

MINUTES
PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD
CITY COMMISSION ROOM
February 6, 2017 - 4:30 P.M.

Present were the following members of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board: Mr. Ed Klimek, Ms. Marcia Rozell, Mr. Dave Schafer, Ms. Leah Fliter, Ms. Linda Teener, and Mr. Mark Bachamp.

Absent: Mr. Brian Thomason.

Employees present: Mr. Eddie Eastes, Director of Parks and Recreation; Mr. Wyatt Thompson, Senior Park Planner; Mr. Scott Shoemaker, Director of Sunset Zoo; Ms. Susan Adams, Director of Flint Hills Discovery Center; Mr. Randi Clifford, Recreation Director; and Mr. Casey Smithson, Park Superintendent.

MINUTES

Mr. Klimek called the meeting to order. The minutes of the regular meeting held on December 5, 2016 were approved by a 5-0 vote.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Ms. Linda Teener nominated Mr. Mark Bachamp to be Vice-Chair; it was seconded by Ms. Marcia Rozell. On vote, motion carried 5-0. Leah Fliter arrived after the minutes were approved.

WARNER PARK NEIGHBORHOOD SURVEY UPDATE

Mr. Eastes stated that Mr. Thompson has been working with Kansas State University to collaborate on a master plan for Warner Park. Mr. Thompson introduced Ms. Rial Carver to share the history and intent of the parkland at Warner Park. In May 1957, Kern and Bessie Warner dedicated approximately 40 acres of ground as a gift to the City for park purposes to be dedicated for a public park and for other public use deemed advisable by the said City Commissioners of the City. Ms. Carver provided a decade-by-decade history for the parkland. In 1957, City Manager Wesche mentions that the park should be left "as natural and rustic as possible". In 1959, a proposal from the Women's Club for playgrounds, restrooms, and baseball diamond in the park was proposed and approved by the Park board with Kern Warner as a board member. In 1978, a Parks, Recreation and Open Space Planning effort recommended that "development of the park be encouraged in a systematic manner which allows the natural openness of the area to prevail as well as allowing the addition of much needed facilities." In the 1990s, there were two general feelings on the park land. The park neighbors wanted to keep the park road closed, "natural" and without further amenities provided. The relatives and friends of Kern Warner wanted to keep the park open to the public, add restrooms, and parking (facilities needed by non-neighbors).

Mr. Bachamp asked about documentation for the property not showing it to remain a natural, rustic area. Ms. Carver indicated that there was no indication on the deed of the property; a majority of the information was gleaned from City Commission Memos and Minutes. Mr. Thompson indicated that we need to keep in mind the comment from then City Manager Wesche in 1957 that the park plan indicated that we keep the area "as natural and rustic as possible". In the late 1970s there was some discussion about making Warner Park available for athletic fields, prior to the construction of Anneberg Park. Mr. Bachamp asked about the connections into the park from the 1950s drawing of the park. In the 1950s, there were two entrances shown for the park. Mr. Thompson shared that those were drawn on the west on Warner Park Road and Schuss Road on the east. The Schuss and the Johns tracts were acquired at a later

time. Part of the Miller Ranch Unit 1 where the pond is located was acquired at a later time as well. Mr. Klimek asked if Mr. Warner was advocating for updates to the park. Ms. Carver indicated that, based on the documentation she found, Mr. Warner was keeping the park board on track with keeping funds allocated to the park and the improvements outlined in the agreement.

Mr. Thompson indicated that continued conversations are occurring with Kansas State University (KSU) regarding a master plan strategy for Warner Park. KSU is a semester ahead with working on projects for the courses. Design Implementation and Planting Design Studios considered this as a Fall 2017 project but it does not meet the scope of what those students need to work on. Collective Decisions Planning course may have some students that want to work on this project for Summer 2017. It is possible that the class could work on this master plan in Spring 2018. Staff could issue the online survey in February and analyze the survey results in Spring 2017. Future plans would be made by demands for the park identified in the survey. Depending on workload, we would anticipate beginning a master plan late 2017 or Spring 2018. Mr. Klimek asked if prior master plans have been followed. Mr. Thompson indicated they have been followed to some degree. Mr. Thompson mentioned that restrooms were discussed in the 1980s planning document. Mr. Schafer stated that restrooms were demolished. Mr. Thompson indicated that we did not know exactly where the restrooms were located in the park. The restrooms were demolished sometime before the 1987 plan.

Mr. Thompson shared the draft Warner Park Master Plan online survey questions with the board. The intent is to promote the survey via City email lists, Advisory Board email lists, neighborhood HOA contacts, user group contacts, social media and a media release. We plan to run the survey through the end of February. Mr. Thompson reviewed the survey questions with the board. Mr. Bachamp indicated that questions one and two are the same. Ms. Teener indicated that the survey seemed lengthy. Ms. Rozell recommended asking if someone had lived in Manhattan for longer than 5 years. Mr. Schafer would like to see the survey be less lengthy. Mr. Klimek asked if there was a consideration for sports fields in Warner Park. Mr. Thompson indicated that sports fields were not added to the survey.

