

MINUTES
PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD
CITY COMMISSION ROOM
JANUARY 7, 2002
4:30 P.M.

Present were the following members of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board: Ms. Jean Darbyshire, Ms. Beverly Page, Mr. Roger Brannan, and Mr. Larry Weaver. Mr. Gerald Reeck removed himself from the Board during discussions of Warner Memorial Park. Mrs. Marie Steichen was absent at this meeting. Also present at this meeting was Mr. Terry DeWeese, Director of Parks and Recreation; Mr. Jerry Dishman, Park Superintendent; Mr. Scott Shoemaker, Zoo Director; Mr. Frank Gibbs, Park Planner; Mr. Ivan Wilkinson, Recreation Superintendent; Mr. Adam Dolezal, Recreation Supervisor; and Mrs. Debbie Dugan, Administrative Supervisor.

Ms. Darbyshire called the meeting to order.

MINUTES

It was moved by Mr. Brannan, seconded by Ms. Page to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting held on December 3, 2001. On vote, motion carried 4-0.

WARNER MEMORIAL PARK

Ms. Darbyshire read each element of the "draft" master plan for Warner Memorial Park. The Board held discussion on each element and made recommended changes to the elements. The following are the elements of the master plan for Warner Memorial Park.

Erosion

Natural erosion continues in the ravines of the park. This is due to natural occurrences from the park itself as well as run off from some of the adjoining neighborhoods. Erosion control would be very expensive. City Administration is recommending yearly evaluation and will use fill material covered with soil on areas that can be controlled with minimal expense.

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board's Recommendation: City Administration is to utilize erosion conservation on existing roads or any new roads that are developed. City Administration is to manage the erosion within the resources that are available.

Trees, Vegetation, and Soils

City Administration has worked with a Kansas State University professional in evaluating Warner Memorial Park. City Administration has on file studies of the soil and vegetation, which includes plants and trees that were completed by professionals at Kansas State University. Continued use of expertise at Kansas State University will be utilized when it is necessary for further evaluation and assistance on Warner Memorial Park.

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board's Recommendation: Continue to utilize community resources including Kansas State University in managing Warner Memorial Park.

Cedars

Through the years, cedars have continued to multiply at Warner Memorial Park with burning not suitable because of the close proximity of neighborhoods that surround the park. Cedars need to be removed in the southeast corner of the park's open space and the border surrounding the park where necessary to develop a firebreak. In other areas of the park, the cedars need to be thinned out over time if it doesn't affect erosion or acts as a barrier for the park.

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board's Recommendation: City Administration is to evaluate the brush and trees on the east slope of the park and determine what cedars can be removed to promote growth of the deciduous trees. City Administration will also start a long-term plan of removing cedars in areas of the park with emphasis on the border for fire safety. City Administration will also evaluate the southeast corner of the park's open grassland to determine what cedars need to be removed to promote the open space. This will be accomplished on an ongoing basis with community service workers and forestry crews.

Wildlife

Wildlife continues to use the park and will remain as long as there is room in the park environment for both humans and wildlife. The variety of wildlife will depend on the activities that take place in the park and the amount of use.

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board's Recommendation: The variety of wildlife will depend on the amount of activities and amount of use that takes place in the park in the future.

Encroachment

This is currently being addressed with the neighbors that have encroached into the park. A letter has been sent out giving the neighbors that have encroached one year to correct the encroachment or appear before the Board to discuss why they can't meet the one-year deadline.

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board's Recommendation: City Administration is to send out a reminder after the first of the year to the property owners who have encroached into the park that they need to correct the encroachment before December 1, 2002.

Assessment of the Park

The park is made up of grasslands, wooded areas, and ravines. The open grassland should be maintained as open space and the wooded areas be left to prosper with the exception of the cedars. The grassland should not be confused with or maintained like the Konza Prairie. It should, however, be maintained as open grassland to fit the character of the activities that will happen in the park. The topography of Warner Memorial Park is not conducive to athletic sports fields. Its capabilities include picnic shelters, playgrounds, cross country, trails, bird watching, viewing wildlife, bathrooms, and open space for a wide-variety of activities, etc. Its geography is best utilized for a variety of unorganized activities on the grasslands and wooded ravines.

