financial supporting for those not in Ann Arbor. It is important to word it correctly, so that they know they aren't the only ones being taxed. Mr. Hieftje explained there would be a resolution that will talk about the ordinance to be developed. Ballot language is only 100 words. We can't write ordinance until we have authority from the voters. Ms. Berauer questioned the role and composition of the new commission. The Mayor responded that with a supermajority from council, you could be on one now. If there are participating townships, they would have a seat. The commission would be created by the ordinance. Washtenaw County's program is modest and stretches over the county. The city's program would be directly around Ann Arbor. Ms. Berauer asked if the ordinance would include the guidelines and criteria of the ratio of our money and any partner's money and the Mayor responded that those targets would all be there. It would be set up very much like the Park Advisory Commission. The Mayor commented

that he looks at it that townships are sometimes involved in development and successes in our community. The city is helping to create the sprawl problem and we should be willing to give relief to this problem if a farmer wants to sell and there is no control from the township. Our intention is to pay 1/3 of the costs. Townships are being developed against their will, by developers pursuing in court. People are moving into the townships due to the success of Ann Arbor and we don't want to see wall-to-wall sprawl. Ann Arbor Township is raising money and will be able to participate.

CURRENT PARK REHAB AND DEVELOPMENT MILLAGE PROJECT STATUS REPORT

Jayne Miller presented a report, which is a result of a resolution passed by PAC last month, to provide information they need. She asked for feedback for form and content. Ms. Miller explained that projects will stay on the list until completed. John Satarino asked if the Liberty Plaza project improvement. Is complete. Amy Kuras responded that it is. Mr. Satarino remarked that his understanding was that our outlay was going to be \$50,000. Ms. Kuras advised that is correct, with an additional \$25,000 from development contributions. Mr. Satarino commented that he noticed stains before and asked if this will be better material. Ms. Kuras advised it will certainly be a durable material. Linda Berauer commented that it would be helpful to specify the amount of funding targeted for the projects. Phil D'Anieri suggested just totaling all grants and not specify each one; note how much from the millage and how much from other sources. Roy Curry asked about the NE Area Park budget. Ms. Kuras responded that funding for Phase I now is all in place and then in a couple of years, with more millage money, we are hoping to put in restroom facilities. All the clearing that is to occur has been completed. We don't want to intrude into the woodland. Ms. Miller added that the report is a work in progress, so let her know what needs there are.

Jeff Dehring reported that the play equipment contract has been submitted for approval by City Council for Las Vegas, White Oak and Buhr Parks. At Buhr we had meetings and a community survey. Items that came forward was a pathway that would go through the park, to Allen School, to the County Farm Park, tennis courts and a playground area in front. The play equipment is dated and needs updating. We also need to move the play area at Buhr back or to another location because it is close to the drive. Mr. Dehring is hoping to convert the existing area into parking. Some of the money will be used for tennis court refurbishing. One of the court areas will be a practice area, with a backboard. A meeting took place at Dicken School regarding Las Vegas Park and we have found that the play equipment needs updating. They use the soccer field for youth programs and we will preserve it for that. A survey indicated that trash during the soccer programs needs to be taken care, a path through the park to access the basketball court, a play area and children's pathway to Dicken School. The drinking fountain will be replaced and moved. Some small berming will occur to allow spectator them to sit up somewhat and watch games and provide separation between the field and play area. Some trees have been moved. White Oak Park is in the northern part of the city off Newport Rd., in Newport Creek Subdivision. It is a wooded

area, approximately 3 acres in size. A survey was sent to the neighborhood and two public meetings were held. There was tension over development in regards to putting a play structure in. The survey results indicated a lot of neighbors wanted one, with a pathway and maybe a bench. A lot more people came to the second meeting and a small structure for younger children was acceptable. There will be a woodchip path and a bench or two. John Satarino asked if it is a paved path in Las Vegas Park and Mr. Dehring responded that it is. Phil D'Anieri asked what it means when stated that playground equipment needs replacing. Mr. Dehring answered that the equipment is old, it is in bad condition, and the materials used have seen its lifespan. We also look at ADA compliance and safety requirements or guidelines. These things are recognized through the inspection process.

CURRENT CITY COUNCIL PARKS ACTION ITEMS

Jayne Miler reviewed the list of action items. At the August 18th council meeting we will have a contract for installation of reinforcement of the roof structure at Veterans Memorial Arena so that it meets code. In addition, Council was to act on a purchase order for playground equipment at White Oak, Buhr and Las Vegas Parks. James D'Amour asked what is going in at Windemere Park. Jeff Dehring responded that a pathway is being made, past the tennis courts, and continues to Wynnstone then skirts along the north side. The need for this was identified through the survey, public meetings and must meet ADA requirements. The play structure is out-dated and needs replacing. They will be doing some significant replacement of equipment there. On the NE corner of the tennis court there is always a problem of mowing because the ground gets saturated, attributed to runoff of the tennis court. There will be a no-mow area, seeded with plant materials to help take care of the wet area. It will not be an area that will influence the play values there.

