

**ONEONTA, NEW YORK - MAY 7, 2012 - 7:00 P.M.**

**REGULAR MEETING OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION PG. 1**

**PRESENT:** Chair Tim Catella  
Commissioner Cynthia McCarthy  
Commissioner Geoff Davis  
Commissioner Stephen Pindar  
Council Member David Rissberger

**ABSENT:** Commissioner Gary Dilello

Chair Catella called the regular meeting to order and asked the Clerk to call the roll.

**PETITIONERS**

Mr. Charles Hartley of Oneonta expressed his concern to commission members about recent tree and brush clearing in Neahwa Park and the manner by which the tree and brush maintenance was undertaken. Areas of concern included the War Memorial Walkway and the Lettis Highway. Mr. Hartley felt that some of the trees were not trimmed and pruned properly and that the brush areas were unnecessarily cleared. He stated he could not figure out why this had been done.

Mr. Hartley also stated that a willow tree in the millrace had been damaged that was in good condition prior to the mill race brush removal. He encouraged the commissioners to go take a look at it. He said Neahwa Park flooding had nothing to do with the millrace and he questioned the excavation done and the cutting of the shrubs. He said the best way to protect the millrace was to allow the brush to grow along the sides of it. He said he had pictures of the areas around the millrace and what the engineers had done to stabilize the creek.

Chair Catella questioned if it would be safe to say that with the maintenance of the trees Mr. Hartley's recommendation would be that the commission pass along the concerns to the maintenance crews and that they give more thought while doing maintenance.

Mr. Hartley stated what really prompted him to come before the commission was because when he was in the park recently he saw a giant excavation machine driving down the Greenway path which goes behind the maintenance building and found that a Bobcat had gotten stuck and city crews were using the excavator to get it out. He said in the process they had to cut a tree down and it fell into the creek that will have to be removed. He said questioned why all these things were being done and felt that it was just because the trees were in the way and he thought somehow the trees in city parks had to be protected a little bit more and somebody needed to tell the maintenance people not to do what they were doing to the trees. He said at this point he was frustrated and angry about this and would want the maintenance people told they could not cut any more trees or branches and not to knock anything down with their machines. He encouraged the commissioners to just go down to the parks and walk through and if what they see had been done by vandals in the middle of the night everyone would be upset when instead the city was paying people to do it. He said the commission could keep his pictures.

Chair Catella thanked Mr. Hartley for bringing his concerns to the commission and he said they would follow-up on it.

Mr. David Hutchison, Environmental Board Chair, stated he had written letters and spoken to city officials about his concern as a geologist and suggested that as a result of the flood there was a geological hazard waiting to happen at the slump across from Oneonta Creek from Wilber Park pool in the upper level. He said the normal slope was roughly a 30° angle of repose and this slump was way past 45° which was highly unstable. He distributed copies of a drawing of the site. He expressed his concern for injury to persons walking in this area off the road. He said in discussion with City Engineer Suozzo it was suggested that either a natural looking log-type barrier or a 4' high dark green coated wire fence with metal stakes and secured around trees to stabilize it and have that run the entire length. He said he just wanted the fence to protect people from going in there. He said he found the best price for materials at Munson's of \$44 a roll of 4' x 50' fencing and \$3.49 for stakes. He said he roughly measured 1000' of distance which would make the cost for about 20 rolls x \$44 = \$900 and \$700 for 200 stakes for every 10' or \$350 for 100 stakes at every 20'.

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**(Petitioners)** continued

He said there was a second slump across from the Kiwanis Pavilion near the foot path that was not quite as big as the other but equally as dangerous. He suggested that an area of 350' be secured with the same type of fencing and stakes and using the trees there to stabilize it. He said that cost of the same materials at Munson's would be for 7 rolls = \$308 and \$210 for the stakes. He said aesthetically he did not like fences but these areas needed to be secured. He said these slumps were going to slump more in time.

