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PARK ADVISORY COMMISSION

Minutes October 21, 2003

Members Present:	J.Reneaud L.Berauer J.Satarino	T.Berla P.D'Anieri B.Rodgers
Members Absent:	J.Cohen	C.Riseng
Ex-officio Members Present:	R.Johnson	S.Aeschbach
Ex-officio Members Absent:	J.Miller	W.Woods
Staff Present:	J.Dehring M.Warba T.Rynard	D.Borneman K.Bemish
Others Present:	Denise Held 3145 Baylis Dr. Judith Judge 1500 Barnard Rd.	971-0746 663-9975

CALL TO ORDER

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

SECRETARY CALLS ROLL

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

PUBLIC COMMENTARY

Denise Held of 3145 Baylis Dr., Ann Arbor, addressed the Commission to recommend the acquisition at Stone School Rd. and Baylis. Ms. Held noted that there was an ice rink there at one time, neighbors used to take care of mowing, neighborhood activities are scheduled there and there now is a Halloween get-together night. It's a nice open area where you can walk your dog. It is a good location for the Ann Arbor Public Schools' bus stop for the neighborhood. Children could wait there and would stay out of the street. Ms. Held read a letter from the neighborhood and stated they hopefully will be getting signatures for PAC's next meeting in support of the acquisition. The Brookside Subdivision has three parcels of land at Stone School and Baylis. There are 54 homes that are

being annexed gradually and will be getting City of Ann Arbor water and sewer. The Malletts Creek library patrons will also enjoy it. Ms. Held stated that residents would like it maintained as an open park space. John Satarino asked if this is a dedicated park through the site plan agreement process. Ms. Held responded it is not. The parcels house the current pumps, well, etc. When they go to City water they won't use the well.

Judy Judge of 1500 Barnard Rd. addressed the Commission on behalf of the Friends of Greenview Park, which is 27 acres, located north of Scio Church Rd. The property is maintained as a City park but is owned by the Ann Arbor Schools. Their group, which was formed around 10 years ago, has gotten more active in terms of preserving this property. The status of this park, as well as others owned by the Ann Arbor Schools, is a concern because the schools are looking at these properties to possibly build on or sell. Ms. Judge stated that PAC looked at this property, Scarlett Woods and others earlier and their group would like PAC to keep an eye on what the school is doing. Ms. Judge also thanked Natural Area Preservation for helping them with their maintenance efforts.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 16, 2003

Acceptance of minutes moved by John Satarino, supported by Tim Berla and passed unanimously by voice vote.

REHABILITATION AND DEVELOPMENT MILLAGE PROJECT UPDATE

John Satarino inquired as to the status of the Argo Livery Study and wondered if there are severe structural problems. Amy Kuras responded that about 30 people responded to the questionnaire. The building is not habitable and we are looking at what to do. One person came to the public meeting. We want to see the site more organized; construct a smaller livery building, continue the bike path by it, and additional parking space. The current building is sinking into the river. Mr. Satarino asked if there is a ballpark figure on the cost. Ms. Kuras answered that there is funding dedicated for shoreline restoration and other components. The site itself will not change that much. Mr. Satarino inquired about the effort to rewrite the PROS plan and having this farmed out to a consultant. Ms. Kuras advised it was a reality check. With short staffing they don't have time to work on the PROS Plan and get projects also. She meets with Washtenaw County periodically and their planner had hired a consultant, who told her that it's worth every penny and a very reasonable cost. We have hired consultants in the past. Funding will come from the Rehabilitation and Development Millage. Mr. Satarino asked if the downtown pathway is being seriously considered as part of the overall plan. Ms. Kuras indicated this is mentioned periodically and she needs to get up to speed on what is occurring with this. A consultant was hired to look at an alternative transportation plan but no public meetings have been held yet. Dave Borneman announced that there is a public meeting tonight on White Oak Park at 6:30 p.m.

CITY COUNCIL ITEMS UPDATE

Dave Borneman stated that reports are in the packet with any changes in italics. Items going to council include the November 6, 2003 Sunset Brooks resolution as approved at PAC's last meeting.