Public comment: Mr. Bruce McMillan, 555 Poyntz Avenue, sat on the park board during the time Mr. Bill Warner personally addressed the board with the intent that the park was to remain as open and natural as possible. He also indicated that several times the park neighbors have encroached into the park with gardens, out buildings, and other items. Ms. Rozell asked if Bill Warner is Kern Warner's son. Mr. McMillan confirmed that Bill is the son of Kern Warner.

JORGENSEN PARK UPDATE

Mr. Eastes stated that this is a CIP project to connect Linear Trail to Anderson Avenue to provide the north to south connection. Park staff mows the property and has for quite some time. This would tie into Linear Trail at Poliska Lane. The 2015 Strategic Facility Improvement Plan (SFIP) identified a high need for trails and greater connectivity. Mr. Thompson showed some photos of the proposed trail pathway. Mr. Thompson indicated that 28 people signed in to the meeting last week regarding the trail. This project would create a more user friendly environment for individuals wishing to be able to connect from Anderson to Linear Trail. Mr. Thompson said the intent would be a three to five foot wide natural surface trail. This type of trail would have a minimal impact on existing trees and work with the natural topography. The trail is envisioned to be a walking or hiking type of trail that would allow some types of bike use. Mr. Thompson indicated that signage would delineate private and public property. The trail head would be on Anderson Avenue and go south through the park to Grandview and a cross walk would be created for a safe pedestrian crossing area. Crossing Grandview into Girl Scout Park would have two trail loops, one at the east edge of the tree line and one through the trees. Mr. Thompson pointed out the drainage area from the cemetery property north to Anderson. Mr. Thompson indicated that drainage from the parking lot for the Girl Scout Cabin was brought forward as a concern in the public meeting. The water from the parking lot drains right to the front door of the church across the street. The east to west

connection runs along the cemetery fence to Edgerton Avenue and then goes along the curb to Oakdale Drive. One neighbor indicated that they would prefer the trail remain along the fence line and not come to the street. Mr. Thompson shared the community feedback received at the public meeting regarding the trail improvements. The feedback included comments about the trail routing, lighting, seating, Grandview crossing, drainage, cemetery, and the parking lot. Moving forward, the park staff will survey to find the property markers and run tape where the proposed trail will be constructed.

Ms. Rozell asked where the tree house was located on the park property. Mr. Thompson shared the area and indicated that the property owners were not able to make it to the meeting, but called to state their support for the trail. Ms. Teener indicated that she received calls about the project and she looked over the proposed trail. Ms. Teener asked about the property that shares a boundary with the cemetery property. Mr. Thompson shared specifics about the property lines and the fencing and vegetation. Mr. Thompson met with the adjacent property owner, Mr. Ben Brent, on site and discussed moving the cemetery fence and putting the trail where the fence is currently. At the public meeting, we discussed pulling the fence back four feet to Edgerton and putting the trail where the fence is currently. A neighbor would like the City to pull the fence back all the way and put the fence behind vegetation for the entire length of Park Drive. Ms. Teener asked about the drainage. Mr. Thompson shared that all trails would be east of the drainage in Girl Scout Park. The City currently mows a pathway through the clearing in the northern section of the park.

Ms. Teener also received a comment about whether the trail way would be bicycle friendly. Mr. Thompson shared that it would likely not be friendly to road bikes. Mr. Bachamp asked about storm drainage. Mr. Thompson shared that storm water was not a specific issue for the trail. Mr. Thompson has discussed with Public Works the potential to raise the sidewalk at Grandview to keep storm water on the street and off the sidewalk. Mr. Bachamp had concerns about making a legislative action for the trail. Mr. Thompson indicated that we were looking for feedback on the project from the board. Mr. Klimek asked where he could park to review the project. Mr. Thompson showed options of parking at Grandview Drive, Park Drive, Girl Scout House parking lot, or at Sunset Zoo. Mr. Schafer asked if Girl Scout Park was City property. Mr. Thompson shared that the park land is owned by the city. The Girl Scout House is exclusive use by the Girl Scouts. Mr. Bachamp asked about the trail at Poliska. Mr. Thompson shared the trail near the old tiger exhibit connects down the hill to Linear. Mr. Thompson indicated that the trails behind the Sunset Zoo have gotten more use because of cleanup efforts of volunteer groups.

Public Comment: Ms. Sue Mayes, 428 Wickham Road, has lived in the area for 30 years. She indicated that her children created and used a trail in the wooded area. The concern is creating a loop into the wooded area and encroaching on the wooded area near her property. The neighborhood is family friendly and they use Park Street as the walking area for the neighborhood. Grandview Street is parked heavily by the sorority house members. Parking increases during ball game season. The utility work encroached on the natural vegetation. Ms. Mayes recommends not creating the wooded loop and allowing pedestrian traffic on Park Street in lieu of creating a trail along the street.