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board's Recommendation: The plan over the next 10 years is for the park to be managed to allow only minimal development to occur and to maintain the open character of the park. There is to be no ball fields, lighting, or organized sport activities with the exception of cross-country, which will continue to use a maintained, established trail. The existing, west parking lot may move into the interior of the park in the future. The southeast corner of the park, with access off of Shuss Road, is to be developed to include: a paved entrance road and parking lot that is bordered by a barrier and renovated existing picnic shelter with the addition of picnic tables and grills. The annual haying is to be coordinated to maximize the use of the open space for the community. City Administration will maintain a mow strip around the perimeter of the park where appropriate.

Amenities

Restrooms

An ADA restroom building can be built in the park at an estimated cost of \$80,000. The expense of restroom construction will depend on the location and how much the cost to bring sewer and water to the location.

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board's Recommendation: Restrooms and drinking fountains are to be located on the west and the southeast side of the park with the priority being the southeast side. A restroom on the west side is more of a long-range project for the CIP. City Administration is to determine the best location for the restrooms in relationship to City sewer and water and the affect on the neighborhoods that border the park.

Trails

Trails already exist in the park, which includes the Historical Trail developed by Don Combs. These trails can be identified on a map at entrances to the park.

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board's Recommendation: The trails are to be maintained. City Administration is to clear brush where needed to make existing trails usable and add signage at entrances to the park identifying the trails. The positive aspect of the park is it allows the community to go throughout the park based on their abilities.

Access

Access into the park can come in a variety of ways. The park can remain closed with vehicular traffic not allowed, except for special events, activities, or for people with disabilities. Parking may be moved further into the park with vehicular traffic limited beyond a certain point. Wherever the parking lot is built, the roads need to be lined with large stones or posts to prevent vehicles from driving throughout the park. The southeast corner of the park can be open to vehicular traffic. It would require the road to be rebuilt with a hard surface, the parking lot to be graveled and bordered with native stone or posts. The shelter will be repainted and a concrete slab, picnic tables, and grills will be added.

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board's Recommendation: Vehicular traffic will be allowed in the southeast corner of the park. Vehicular traffic will be allowed in no other areas, except for special events, activities, or for people with disabilities. Wherever the parking lots are built, the roads, where appropriate, need to be lined with large stones or posts to prevent vehicles from driving throughout the park. The entrance road to the southeast corner of the park shall be rebuilt with a hard surface, and a small appropriately lit parking lot is to be graveled and bordered with native stone or posts. The shelter will be repainted and a concrete slab, picnic tables, and grills will be added. A key to the entrance on the west side of the park will continue to be available on weekends and special events.

Park Hours

Currently, park hours are sunrise until 11:00 p.m. except on the Hudson Trail, which is sunrise to sunset. The City Ordinance allows the flexibility to set hours for each park. It is recommended that Warner Memorial Park hours should be sunrise to 11:00 p.m., which is consistent with the other parks in the system.

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board's Recommendation: The park hours would be set for sunrise to 11:00 p.m. with special permission to be given to groups who want to utilize the park after hours for specific activities. Permission would be given through the Parks and Recreation Director or designee.

Signage

Signage needs to be installed at the entrance of the park giving some historical information on Kern Warner and what amenities are available in the park. Signage also needs to be installed if vehicular access is allowed to the southeast corner of the park.

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board's Recommendation: Signage would be added at the entrances to identify trails and features of the park. A sign at the two entrances of the park would also provide some historical information on the park.

The Board unanimously approved the elements of the master plan for Warner Memorial Park.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM (CIP)

Mr. DeWeese explained that the main emphasis for the Board to consider when reviewing the CIP is projects. The deadline for citizens' input is January 25, 2002. Mr. DeWeese suggested that the Chairperson submit a memo to the City Commission on the Board's priorities for the CIP. The Board suggested that City Administration submit a listing of items that didn't make it in the 2002 CIP and City Administration's priorities.

The Board held discussion and questions were answered at that time.

MISCELLANEOUS

Skate Park - The City Commission, at their meeting on December 18, 2001, approved the purchase of equipment for the park. The equipment has been ordered and should be installed in February, weather permitting.

Mr. Brannan congratulated Mr. DeWeese for being nominated as one of Manhattan's Most Admired.

The meeting was adjourned.

Approved by Chairperson Parks and Recreation
Advisory Board

Date