ADDED RESOLUTION – TIM BERLA - REGARDING FIELDPLEX

Tim Berla stated that when he started serving on RAC, a couple of things were of main interest to him; one was fields and their distribution and the other was getting more fields and getting fields to be in better condition. The purpose of this resolution is not to decide the location, but to say there is a need and those who know more about it should take action to get us more fields and have them be in good condition. So RAC passed the resolution at their last meeting and it will eventually go on to the School Board and City Council. Bob Johnson asked if RAC isn't a joint city/schools entity. Mr. Berla responded that it is but RAC feels it's not appropriate for the schools to put money into this. The fields would be for other than school teams. Mr. Berla stated he doesn't think the schools have any parcels of land that could be used for fields. Fuller Park fields are the main ones. At Fuller, everyone got accommodated this year but didn't get everything they wanted. The Ann Arbor Youth Soccer Association has 2,000 children that play. Teams practice where they can at the schools, where there is no reservation

system. Terry Rynard advised there was a process started last year and they have another process going before RAC in the next couple of months. We have 20% of what is needed, if you count practices, etc. Part of problem is field conditions. We can't rest them enough. Teams practice where they can find a flat place. Phil D'Anieri asked what the mix of usage is; how much of the capacity is City and how much is schools. Ms. Rynard responded that the City can only provide fields for about 20% of the games they play. Mr. Berla added there are so many different programs, middle schools/high schools and Recreation and Education, that the more premiere programs don't have scheduled practices. A lot of people use the University fields when they can but they sometimes get kicked off. They also use Concordia College, Washtenaw Community and Wide World of Sports. Mr. D'Anieri commented that it's hard to get a grip on what the City's obligation is. We are one of several providers. Mr. Berla stated RAC feels the City is under-served and it is a great time to tackle this. More fields would ease up pressure on Fuller. RAC didn't talk a lot about the money but they are hopeful there is a way to run the fieldplex without a large operational cost. Possible fees can cover the cost of operation. There is a real stream of money coming in. John Satarino stated the resolution is a little premature. Mr. Berla responded that there was a commitment five years ago to do this through a PROS Plan. Mr. Satarino remarked that this would be a multi-million dollar investment by the City and Township participants are also using these fields. Non-residents pay more for use of a facility. Mr. Satarino asked for a written report of existing fields available, who owns them, who manages them and who pays the maintenance costs. We need to determine if we are fine for providing City use, but not when we include Township uses. He understands the City never gets back the cost for maintaining the fields. We need to construct a financial framework. Mr. Satarino asked what RAC will do in providing the management of the fields, etc. We need to have something written down before a resolution like this is voted on. Mr. Berla responded that it sounds like a study is wanted and nothing will happen. RAC doesn't have money to have a study done and he doesn't know how to get this started. It is frustrating to not see additional fields being made and he sees the need for this to get moving. Mr. Satarino reiterated that it has to start with gathering that information. Sara Aeschbach commented that groups that are having trouble getting fields are independent groups but RAC has taken this on because they see the definite need. We want a community that will enjoy sports. There are 40-60 year olds who play soccer. They use some City parks for soccer programs and lacrosse but for the most part they use other fields and don't use Fuller Park. RAC doesn't have the resources to get the study done. Mr. D'Anieri advised the Parks Department is commencing the rewrite of the PROS Plan and this assessment could be addressed in that. Ms. Aeschbach stated the last PROS Plan did outline this as a need and suggested moving forward with some fields but it was not a high enough priority. Mr. D'Anieri stated PAC needs some basic factual questions answered. Dave Borneman added that this is reasonable to do that through the PROS Plan. Bob Johnson commented that RAC is saying it is impossible to write a report outlining that this is needed and yet they are saying

they know there is a need so there has to be some data. Ms. Aeschbach responded that last year when use of Fuller by any group was opened up, there was an expression of public interest in more field space. Any group would say they have trouble getting fields. Mr. Berla added that Terry Rynard polled all the groups and got what they would want to use. He wants this to be an action thing. He may get soccer people to call City Council but he doesn't like to go that route. Bob Johnson advised that 12 fields would take around 20-25 acres and that it is probable that this has been neglected, but to say today that we will do a fieldplex would be inappropriate at this time. Mr. Berla asked if Ms. Rynard could do a report of her understanding of the needs and the costs of maintaining the fields. Ms. Rynard agreed to do a report by next month. Mr. Berla stated he's hoping to come up with what it would cost to purchase the land, develop it and operate it. Mr. Satarino remarked that there is a possibility that the City already owns land, but still must talk with the Townships to coordinate this. Having fields in one location is good, but he wonders if someone on the north side of town is going to travel to the other side of town for this. Mr. Berla answered that adults always want to have all their games at the same time. The fieldplex would enhance the community. RAC hasn't talked about corporate sponsorship, working with the County, etc. REC and ED is a department that serves the City and the School District. The programs that Rec and Ed operate are open to the public and anyone can join.