Mr. Ben Brent, 400 Wickham Road, has lived in the area 50 years. His property was constructed by Sam Charlson of Charlson & Wilson Abstractors. Mr. Brent indicated that the culvert in the cemetery can overflow to within four feet of his property during heavy rainfall. Mr. Brent has concerns that trail users will cut through his backyard. He does not want the public in his backyard. Mr. Brent would like the trail to be directed along the road that is currently within the cemetery. Mr. Brent is concerned with declining property value.

Mr. Huston Gibson, 2015 Meadowmere, shared that he uses trails and his family uses Girl Scout Park. Mr. Gibson is concerned about the value added for a short length of trail being disruptive to the neighbors of the parkland. Mr. Gibson is concerned with converting the open urban space to parking.

Mr. Brian Johnson, City Engineer, addressed a comment about Westar utilities and parking on Grandview. Mr. Johnson indicated that the City does not own the power lines and any concerns about tree removal or trimming related to those lines should be directed to Westar. Mr. Johnson indicated that the City is considering moving the permitted parking from the north side to the south (park) side of the street. Mr. Johnson also indicated that the City will have to address the drainage of the parking lot into the church property.

Mr. Aaron Apel, 321 Ridge Drive, shared his involvement as a volunteer in creating the trail project. Mr. Apel understands the concern that this is a small piece of trail. Mr. Apel would like to see Parks and Recreation shift some of their projects to unstructured outdoor recreation as opposed to focusing on Youth and Adult sports. Mr. Apel would like activities and programs that allow individuals to experience nature in their own way. Mr. Apel shared that he has been working on the Sunset Zoo trails for seven years. The negative use has decreased and positive use has increased. People want to wander into wooded areas and use natural areas. Anderson Avenue linking to Sunset Park; linking to Linear Trail; linking to Lee Mill Heights; linking to Warner Park; this kind of connectivity is what will draw people to our community to live. People make decisions about where they will live and work based on the quality of place here in Manhattan.

Mr. Dennis Hemindinger, 428 Wickham Drive, shared concerns for high school students that come onto his property during lunch hours and the increase of that use with the proposed trail.

Mr. Klimek would like the board to accommodate as many of the concerns as possible. Mr. Bachamp will hold on conclusions until the board hears the next proposal. Mr. Schafer would like time to review the proposed trail.

Mr. Brent invited the board to come to his home and see the view of the proposed trail project from his point of view.

Mr. Thompson indicated that we would be putting a pink tape along the area of the proposed trail. The pink tape does not indicate that clearing will occur; but just to invite those interested to be able to visualize the location of the proposed trail.

DOUGLASS CENTER RENOVATION UPDATE

Mr. Eastes introduced the Douglass Center projects. The SFIP identified short term need to address electrical issues and locker room layout. Mr. Thompson shared photos of the work being designed with funding from Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. Mr. Thompson shared two concepts for locker room use. The recommendation is to proceed with a larger restroom footprint design and move the staff office space to the meeting room on the other side of the building.

STAFF UPDATES

Mr. Shoemaker shared that zoo staff has been reviewing Requests for Qualification for the Master Plan and Strategic Plan for Sunset Zoo. Some exhibit renovation and modifications are being made in preparation for the eventual Expedition Asia exhibits. Staff is hosting Science on Tap February 15th at the Tallgrass Brewery as an adult education program.

Mr. Smithson shared that turf management and horticulture planning are ongoing. The Street Tree Program is being advertised. At the end of February, Park Seasonal positions will be posted. A number of pool projects will be completed before the water park season kicks off.

Mr. Clifford provided an update on winter programs. The adult sport programs have good participation numbers. The next Family Fun Day will be with the Lyons Club Easter Egg Hunt in City Park. The recreation staff is also working on a corporate challenge event. The ice rink will closed at the end of February. Seasonal hiring is ramping up for water parks and other recreational employees. The recreation staff hosted the Kansas Recreation and Parks Association conference last week. Mr. Clifford also recognized awards received at the conference: Chad Pape, Distinguished Volunteer; Kelly Cook, Outstanding Professional in Aquatics Branch; and Little Apple Paddle Program, Innovative Program Award. Mr. Klimek commented that he heard it was the largest conference on record for the organization.

Ms. Adams shared that the new exhibit “To My Plate and Beyond & Maize: Mysteries of an Ancient Grain” has opened. “To My Plate and Beyond” is about healthy living and healthy eating choices. The FHDC is partnering with the Parks division to use the trails with a Trail of the Week program. STEM family fun night will be Thursday from 6p-8p. Go See It Lecture on Cardiac Health by Marty Reed, will be sponsored by Via Christi Health.

Mr. Eastes reminded the board that we will be at the City Commission Work Session on April 11, 2017 with the final Facility Feasibility Study report by Bruce McMillan. The citizen and advisory board member capital improvement project submission deadline is March 3, 2017.

FUTURE BUSINESS

None.

MISCELLANEOUS

None.

OTHER BUSINESS

None.

Meeting Adjourned.