

Park and Recreation Commission

Minutes

(meeting taped)

Monthly meeting: Monday, January 8, 2007 in the New City Hall.

Meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m.

By roll call, members present: John Walsh, David Mikos, Al Felice, Beverly Moran and Andrew Cota. Nick Serednitsky and James Benanto were excused.

Parks and Recreation Director Dennis O'Connell was present. Athletic Director Joseph Orazetti arrived at 7:07 p.m.

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA:

Without objection, the agenda was accepted as written.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A motion was made by Al Felice and second by David Mikos. Move to accept the minutes of December 11, 2006, with correction page 2 second paragraph "The need for maintenance supervision not only arises at the Parks & Recreation.." adding the word only. Motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC PORTION:

No public came forward at this time.

CORRESPONDENCES:

Nothing was presented.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

A motion was made by Beverly Moran and second by Al Felice. Move to nominate John Walsh as Chairman of the Parks & Recreation Commission. Motion carried unanimously.

No other nominations were received. The floor was closed. Members congratulated Mr. Walsh and commended him on his continuing efforts for recreation in the City. Chairman Walsh noted that there would be many challenges and opportunities this year.

DIRECTOR REPORTS:

Parks & Recreation Director's Report: Mr. O'Connell noted that basketball season is progressing well. With no weather related postponements things are flowing well. He is working on scheduling the Yoga classes at the Derby Public Library. A press release will be sent next week and it will be posted on the website.

The City Engineer is working with the contractor who installed the bleachers at Ryan Field, there are some loose planks and gaps that need to be addressed. The City Engineer will authorize payment of the bill once all concerns have been satisfied.

The structural engineering report for the lighting at Ryan Field Complex has not been scheduled as of yet. The question has arisen whether emergency back-up lighting is needed as per safety codes. This emergency lighting would come on if the regular lighting went out so that anyone on the field could exit safely. Another issue raised is stripping on the steps per safety codes. Mr. O'Connell will be working with the City Engineer, the Building Official and the Fire Marshall to review all necessary improvements

to satisfy codes and regulations. Plans are to also install new fencing and this will be done with light pole placement in mind.

Mr. O'Connell attempted to contact the company where the Bradley School playground equipment was purchased. He spoke with a representative of the company and was told that the manufacturer is out of business. The representative stated that without inspection, he could not speak to any cost estimates or ability to repair. There have also been code changes since the playground was initially installed and they would have to be addressed. The information will be forwarded to Board of Alderman President Ken Hughes. Mr. Walsh noted that the Review Committee is looking at how equipment should be accepted and installed in the future. Important needs to be determined will be who will be charged with the oversight of the equipment and a long-term maintenance plan must be in place prior to installation. He noted that volunteers are looking at undertaking the repair or replacement of the playground and are exploring fundraising possibilities.

Mr. Mikos noted that the light pole that fell in the windstorm is still lying on the ground. He suggested that it should be moved prior to any snowfall as it could become obscured and with youth looking for sledding possibilities, this could be a hazard.

Mr. O'Connell indicated that the field house was broken into a few weeks ago. A police report has been filed. Doors were broken and football equipment was stolen. Board of Education will pay for the lost equipment estimated at \$1,000.

Mr. O'Connell noted that funding for the Amendola Complex bathrooms was redirected to pay for the bleachers. There are remaining funds available and he would like to use a portion to replace the pavilion roof. He will approach Capital Planning Commission to see if this is possible. The tennis courts are in disrepair and it was questioned whether this funding could go for that as well. Mr. O'Connell will explore cost estimates on these projects.

Mr. Walsh noted that three youths have been apprehended in connection with the graffiti on the Greenway.

Mr. Mikos noted that parents have approached him seeking a High School level basketball league. Mr. O'Connell suggested the possibility of a regional league and he will explore this possibility.

High School Athletic Director's Report: Mr. Orazetti noted that the lack of lighting at Ryan will impact some games. Generally, they play back to back but possibly games will have to be scheduled at Amendola. He noted a drainage problem in the batting area. Mr. O'Connell indicated that clay will be brought in that should correct the problem.

Mr. Orazetti noted that the latchkey program may further impact the indoor facility use at Irving and may expand to Bradley. He and Mr. O'Connell will have to explore long-term considerations.

Mr. Orazetti stated that the field conditions at Ryan were really bad by the end of the season. Mr. O'Connell indicated that Public Works did seed after the end of the season and weather permitting, they will try to do more to improve the conditions or get a jumpstart on the spring.

