

Park and Recreation Commission

Minutes

(meeting taped)

Monthly meeting: Monday, August 10, 2009 in the City Hall.

Meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m.

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

Parks and Recreation Director Dennis O'Connell was present. Athletic Director Joseph Orazetti was excused.

Without objection Andrew Cota served as chair in the absence of the chairman.

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA:

Nothing was presented.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A motion was made by Red Clynch and second by Nick Serednitsky. Move to accept the minutes of June 8, 2009, as written. Motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC PORTION:

No public came forward at this time.

CORRESPONDENCES:

Nothing was received.

DIRECTOR REPORTS:

Parks & Recreation Director's Report: Mr. O'Connell reported that the fall season is beginning. He has been trying to get the Ryan Complex lighting project underway prior to the start of the football games as Capital Planning has allocated \$30,000 for the project. He has been meeting with an electrician and was informed that it was not feasible to upgrade the existing fixtures. The current fixtures are over thirty-five years old. The electrician indicated that there would be two options: 1.) to change the bulbs and clean the lenses or 2.) to replace the lights. To change 39 bulbs would cost approximately \$4,000. Mr. O'Connell intended to bring these options to the Capital Planning Commission meeting this evening but their meeting was cancelled. The first High School home game will be played on September 18th. Due to time constraints he desired to move forward with the project of replacing the bulbs and to continue to pursue the Capital Planning Commission when they next meet. If they did refuse to expend the funds for the bulbs, then he could take the money from the Ryan Field Capital account for this expense although he hoped this would not be necessary as it would leave that account nearly half expended and it is the start of the fiscal year. He noted that the electrician estimated that the existing bulbs are likely at only 35-40% illumination and the general recommendation is to replace the bulbs every four to five years. The City's schedule has been to replace only when the bulb has blown out so the bulbs are certainly past due for replacement.

The Little League/Pop Warner field house is in desperate need of a roof replacement. This was identified just recently when it was discovered that shingles were falling off. Estimated cost is \$4,200. Mr. O'Connell had intended to approach the Capital Planning Commission on this project.

Lights at the Picnic Grove have been discussed for a number of years now and the fixtures have been stored at Public Works. Pop Warner had intended to accomplish the project with volunteers but the scope is much greater than anticipated. Mr. O'Connell has been working with them to accomplish this project and will assist in providing funding. This field is used as a practice field by both Pop Warner and the High School football teams.

Mr. Benanto suggested that a five-year plan for the bulb replacement should be included in the next budget. By staggering the replacement costs over five years, the expense would be less daunting. He noted that at the time of the replacement the bulbs will also have to be aligned and he suggested that Mr. O'Connell verify that the contractor will be performing this task. Mr. O'Connell indicated that there is some concern about the condition of the existing football light poles, noting that the softball lights had to be taken down after one of the fixtures fell. He will ask the contractor to inspect the fixtures and offer a recommendation on their condition. In the meantime he suggested that if weather conditions warrant it (strong winds/ heavy rain etc.) the scheduled game should be postponed until conditions improve. Mr. O'Connell had spoken to the City Engineer a few years ago in regard to the poles and at that time it was felt that the fixtures were acceptable. He will approach the City Engineer again to update his findings.

Mr. Clynch questioned whether the Light The Night lighting was working on the paths down to the field. Mr. O'Connell indicated that they were working as far as he knew. The paths were cleared of brush but the condition of the path is difficult with ruts and rocks. They will be looking at the lighting again to insure the safety of the players that are using the paths. It was noted that the path that did go down behind the softball field has been eliminated with the Middle School construction. Mr. O'Connell approached the Middle School Building Committee to see if there were plans for an alternate route but at the time there were uncertain.

Mr. O'Connell noted that football has been practicing to the side of the field and Public Works discovered that it was effecting the sprinkler system. Mr. Benanto, speaking now as a football coach, indicated that he feels the need for better communication and cooperation between all departments involved. The school custodians, the public works, the athletic director and the recreation director have to be working together as a team, not as separate units. He cited as an example, the gym was closed so the floor could be refinished but this occurred at a time when the teams were set to be in the weight room. If this was communicated, possibly a schedule could be arranged so the floors could be done at a time when the teams were outside practicing. Mr. O'Connell noted that the field house has been an ongoing concern due to the lack of supervision of the players and the conditions that are left after use. Certainly, all sides do have to work together and he was hopeful that with the strides that are being made, the results will be positive.

Mr. Benanto questioned the recent running clinic that was held at the football field. Mr. O'Connell stated that he was unaware of this clinic but found out about it when he was contacted about players on the field. Apparently it was arranged by Pop Warner. He immediately contacted Ron Slowik. The field had been chemically treated that day and there were signs posted to keep off. Mr. O'Connell understood that the running was done on the track. He did stress to Pop Warner the protocol for field use.

Mr. O'Connell indicated that the High School Soccer program has requested field time for a number of night games at Ryan Field as Witek Park has no lights. This would require Public Works to bring the goals to the field and to line the field for their games. Mr. O'Connell suggested that the Soccer program be allowed to have one night game on Senior Night pending the availability of the field. Members agreed that Witek Park was designed for soccer use and its creation allows for lessening the overuse of Ryan Complex. The football season of the High School programs and Pop Warner overly stresses the playing surface and the schedule was developed to try and balance the wear and tear on the recreational facilities.

Motion was made by James Benanto and second by Red Clynych. Move to allow the High School soccer teams to play their last regularly scheduled home game, Senior Night, at Ryan Field subject to the availability of the field per the already scheduled football games. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. O'Connell stated that the Youth Soccer Program has asked to play all of their games at Witek Park. They will continue to practice at Bradley School. He explained that lining the field for their games is in a different formation than the High Soccer program resulting in a checkerboard effect. He suggested that if the use was allowed, that the Youth programs understand that the field would not be lined. Cones could be placed on the sidelines to define the parameters. Mr. Benanto questioned whether the play would develop different wear patterns on the field being that their placement of goals would be opposite the regular placement.

At 8:00 p.m. Mr. Benanto was excused and the meeting no longer had a quorum.

Members recognized that the Youth Program does have full use of the Witek Park for their spring program and the schedule was developed to offer the High School program Witek Park in the fall. It was decided to leave the decision to the Recreation Director.

The playground program had approximately 90 participants. The free lunch had approximately 40 children per day.

High School Athletic Director's Report: Mr. Orazetti was excused.

NEW or OTHER BUSINESS:

Members reviewed the approved Capital projects, the football lights and the Little League roof. Being that \$30,000 was allocated for the lights and that the scope of the work has been greatly reduced, Mr. O'Connell will approach the Capital Planning Commission to request that the remaining funds be used to purchase the groomer that was also requested.

Mr. O'Connell noted that work is being done to repair the baseball diamond.

Mr. O'Connell indicated that the freshman football program is considering a fundraiser that would be to sell business signs that would be displayed at the football field. Members questioned whether they would be a seasonal sign or more permanent and who would be installing and maintaining said signs. Members took no exception to the fundraiser as long as the details raised were addressed. It was felt that the Board of Alderman would likely have to approve the use.

Without objection the meeting adjourned at 8:25 pm.

Respectfully prepared,
Karen Kemmesies, secretary

These minutes are subject to the Commission's approval at their next scheduled meeting.