ORIENTATION TO REHAB AND DEVELOPMENT

Jayne Miller reviewed the materials in the packet is, when the Rehab and Development Millage was on the ballot in 2000, which is used as a guide. A draft CIP is also included. Amy Kuras explained that the millage and fact sheet is the planners' work plan. Both planner are entirely funded from this millage. The PROS Plan culminated with development of the CIP. Staff went through neighborhood parks and prioritized the need for rehab and came up with a plan. This is basically the schedule and an attempt at the cost of the improvements. Jeff Dehring added that we are faced with increases as contractor's prices go up. Ms. Miller commented many of projects are very specific to a particular project. Those under NAP are a little more complex and don't happen right away. We try to find matching money to help stretch the dollars. At times we have to wait and if we don't get a grant, we look at an alternative plan, such as the interim skate park at Buhr. Mr. Dehring commented that if we find that we can pursue it toward the development such as a skate park, the money remains there. Phil D'Anieri asked if it is in the CIP where you get really specific. Ms. Miller responded that it mirrors the PROS Plan and allows for changes. Details get worked out with public meetings and input. Ms. Kuras added that sometimes development contributions come in, such as in

downtown area where there is no open space. We get a lot of free parkland from the developers, who recognize the importance of this. Mr. D'Anieri asked if there are major items within the first two years of the millage that aren't done. Ms. Kuras answered that there is a lot of problem with the Gallup project, which she is negotiating, and will try one more time for an RFP for the tunnel. We would also like to implement the Bandemer Tunnel. Linda Berauer asked if we are not getting a lot of response from an RFP. Ms. Kuras advised that the railroad has provided a list of contractors that can handle the project. Jayne Miller added that we are working with Pittsfield Township on soccer fields and it is a complicated project. Linda Berauer stated there was a site plan developed for the landfill and asked if we can we use it. Ms. Kuras answered we will use it as a framework and revisit the plan. James D'Amour asked if a maintenance facility will still be going in there. Ms. Miller answered yes and we are hoping we can accomplish additional fields there also. Mr. Satarino related that on the summary sheet, if he adds it all up the sum is very large and asked if someone has looked at anticipated millage revenue. Ms. Miller responded that we look at this during the budget process; what didn't get done and those that are likely to get done. The goal is to try and stay on track with the projects that we have. Mr. Satarino asked what happens with the difference between what is expected to be spent and the actual. Ms. Miller explained that any remaining fund balance stays in the fund to be used in the future. We like to use Targets of Opportunity for grant matches. Catherine Riseng noted that Bluffs Park is listed under active parks and asked if it really is planned for an active park. Ms. Kuras answered that it is not an active park but there was no place else to list it. Mr. Dehring added that they have moved some of the neighborhood parks around due to the conditions of things and having to be done immediately. Mr. Satarino asked if there is a list of anticipated improvements that are not funded. Ms. Miller explained that these come up at times and we try to use Targets of Opportunity for that funding, such as at the Farmers Market which has potential significant expenses.

STATUS OF GREENVIEW/WOODLAND SITE (By Pioneer High School)

Dave Borneman reported there was a park that was removed in 1985. Tom Raynes, previous Park Planning and Development Manager recommended in 1986 to put a playground in there and staff believe putting one in makes a lot of sense. There is no money set aside for this so we need to see if this could be accomplished with funds from Targets of Opportunity or elsewhere. Mr. D'Anieri asked if we have an idea of how unique a problem this is because he would be a little hesitant in doing this, before we identify citywide needs. Mr. Borneman responded there is a list of projects laid out by the park planners that spells it out. Mr. Satarino asked if there is a conflict in terms of potential damage. Mr. Borneman stated it is mostly an open space field area. We will need to take into account that we don't actually own the property. We lease it from the schools, and would need their blessing. Bob Johnson asked how we are leasing from others. Mr. Borneman responded that there are a couple like this, i.e. Brown Park. We also have some property we own that are leased by the county, i.e., the Arboretum, and the University does all the maintenance there. Ms. Berauer asked if the leasing is an insignificant amount in terms of money. Mr. Borneman responded that it is a \$1.00/year.

PROS PLAN

Jayne Miller advised that the PROS Plan is very in depth and it is now time to be updated again. They would like some members from PAC to help develop the PROS Plan. Linda Langmore stated that when it was worked on originally, they talked about updating yearly and always had 2-3 PAC members involved. Ms. Kuras stated the first task is the survey and she has been talking with Wendy Rampson in Planning to target the big issues coming up now, determine sections that really need updating and those that don't need so much. Ms. Miller asked that members interested in doing this e-mail her before PAC's next regular meeting. The time commitment varies in terms of your interest level. It will be somewhat less than the last one. The PROS Committee consists of a representative from the Planning Department, from schools, Parks and Recreation staff and PAC. John Satarino volunteered to be a part of the PROS Plan Committee.

PARKS AND RECREATION SERVICES MANAGER'S REPORT

Ms. Miller reminded everyone that Ron Olson's party is September 18, 2003 at Gallup Park from 3 p.m. – 5 p.m. We will be doing some things to surprise him.

SCHOOLS REPRESENTATIVE REPORT – NO REPORT

RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

James D'Amour reported that this is his last meeting on PAC and wants everyone to know it a lot of fun and a learning experience. He has been appointed to the City Planning Commission. RAC will elect a new Chairperson on Tuesday, September 2, to elect new Chair. Mr. D'Amour would like to see the PAC/RAC operating agreement completed. Roy Curry added that he won't be able to attend the PAC meeting next month UAW contract negotiations at Ford. That would be his last meeting and he added that it has been fun and PAC is a successful organization. Linda Langmore, whose term is also ending stated she has really enjoyed her time on PAC and hopes to stay involved in some other way. She also served on the PAC/RAC sub-committee and hopes PAC can recruit to take her place.

Roy Curry moved to adjourn to closed session, supported by Linda Langmore and approved unanimously by voice vote.