

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board
Parks Division Conference Room
July 9, 2009

The meeting of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board was called to order at 5:30 pm on Thursday, June 11, 2009 with the following members present: Chairman Van Lindquist, Liz Runquist, Sheri Zimmer, Wade Morris and Wes Storm. Also present were Parks and Recreation Director Jerry Cole, Parks Division Manager Lon Van Deusen, City Council Liaison Karen Gunderson Olson, Beautification Committee Liaison Steve Doshier, Urban Forestry Liaison Steve Hasenohrl, Council Member Patti Martinson and Administrative Assistant Jeri Taton.

Motion was made by Storm, seconded by Runquist and carried to approve the minutes of June 11, 2009.

The agenda was approved as presented.

Liaison Reports

Council Liaison Olson reported that construction has started on the Parkview Tennis Court project. Also, she volunteered on the Powers Park Playground project and it was a very good experience.

Hasenohrl reported that the Urban Forest Board met this morning and discussed the annual Tree Care Workshop being developed for 2010. The Board is beginning the search for speakers for this event. They also discussed the 2010 Arbor Day celebration and that Vickie Powers Park would be a good location for that event.

Steve Doshier reported that the Beautification Committee met and Rod Johnson made a presentation on the ISTEA grant for the St. Joe street trees project. The Advisory Board may need to review the funding to make sure that matching funds in the amount of \$25,000 are available for this project.

Urban Orchard Project

Bret Lawlor presented maps of the following areas which he is proposing to include in the Urban Orchard Project:

- 1) Jackson Boulevard (Disc Golf Course)
- 2) Evans Orthodontics
- 3) Al-Anon Society
- 4) Abourezk Law Offices
- 5) Omaha/West Boulevard intersection (northeast corner)
- 6) Two Wheeler Dealer, and
- 7) Old BH Harley Davidson location on East Omaha Street

Each of these areas has been reviewed by the Growth Management Office relative to flood issues and trees and fences would be allowed at each location. The Urban

Forestry Board has also reviewed the sites. Each of these locations has a business or company nearby who would be willing to provide water for the trees. Lawlor noted that he will also be contacting these groups about “adopting” the orchard. Requirements for adoption would be an agreement to provide maintenance for the trees and care for them throughout the year. Relative to the location near Two Wheeler Dealer Olson stated that the Roosevelt Park Neighborhood Association has been very diligent recently in their attempts to make this neighborhood safe. One of the changes includes trimming back the hedges along East New York Street to provide increased visibility. She encouraged the proponents of the orchard project to maintain visibility in these areas. She added that the work load for Parks Division staff is always increasing and she urged the planners to make sure that we can mow around these trees easily. She wants to make sure this project won't create a lot of work or maintenance issues for the parks division employees. Parks Division Manager Van Deusen concurred and noted that he doesn't feel these trees will create any additional maintenance issues than any other trees planted in the park system. The trees should be surrounded by mulch as proposed by Mr. Lawlor. He noted that it may take longer to mow these areas once trees are planted, but staff does have access to smaller equipment that can be used in tight areas. Van Deusen stated that he would like to be involved with the planning of the orchards at each site. Regarding the area at the intersection of West Boulevard and Omaha Street, it was noted that this area may be under construction in the future. This area will be developed as a retention site to handle storm water runoff for the entire downtown drainage area.

A question was raised about what would happen if the trees were not properly cared for. Lawlor noted that the adoption agreement would include a provision stating that if proper maintenance was not done, the agreement would be terminated and a new group identified to take care of the trees. The agreement will be specific about the maintenance that must be done and will include a timeline for that maintenance.

Motion was made by Storm and seconded by Morris to allow Bret Lawlor to proceed with the Urban Orchard project in the locations presented. Lawlor stated that he anticipates planting the trees next spring. This will give him plenty of time to establish a management board, plan the orchards, and line up volunteer businesses and organizations to provide maintenance. Cole suggested that a Memorandum of Understanding outlining the duties of each group be drafted. Upon vote being taken, the motion carried unanimously.