ORIENTATION TO NATURAL AREA PRESERVATION

Dave Borneman gave a PowerPoint presentation. The 10-yr anniversary is coming up for the Natural Area Preservation Division, which is funded from the Park Repair and Restoration Millage. 1,111 acres of the approximate 2,000 acres of parkland are undeveloped natural areas. 756 acres of those are restorable. Staff identifies many species. There are approximately 1,100 species of plants, including 19 species that are endangered, threatened or of special concern in Michigan. They have very detailed maps through GIS, inventorying 1,400 acres, including citywide, University, County Schools, etc. Mr. Borneman explained the Prescribed Burn Program, which will be starting again in another week. Mr. Satarino asked if PAC could get something in writing of the cost of nature. Mr. Borneman will get a report to PAC but it will be difficult because there are a lot of variables. The lower quality of the site, the more expensive it will be to restore.

REPORT FROM MANAGER OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Dave Borneman reported that before the next City Council meeting on November 16, there will be a reception for Virginia Johansen, who is receiving the 2002 Molin Morris Award. At the August 7 City Council meeting, they passed two resolutions; one to name a park after Ron Olson and one to approve purchasing

Dicken Woods, which will be bought from acquisition funds and we will talk to the library to see if they want to use part of the site. Upcoming items to City Council include the Sunset Brooks resolution and the Traverwood parcel is getting close to finalizing. Mr. Satarino stated he was hoping that the library would fess up to what they did with regard to the Dicken Woods site and give the correct chronology. PAC went through the proper procedures and made a good faith offer and at the last minute the library came up with a counter offer. This was a lack of communication from the Library Board. We don't expect the library to pay us back the \$50,000 extra we had to pay but some conversation about this would be appropriate. He also noticed a letter from the City Attorney saying what we can and cannot do with regard to the greenbelt issue. Mr. Borneman advised that we can and have put together fact sheets and will continue to do that. Mr. Satarino stated the anti-greenway people have a slogan "save the parks" which is not true. If you go out and look at the parks, in general, there is no deterioration in quality. If there is deterioration, let Parks staff know. Linda Berauer commented she is concerned about the impact that the Dicken Woods purchase will have. We need to do something publicly and get the City's opinion on what happened. Bob Johnson advised the City doesn't have an opinion but everyone agrees with the chronology that Mr. Satarino pointed out and the library jumping in. The library is an independent organization. We have made strong representations to them about what they did and don't think it will happen again. Many interactions have taken place between Mr. Johnson, City Administrator Roger Fraser, Mayor John Hieftje, Ron Olson and others. Mr. Berla stated he doesn't know why the library didn't talk to the City about an arrangement and doesn't get their motive. Mr. Berla added that perhaps we should consider next time if it comes up, that it might have been better for the City to back off. Bob Johnson remarked that if we could have gotten an agreement with library to dedicate some land they may have been willing to do that. There was a purchase agreement that had a time limit. Bill Rodgers asked if anything has been done to better inform the public. Mr. Satarino responded that PAC could do that and he would help with making a statement.

REPORT FROM RECREATION AND EDUCATION

Sara Aeschbach reported they received a grant that has nice interfaces with Ann Arbor paces. It is called Great Outdoors and is designed to get children and families to get active outdoors with a goal to reduce the amount of time kids spend in front of a TV or computer. They are also doing an Environmental Education Program and will be providing some public programming to lower income communities. Dave Borneman indicated that NAP would love to collaborate and set up some workdays. Ms. Aeschbach agreed this would be good because they want to introduce them to parks they haven't visited before. It's a 2-year grant that is designed to enhance greenspace initiatives.

REPORT FROM RAC – No report.

**PAC ADJOURNED TO CLOSED SESSION TO DEAL WITH LAND
ACQUISITION ISSUES AT 5:00 P.M.**

Dee Lumpkin
PAC Secretary