Recreation Director Andrews stated that the Facilities/Technology/Operations Committee was going to talk about this matter at their next meeting, May 8<sup>th</sup>.

Chair Catella thanked Mr. Hutchison for the information.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**MOTION**, made by Chair Catella and seconded by Commissioner Davis, that the commission approves the minutes of the regular meeting held on April 2, 2012, as written.

**Voting Ayes:** Chair Catella  
Commissioner McCarthy  
Commissioner Davis  
Commissioner Pindar

**Noes:** None

**Absent:** Commissioner Dilello

**MOTION CARRIED**

**CORRESPONDENCE**

Chair Catella stated he received a call from Bob Halstead and he just wanted the commission to know that he and his brother would be doing the landscaping around the Waddington Memorial up at the tennis courts, as they had done in the past couple years.

Recreation Director Andrews asked the Chair to send him the contact information on that so he could touch base with them about it.

Chair Catella stated there was no other correspondence.

**OLD BUSINESS**

- Dog Park Recommendation (G. Davis)
- Playground Update (S. Andrews)
- Survey Update (S. Andrews)
- Applebaugh Funds Update (S. Andrews)
- Community/Youth Update (S. Andrews)
- Pool Use (T. Catella)

Chair Catella stated the Dog Park subcommittee submitted a complete report at the April meeting for the commission's review.

**MOTION**, made by Commissioner Davis and seconded by Commissioner McCarthy, that the Parks and Recreation Commission recommends approval of the Parks and Recreation Dog Park Subcommittee's proposal to create an off-leash dog park within Catella Park.

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Dog Park Recommendation (G. Davis)

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

MOTION CARRIED

Voting followed this discussion.

Council Member Rissberger stated that would be discussed at the Community Improvement Committee. He said at the commission's April meeting they talked about the potential involvement of the community to raise money for the dog park. He said he did discuss it with Council Members and the Mayor. He said the Mayor suggested to wait and see what developed by the subcommittee about any specific ideas of raising some money.

Commissioner Davis stated he thought the subcommittee did have ideas but would need some parameters on this, such as if the city could say it would put in an amount of money toward the project and private funds were needed to cover the rest of it, the subcommittee would have an idea of what they would have to do.

Council Member Rissberger stated he would take the commission's recommendation to the Community Improvement Committee and then he thought it would have to be forwarded to the Finance/Administration Committee. He said he thought some stipulations may need to be added. He said something like this could possibly happen in a year.

Council Member Rissberger asked if there were any changes to the final proposal submitted in April.

Commissioner Davis replied no.

Playground Update (S. Andrews)

Recreation Director Andrews stated the Common Council met May 1<sup>st</sup> and approved the recommendation of the Finance/Administration Committee to award the playground equipment to Parkitects. He said the discussion of installation was included with the Council's recommendation to go back and see what costs could be trimmed off the \$99,000 price tag of the equipment, which the installation was not budgeted. He said Parkitects has responded and they were working on that figure. He said hopefully he would have the equipment ordered within a week, maybe as early as next Wednesday and 2-3 weeks after that the equipment should start to be installed.

Chair Catella questioned if the equipment would be in by July 4<sup>th</sup>.

Recreation Director Andrews responded his original target date was June 15<sup>th</sup> and he was confident that it would be in by the 25<sup>th</sup>.

Recreation Director Andrews stated he had not received much feedback on the survey that was sent out to the commission. He said Commissioner Davis did give some feedback and he made those changes along with the comments made at the April commission meeting. He said the survey was ready to be sent out if the commission wanted to approve it at this time. He said the purchase order for survey had been done. He said they should use a 6-week period to run the survey and he was proposing to do the survey generally from Memorial Day to July 4<sup>th</sup>. He said he could get the survey results to the commission in time for budget preparations.

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(Old Business) continued

**Survey Update (S. Andrews)**

Commissioner McCarthy questioned if the question on the age of the person completing the application was included.