Members indicated that the long-term solution for the football field conditions is to consider turf. There was no freshman program this year and Pop Warner had one less team and still the field use took its toll. JV soccer did play at Witek and some Varsity games were played there but there is no place to sit and the working parents like the evening games so they may attend but this requires lighting. Members suggested that signs be posted to encourage the parents to sit on the slope as that was the purpose of the design.

Mr. O'Connell noted that he has received a request for use of Witek by another Men's Soccer team. He indicated that he would explore whether city residents participate on the team before he makes a decision.

Mr. Orazetti stated that there is consideration to adding a Middle School soccer program. This would be a feeder program for the High School.

Mr. Walsh noted that the Parks & Recreation Commission does not yet have control over the Witek Park fields, the Board of Alderman still oversee their maintenance and use.

NEW or OTHER BUSINESS:

A.) Discussion with Program Directors: The matter was tabled.

B.) Discussion of priorities for 2007: Mr. Walsh indicated that the Review Committee is almost done with determining the needs and will be compiling their recommendations. It is clear that the current maintenance plan is not working. The recommendation will be to look at the staffing of Public Works and possibly set a dedicated staff for recreational facility maintenance. The issue of having the Parks & Recreation director overseeing maintenance is being explored. Possibly, the line items would be better served in the Public Works department budget. It is felt that there should be in-house staff available for general maintenance needs or there should be a list of authorized vendors who would have to be available for the City's needs. The Committee feels that the oversight of fields and facilities must be clearly defined. Currently, the oversight is divided between Board of Alderman, Board of Education and Parks & Recreation with no clear understanding of the overlap of authority. The Committee also noted that individual projects should not be designated to special committees but rather should fall under the Parks & Recreation Commission. Another issue is that a clearly defined long-term maintenance plan must be in place prior to the acceptance of any facility or equipment. It was felt that the City should explore a Maintenance Supervisor that would oversee all of the duties of general maintenance as well as capital improvement projects. It was noted that Witek Park has a specific turf management plan attached to its creation. It was noted that a contractor currently oversees this plan and it was questioned whether the City could have trained staff in-house that would not only do this management of Witek, but also all fields. All fields should be receiving the same level of care.

Mr. O'Connell suggested that the Committee also consider having the supervisor attend the Parks & Recreation Commission meetings.

Members deferred discussion of the priorities for 2007 until the Review Committee presents their recommendations and they are acted upon by the Board of Alderman.

C.) 2007 meeting Schedule:

Motion was made by Beverly Moran and second by Al Felice. Move to adopt the Park and Recreation Commission meeting schedule for the 2007 calendar year to be the second Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m. with the exception of October and November, which would be scheduled for Tuesday, October 9th and Tuesday, November 13th to be held at the new City Hall. Motion carried unanimously.

D.) Other business: The Board of Alderman banned dogs from the Greenway for a six month trial period starting in December. Residents have expressed dissatisfaction with this action at the Board of Alderman meetings. The Greenway Committee will be reviewing the proposed ordinance for this ban and will bring their recommendation to the Board of Alderman for action.

Suggestions were made to possibly set a time during the day when dogs would be allowed or to come up with an alternative trail location. It was noted that there were leash laws and excrement laws in effect prior to the opening of the Greenway. It was suggested that the Volunteers for the Greenway may survey the users to obtain comments and suggestions. By involving the users, any proposal would likely have greater success. Members expressed serious concern with the possible injury to a user being bitten by a

dog on the Greenway It was noted that the path is not very wide, there is little area on the side for the dogs to be off of the trail and the fencing and stone slopes further limit where you can walk. This liability should be a consideration.

The next Greenway Committee meeting is set for January 29th at 7:00 p.m.

Also, regarding the Greenway, the brick sale is going well, \$50 for a single and \$100 for a double. To add a logo is an additional \$50. Benches are being sold for \$500, there are 14 benches planned and 2 have been sold so far. The fountain restoration is also progressing. Historical signage is being designed. The City has taken action to begin design of Phase III of the greenway.

Ms. Moran questioned if there is an opening on the Board. There is none at this time. It was noted that Nick Serednitsky replaced Matt Cripps. Andrew Cota replaced Karen Izzo.

Beverly Moran, Jack Walsh and Andrew Cota will work with Dennis O'Connell on developing the 2007-2008 budget.

Motion was made by David Mikos and second by Beverly Moran Move to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully prepared,
Karen Kemmesies, secretary