

ONEONTA, NEW YORK – OCTOBER 7, 2013 - 7:00 P.M.
REGULAR MEETING OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION PG. 1

PRESENT: Commissioner Cynthia McCarthy
Commissioner Geoff Davis
Commissioner Gary Dilello
Council Member David Rissberger

ABSENT: Chair Tim Catella
Commissioner Stephen Pindar

City Manager Michael Long also attended the meeting.

In the absence of Chair Catella, Commissioner Davis called the regular meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and asked the Clerk to call the roll.

PETITIONERS

Michael Lynch, 51 Ford Avenue, 4th Ward Council Member, addressed the Commission regarding his concerns with potential changes in the City Parks and Recreation programs, centering on a proposal in development to contract with the Oneonta Family YMCA to provide swimming lessons and operation of the Wilber Park pool as well as certain other summer programs. Council Member Lynch expressed concern that such action would affect core functions of City government to provide recreation programs for residents and could raise obstacles to use of City facilities by residents. He asked that Commissioners learn about the proposal and exercise due diligence in reviewing the proposal. Commissioners McCarthy and Dilello said that they were unaware of the proposal; Commissioner Davis indicated that it would be discussed later in the meeting. Commissioner Davis recognized City Manager Long, who described recent studies of recreation programs and discussions with the Town of Oneonta regarding possible charges for non-City residents participating in City recreation programs. A proposal from the Oneonta Family YMCA arose from these discussions to undertake operation of the pool, swimming lessons and certain other Summer programs under contract with the City. He indicated that the YMCA already operate a pool, swimming lessons and youth programs and this could simply allow them to continue these during the summer at City facilities. He stressed that this is in a preliminary phase and that the YMCA board is still assessing their potential participation. Council Member Rissberger expressed concern that a contract would require issuance of a Request for Proposals. David Coury, Recreation Department staff, asked how other programs such as Tennis, Tee-ball, Youth baseball and softball programs would be affected. City Manager Long indicated that it is likely there would be fewer offerings and that the City would try to find other organizations willing to take on some of these programs. Commissioner Dilello asked what would be left of the Recreation Department. City Manager Long indicated that the department would continue to have responsibility for maintenance and preparation of fields though, as in other cities around the state, the department itself would not offer as many programs as in the past. Recreation Director Andrews explained that he had been charged with reducing the budget for recreation programs; while he would prefer maintaining these as city-operated programs, economic realities may dictate otherwise. Council Member Lynch expressed concern that Common Council has not discussed these possibilities; City Manager Long indicated that the Council's Budget Workshop will allow such discussion.

Commissioner Davis summarized the discussion by stating that if new funding sources or operators are not identified for various recreation programs, it will be up to Common Council to decide whether to continue them, as the Commission has no authority over the budget. Council Member Lynch asked the Commissioners to give the Council their feedback on the proposals as they are developed and discussed. Commissioner Davis stressed that the Commission needs more specific information before its next meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Davis then asked for a motion regarding the minutes.

MOTION, made by Commissioner McCarthy and seconded by Commissioner Davis, that the Commission approve the minutes of the meeting of September 4, 2013, as corrected.

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Voting Ayes: Commissioner McCarthy
Commissioner Davis
Commissioner Dilello
Noes: None
Absent: Chair Catella
Commissioner Pindar

MOTION CARRIED

Commissioner Davis departed from the order of the agenda and recognized Code Enforcement Office Robert Chiappisi, who updated the Commission on new state regulations regarding fire and emergency access safety in tents. This includes tents used on City property as well as on private property. Permits for usage of park areas will be revised to require that tents meet current state code. Recreation Director Andrews indicated that Robert would return to a future meeting to discuss safety concerns with use of Damaschke Field for concerts and other non-sports events.

CORRESPONDENCE

Recreation Director Andrews reviewed correspondence from the SUNY Oneonta chapter of Chi Phi, requesting use of Neahwa Park for a Walking for Warriors 5K Walk/Run on Saturday, November 9, 2013. Members of Chi Phi responded to questions from Commissioners about the event. The event will take place entirely within the park and no street closures will be needed.

MOTION, made by Commissioner Davis and seconded by Commissioner McCarthy, that the Commission approve Chi Phi's request for use of Neahwa Park for the Walking for Warriors 5K Walk/Run on Saturday, November 9, 2013.

Voting Ayes: Commissioner McCarthy
Commissioner Davis
Commissioner Dilello
Noes: None
Absent: Chair Catella
Commissioner Pindar

MOTION CARRIED

Director Andrews then read a letter from Molly Van Ullen of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society Upstate NY Chapter requesting use of Neahwa Park for the 2014 Walk MS scheduled for Sunday, May 4, 2014.

OLD BUSINESS

City Manager Long gave a brief update on the Wilber Park bathhouse grant; he is hoping to use Job Corps to reduce the expenses so that the City does not have any cash contribution.

Recreation Director Andrews reported on preliminary discussions with Margery Merzig on possible improvements to the entrances to Wilber Park, for which she has offered a donation.

Recreation Director Andrews reported on the Oktoberfest; he heard a lot of positive feedback. The organizers sold about 350 tickets in advance and hope to repeat the event next year. He also reported on the offer from the Oneonta Garden Club to donate a memorial bench for the Maple Street Park. City Manager Long and Recreation Director Andrews reported that the Pit Run had been very successful.

NEW BUSINESS

Recreation Director's Report

Recreation Director Andrews updated the Commission on current activities, which focus on preparations for winter. The 2014 projects list is almost completed. Fall intern Justin Barnett is working to benchmark park operating costs and entered the data into a national database. This will

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allow comparison of our data with other communities and will assist in planning, fundraising and budgeting. He has also assisted with the Punt Pass and Kick event.

Commissioner Davis asked for an update on the status of the dog park. The dog park is included in the Park Master Plan, but funding has not yet been identified. It appears the committee concerned with the dog park needs an update on the project so that they know what fundraising needs to be done.

There being no further business to come before the commission, Commissioner Davis adjourned the regular meeting at approximately 8:00 p.m.

DOUGLAS KENDALL, City Clerk

/dk