The commission held a brief discussion on the matter.

**MOTION**, made by Chair Catella and seconded by Commissioner Davis, that the Parks and Recreation Commission that approves the Parks and Recreation Survey for publication as edited and Recreation Director Andrews to check on Commissioner McCarthy's age of person comment.

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

**MOTION CARRIED**

Chair Catella extended thanks to Glenda Bolton and her SUNY Delhi students for doing this project.

**Applebaugh Funds Update (S. Andrews)**

Chair Catella stated feedback was received and distributed on the Applebaugh Funds.

Recreation Director Andrews gave a brief update on the report received from Director of Finance Hungerford and the amounts budgeted. He said Wild Mountain Landscaping of Otego won the award for professional landscaping of the Applebaugh Gardens. He said until feedback was received from the survey he was not recommending updating the Parks Master Plan.

Commissioner McCarthy questioned if the whole park was being done with this money and not just the Applebaugh Gardens.

Recreation Director Andrews responded his understanding was that the money could be used for other park uses than the Applebaugh Gardens. He said for the cash balance that could be spent that because of the interest rates going down the city was spending more of it than it was earning to maintain the Applebaugh Gardens. He said that was not the case back in 2005, 2006 and 2007.

The commission held a brief discussion on the matter.

Chair Catella stated he would talk to Director of Finance Hungerford about the report.

**Community/Youth Update (S. Andrews)**

Recreation Director Andrews presented the following report dated May 5, 2012:

*“Update from Community and Youth Recreation Program meeting held April 26, 2012. In attendance: Frank Russo, Executive Director at YMCA, Donna Dvorack, Executive Director, OCAY/Recreation Supervisor & Volunteer Coordinator with Oneonta Job Corps Academy, Joe Hughes, Athletic Director OHS. The group held a roundtable discussion about the need for teen programming (both year round and in the summer) and thought a teen activities survey would be a good way to reach out to the youth. Further discussion was held about the logistics and feasibility of*

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***(Community/Youth Update (S. Andrews)):*** continued

*implementing this idea. A discussion on the City Of Oneonta Parks and Recreation Survey was held and each member gave important feedback and suggestions. Steve said once this is approved by the parks committee, distribution would be from Memorial Day to July 4<sup>th</sup>. Everyone offered their assistance in getting the survey out to their constituents. Steve thanked the group for their support. The group continued to discuss some of the challenges with fields and gym space, pool facilities discussion on partnerships were shared. Steve mentioned that Al Colone and Bill Shue were having a meeting on Thursday May 3<sup>rd</sup> to discuss forming a sports advisory board. The board would help provide support for area sports events and tournaments. The next meeting is schedule for Tuesday, May 29 at 2pm in the Neahwa Park Recreation office.”*

**Pool Use (T. Catella)**

Chair Catella stated he put the pool use on the agenda again because he wanted to ask the commission if anyone had any new ideas or thoughts about fees/resident/non-resident, etc. He said Recreation Director Andrews distributed information he received from Utica and what they were faced with. He said he needed to offer more options on this and would like to place it on the agenda again for discussion.

Commissioner McCarthy stated her daughter said where she lived in the town there was no difference in what the town kids paid for use of the pool as the city kids paid.

Chair Catella stated Recreation Director Andrews told him that presently 7 years of age and younger had to be accompanied by an adult to use the pool. He said they discussed the possibility of the use of the pool being free for those 12 years old and younger in order to not make it difficult on families to have the kids use the pool but at the same the time he would not want to hear the city cannot afford to operate either pool. He asked if at the end of this swim season would be the timing for the implementation of the fees for next year.

Recreation Director Andrews responded he was not sure exactly where a recommendation on fees would go from this commission, it may go to Community Improvement Committee for review or go directly to the Finance/Administration Committee but ultimately it would go to the Common Council. He said his thought was that if they were going to implement something for 2013 it would be prudent for them to have a plan and have some of the word passed to the constituents by the end of the operating season this year, which was generally Labor Day.