Kepps Water Main Extension Project

Cole explained that the Water Department is extending a new water main from the west side of Skyline Drive from the tank that sits south of the cemetery above the Sandstone Apartments to the tank that sits on Skyline Drive and Flormann. This project will provide more water pressure to the new site. Both routes that have been identified will go through the Skyline Wilderness Area and this item is informational at this time. Cole noted that if the water main is going to go through the Skyline Wilderness Area, it would be wise to incorporate that route with the trail system that is being developed. Cetec Engineering has agreed to bring IMBA on board as a contractor to lay out the trails should that option be selected.

Request to place Scott Backens Memorial Statue in Memorial Park

Bruce Backens, Doug Pitts, Kurt Wolf, Ann Van Loan and Cheryl Ferrel were present for the discussion. Backens submitted a miniature of the proposed statue for the Board's information as well as a site plan showing the proposed location in Memorial Park. Pitts explained that the proposed project has been scaled back from the original version that was submitted. It will now just be the statue sitting on a pedestal along the sidewalk. He added that the proposed location is out of the flood zone and could be approved by the City. Pitts added that they investigated other locations but the Dahl would only authorize the statue location for six months and the YMCA is not a visible area. Locating the statue at the courthouse would be OK, but it would take a lot of additional work.

Ann Van Loan from Western Resources for Dis-Abled Independence stated that this will be a life-sized memorial and WRDI is a 501(c) 3 that will be able to collect donations that are tax deductible for this project. She added that there will be very little maintenance needed for this project and the memorial will in fact be for all individuals with disabilities, not just Scotty Backens. The Mayor's Committee for people with Disabilities also supports the project because it will be for the entire community, not just one individual.

Cole explained that the City Council sent the request to place this statue in Memorial Park to the Advisory Board for their recommendation. Since there is no policy covering statues in the park system, Cole urged the Board members to take into account the criteria in the Naming Policy and the Memorial Policy. He added that Memorial Park was established originally in memory of the people who lost their lives in the 1972 Flood. Since that time, with City Council direction, 3 or 4 other memorials have been included in the park; the Legacy Statue, the Veterans Memorial which honors veterans from five different wars, and the Berlin Wall exhibit which is part of a world wide historical event. Cole added that if the Board votes to recommend approval of this request, you will be setting a precedent by allowing a memorial to an individual rather than a group of people which was not the original intent of Memorial Park. Olson added that there are changes being proposed to move the crosswalk on Omaha Street to the east closer to Sixth Street. The sidewalks coming to the existing crosswalk location will be removed, however it is her understanding that the lighting will remain. This is important for security purposes for the statue.

Martinson stated that if people are not comfortable with a memorial to an individual at this location, then it can be modified to represent all people with disabilities throughout the community. Olson encouraged the Advisory Board to develop a plan or policy that covers these types of requests throughout the park system, no matter what the outcome of this request is. Storm asked what types of disabilities would qualify. Van Loan stated that a disability is anything that hampers daily living; it can be mental or physical and even includes learning disabilities.

Cole suggested that the Board approve the conceptual plan and proposed location for this memorial statue and that the final statue drawings and name be approved by the Advisory Board and City Council. This will allow the project to begin the review process.

Olson noted that if the statue is ready to be placed in 2010 it would coincide with the 20 year anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Motion was made by Storm and seconded by Zimmer to approve the conceptual plan for the memorial statue and the proposed location, with the understanding that the final statue drawings and the statue name must be approved by the Advisory Board and the City Council. A letter outlining the recommendations should include comments about ADA as well as the 20th anniversary of ADA. Upon vote being taken, the motion carried unanimously.

Olson left the meeting at this time.

Excavation of park property for private development

Cole explained that he received a request from the City's Public Works Department relative to development of private property. The property owner would like to provide additional parking on his property which would require developing into the floodplain area. One of the requirements when floodplain property is developed is that the encroachment must be minimized in another location. The property owner does not have enough land to do make this exchange however it could be done on the adjacent park land if the City would agree. Cole cautioned the Board that approval of this request would set a major precedent for parkland throughout the city. It was the consensus of the Advisory Board that this would not be good for the City and they would not approve this type of development request.

Director's Report

Cole reported that construction is progressing on the tennis courts being developed at the Parkview recreation complex.

He also presented a slide show of the Vickie Powers Park Playground construction project.

The next meeting of the Advisory Board will be held on Thursday, August 13, 2009 at the Parks Division Maintenance Facility.

As there was no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:30 PM.