

ONEONTA, NEW YORK - MARCH 5, 2012 - 7:00 P.M.

REGULAR MEETING OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION PG. 1

PRESENT: Acting Chair Geoff Davis
Commissioner Stephen Pindar
Commissioner Gary Dilello
Council Member David Rissberger

ABSENT: Chair Tim Catella
Commissioner Cynthia McCarthy

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

PETITIONERS

Mr. Ed Linsler stated he was a biology student at SUCO and one of the main things he would like to do this semester was an independent study with Dr. Vogler. He said he would like to make a survey of the ash trees in Neahwa and Wilber Parks because of the invasive species the Emerald Ash Borer that has not arrived here yet but was coming. He said this insect prefers ash trees and will kill them. He said he would like to map out and mark which trees would be the most important to look at in terms of removal.

Acting Chair Davis questioned which department this would actually come under.

Recreation Director Andrews stated he had spoken to Engineering Technician Burton about this and he thought that Mr. Linsler should contact him to coordinate the scope of the project and what he could do. He said the city was made aware of this issue last year and some awareness tags were put on some trees. He said he thought volunteering and doing this project would be a great thing for the city and would help in identifying what the city could do. He asked if there was anyway the city could protect the trees from the ash borer.

Mr. Linsler replied there were pesticides being developed that were very expensive but presently to protect the communities the remedy was basically to cut the ash trees down. He said by cutting those trees down before the insects come would eliminate risk of injury or destruction to buildings and other structures.

Recreation Director Andrews questioned what Mr. Linsler estimated there to be from just walking around the city and parks of ash trees.

Mr. Linsler responded he did not know for sure but at a recent workshop he attended it was said that it was estimated in upstate New York that 1 in 14 trees are ash trees.

Acting Chair Davis stated this group did not have the authority to approve or disapprove but appreciated hearing what the student wanted to do. He said this needed to go through Engineering and suggested he contact Engineering Technician Burton.

Dr. Vogler stated that this was just mapping trees and any public person should be able to go into the parks and do this without any kind of approval.

Recreation Director Andrews stated yes and no. He said if the student was volunteering and doing something on city property he would still need to follow the proper channels. He said Engineering Technician Burton was the contact because he knows all the trees and inventories and he could help direct and target the student's efforts, etc. He said it was nice that the commission knows about what the student was doing but it was really something that should be coordinated with Engineering. He said Engineering Technician Burton as well as the commission and he would like to see the information from the survey.

CORRESPONDENCE

City Clerk Koury stated there was no correspondence.

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OLD BUSINESS

- Update from Dog Park subcommittee
- Update on the survey development
- Update from Recreation Director Andrews on the community youth and recreation kick-off meeting

Update from Dog Park subcommittee

Subcommittee member Chris Moore gave a brief update on the dog park saying research was ongoing, several locations recommended by Recreation Director Andrews were investigated and one location looked like it would not work because of the flooding conditions caused by certain portions of the Greenway.

Mr. Moore reported that he checked on the number of dogs registered in the city and was surprised that the number in 2011 doubled from 2010 and had observed many dogs not wearing registration tags on their collars. He said for the dog park all the registries regardless of where the dog was registered would have to be on file with them. He said according to veterinarian Dr. Puritz there were certain inoculations that would be required for use of any type of dog park and the dogs would have to be certified in some way by a veterinarian. He said that was all well ahead of where the subcommittee was on the matter. He said he would like the commission to be thinking about when and what information did the commission need for its next meeting from the subcommittee in order for the commission to make a decision.

Acting Chair Davis stated the commission would need information on budgetary figures and the costs of putting a dog park in whatever location. He said there was a fairly new dog park in Binghamton that a subcommittee member was going to take a look out to get ideas.

Mr. Moore stated that he was also going to see a dog park in Afton but it was a private park.

Recreation Director Andrews stated there was also a dog park in Saratoga.

Acting Chair Davis stated in terms of this commission to be able to make any kind of recommendation he thought would depend on possible locations in city parks and what the cost would be in terms of setting it up and maintenance. He said if the commission was comfortable with that information it could make a recommendation to the Finance/Administration Committee.

Mr. Moore stated he thought it would be helpful for those on the subcommittee pursuing this to have some indication or reason to continue with their efforts.

Council Member Rissberger stated he thought if the subcommittee could come up with an outline plan of the space required, where they would like it and also the costs involved.

Mr. Moore stated that the subcommittee had that information.

Council Member Rissberger stated he wondered if that information could be submitted to the Facilities/Technology/Operations Committee for approval and a recommendation to the Finance/Administration Committee or if the money gets raised a different way.