Commissioner McCarthy stated the question was how to differentiate.

Recreation Director Andrews stated on that note if there was any reciprocity why would it not be in the town's best interest to then have an agreement with the city to share services like they do with some other facilities and shared services. He said but then there had to be a mechanism to establish wherever else someone lives.

Commissioner Davis stated it was still not clear to him how much potential revenue the city wanted to generate from a user fee of the pool. He said to him that was a starting point because he thought that would have a lot to say about how to generate it and what was feasible.

Recreation Director Andrews stated he agreed with the commissioner but he thought this commission needed to get its hands around the philosophy of charging. He said the Mayor has talked in the past about offsetting costs with user fees to the tune of 50 percent. He said with a \$100,000 pool budget that would mean in the best case scenario the city would want to offset the costs and generate \$50,000 and he did not think that was reasonable to expect. He said if the commission got its hands around the concept of having a fee he thought those details could be worked out going forward.

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**(Old Business)** continued

Commissioner Davis stated if the city thought about raising about \$40,000 toward the pool budget he said he believed the city of Oneonta had slightly over 4,000 housing units and if a swimming pool tax of \$10 was charged per housing unit that would raise the \$40,000. He said that would mean there would be no monkeying around with dealing with somebody paying to go into the pool, determining how old they were and where they lived.

Recreation Director Andrews stated but a person as a city resident who did not use the pool may not feel that would be fair to tax them for it.

Chair Catella stated these were good points and will taken into consideration at a future discussion.

**NEW BUSINESS**

- Ash Tree Survey Report (Ed Linsler)
- Prohibited Smoking Areas/Youth Activities (G. Davis)
- Wilber Park Foot Bridge Update/Review

**Ash Tree Survey Report (Ed Linsler)**

Chair Catella recognized Mr. Edward Linsler, student, State University of New York, College at Oneonta.

Mr. Linsler distributed copies of the “Ash Tree Survey of Neahwa and Wilber Parks” dated May 7, 2012 he had prepared under faculty sponsor Donna Vogler, Biology Department. He spoke briefly about the survey saying this semester he had gone through both Wilber and Neahwa Parks and did a survey of the Ash trees in regard to the Emerald Ash Borer, an invasive insect, a beetle, that will eventually arrive in Oneonta, possibly 1-3 years, and kill every Ash tree. He looked at the bark patterns, remaining seeds and branches and found over 70 Ash trees in both parks. It was not realistic to eradicate this beetle itself but there were two reasonable courses of action, the injection of pesticides into individual trees or harvesting the trees before the risk actually gets here. Some trees really needed to be addressed with a course of action, in Wilber Park mainly the trees near the pool and almost hanging over the pool because there was the risk of a falling branch if the tree started to die, the trees at the western entrance of Neahwa Park because if damaged they could have falling branches on the path or the road, and along the millrace there were several young Ash trees that probably should be left for now but replaced with another species such as sycamore or silver maple because eventually they will decline in health and need to be removed.

Chair Catella asked Mr. Linsler about how much time he invested in doing this survey.

Mr. Linsler responded it took him about 2 weeks to physically survey the trees and prepare maps and GPS coordinates, which he available for anyone who may need them.

Recreation Director Andrews stated that the survey was really very thorough and he asked Mr. Linsler to e-mail him the coordinates.

Dr. Vogler spoke briefly about other surveys being done and the need for awareness of hazardous trees and hazards to trees. She asked if the commission would be willing to place in the parks, as had been done in the past, of tagging trees with information. She said she would get copies of Mr. Linsler’s survey to Recreation Director Andrews and Jim Hawver in Engineering.

Chair Catella responded he did not see a problem with that.

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(New Business) continued

*Prohibited Smoking Areas/Youth Activities (G. Davis)*

Commissioner Davis stated the reason he started looking into prohibited smoking areas was there were conversations in the youth soccer program about prohibiting smoking at the soccer fields during practices and games. He said he was not 100 percent sure what the city's policy was in the past. He said information he received from the City Attorney was that the youth soccer program could set rules and guidelines for the program but not for the parks. He said currently the existing policy did not specifically prohibit smoking at the athletic fields.

Commissioner Pindar stated smoking was prohibited at specific fields, i.e. Damaschke, Field #6, the playground area, Skate Park and the swimming pool.

Commissioner Davis questioned if the commission would like to revise this policy to cover prohibiting smoking at the soccer fields for the youth games.

City Clerk Koury stated the recommendation would need to be forwarded to the Community Improvement Committee.

Commissioner Pindar stated that there was the issue of enforcing no smoking but what this policy would allow was for parks people to say to someone smoking that perhaps they did not see the no smoking signs. He said at Damaschke they ask people they find smoking to leave.

Recreation Director Andrews stated what they did for the city softball league was include a friendly rule as a policy in their rules that says they did not want smoking on the fields, in the bleacher areas and if they want to smoke be a reasonable amount of distance away. He said they found that most players were understanding.

The commission held a brief discussion on the matter and the consensus was to prohibit smoking at all athletic fields.

**MOTION**, made by Commissioner Davis and seconded by Commissioner Pindar, that the Parks and Recreation Commission recommends that the city's policy on the prohibition of smoking in parks be revised to include all athletic fields.

**Voting Ayes:** Chair Catella  
Commissioner McCarthy  
Commissioner Davis  
Commissioner Pindar

**Noes:** None

**Absent:** Commissioner Dilello

**MOTION CARRIED**

*Wilber Park Foot Bridge Update/Review*

Chair Catella stated going back to Mr. Hutchison and his concern earlier about slumps he said the Wilber Park small foot bridge was currently closed and he was being told it would be pretty expensive, over \$30,000, to repair it. He said Facilities was looking for a recommendation.

Recreation Director Andrews stated in one of the pictures Mr. Hutchison presented to the commission earlier it showed the foot bridge on the right hand side and the road Mr. Hutchison talked about that connects the parking lot of the Middle School all the way to the large pavilion in Upper Wilber Park. He said that road was the primary path, trail or walkway that connects the High School to the Upper Wilber Park area as well as that was a secondary emergency road in case of

(New Business) continued

evacuation of the school. He said that was why the city maintained that one bridge there. He said the location of this foot bridge was an informal trail that comes down from the north and ties into the path and kind of loops around the Oneonta Creek and comes back up. He said in last year's flood this area eroded very badly where it was unsafe. He said the foot bridge was taken out of service and he understands it would be a significant cost to replace. He said he was looking for a recommendation from the commission not to replace that and remove the bridge and restore that to its natural area.

Chair Catella stated the commissioners could wait and go take a look at the area or he could get pictures of it and e-mail them before making a recommendation to remove it if the city did not get the FEMA money.

Commissioner McCarthy stated this was the foot bridge that former Code Enforcement Officer Friedman used the kids in the Youth Employment Program to repair in the past.

Recreation Director Andrews stated that the recommendation needed to be forwarded to the Facilities/Technology/Operations Committee.

**MOTION**, made by Chair Catella and seconded by Commissioner Davis, that the Parks and Recreation Commission recommends that if FEMA money is not provided for the repair of the small foot bridge in Wilber Park that it be removed and the area restored to natural conditions.

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

**MOTION CARRIED**

Commissioner Davis stated that in regard to the concerns presented by the petitioner earlier he said that about a week ago one of his dogs went over one of the slopes in Wilber Park on a leash with his wife following. He said they were both fine but he agreed with the petitioner about those slopes or slumps.

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

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JAMES R. KOURY, City Clerk

JRK/pab