Recreation Director Andrews asked about what space they were entertaining.

Mr. Moore stated he would rather not say at this point because they would like to look at other areas.

Acting Chair Davis suggested that the next time the subcommittee met that it put together a specific proposal to present to the Parks and Recreation Commission at its April meeting. He said it would then need to be forwarded to a Council committee.

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(Old Business - Dog Park subcommittee update) continued

Recreation Director Andrews stated the process would be for the subcommittee to get a rock solid proposal to the Parks and Recreation Commission for a recommendation to approve it and to move it on to the Facilities, Technology, and Operations Committee and then from there to the Finance and Administration Committee to see what they wanted to do and how they wanted to include it, i.e. in the 2013 budget or beyond. He said in the end the Finance/Administration Committee would make that recommendation as part of the budget process in the fall. He said around July would be the time limit for the subcommittee.

Recreation Director Andrews stated he spoke to City Attorney Merzig and the city's NYMIR representative Mr. Bob Blasdell regarding legal considerations and insurance of a proposed dog park. He said City Attorney Merzig would like to see specific signage with legal language similar to what there was in the Skate Park. He said Mr. Blasdell said that if the city constructed a dog park it would be covered under the city's general insurance policy. He said Mr. Blasdell said there were other municipalities that had dog parks and he also mentioned that in his hometown of Saratoga there was an "off-leash" park that could be looked into. He said Mr. Blasdell said signage was a must and asked if there would be signage and lighting. He said he told him he did not know about lighting because an area for the dog park had not been determined yet. He said Mr. Blasdell's recommendations were to just have good policies, lighting and signage in place.

Recreation Director Andrews questioned if the subcommittee was looking at charging a fee for use of the dog park.

Mr. Moore responded yes, basically something like a \$4 or \$5 fee but that would include certification and pay toward the cost of the park maintenance. He said maybe a process could be setup with the Clerk's Office for that charge when people license their dogs or renew a license.

City Clerk Koury stated that would need to go the Council and he wondered how use of the park would be monitored.

Mr. Moore stated there were ways such as a fence with an electronic gate that would be locked and opened when entry was permitted.

The commission held a brief discussion on the matter.

Update on the survey development

Recreation Director Andrews stated in February he met with students from SUNY Delhi and Chair Davis and Commissioner Dilello attended as well to kickoff the program study for developing the survey. He said they were a great group and when he gave them a tour of the park facilities they had a lot of questions. He said he provided them with information and Recreation Clerk Dave Coury put together brochures, flyers, maps, and other materials on a disk for them. He said from that meeting Ms. Glenda Bolton, the students' teacher, sent him a tentative draft survey, which he reviewed and gave some recommendations back to her. He said he thought it was a really good foundation for a survey. He said he thought it was a good start but he still had more questions and the survey would probably undergo several revisions to refine it. He said then there would be the question of how the survey would be distributed, who would it be distributed to, costs, tabulation of results, etc. He said he thought it was moving along splendid.

Acting Chair Davis asked about when the commission would see a draft of the survey.

Recreation Director Andrews replied he would think that would be at the April meeting.

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(Old Business) continued

Update from Recreation Director Andrews on the Community Youth and Recreation Program kick-off meeting

Recreation Director Andrews stated the program had its first meeting February 23rd and Vic Ronovech – Otsego County Youth Bureau, Frank Russo – Executive Director of the YMCA and Donna Dvorack – Executive Director of Oneonta Community Alliance for Youth (OCAY) who also works as Recreation Supervisor & Volunteer Coordinator with Oneonta Job Corps. He said Joe Hughes – Athletic Director at Oneonta High School and Carl Delberta – President Oneonta Boys and Girls Club were unable to attend. He said he basically discussed the purpose of the meeting and what could be accomplished in the next few months of sharing information and exploring ideas to work collaboratively for the betterment of the community. He said there was a roundtable discussion of sharing what programs were conducted, the challenges and how possible partnerships would work. He said they all agreed there were fundamental similarities between the groups and programs offered and that Oneonta had a long tradition of providing athletic youth programming all year round and programs in the summer when city recreation programs kick up and the gaps they could focus on. He said they also discussed some differences in the programs and the individual mandates the programs had. He discussed SUNY Delhi's Needs Assessment survey project and how it tied into programming, the future and long term and the need to update the parks master plan. He said the group had some questions on the design of the survey, distribution, costs and they also wanted to be a part of this process. He said Donna Dvorack had done these types of surveys and had a sophisticated software program and offered to help to allow the tabulation to be done quicker. He said he did talk about his willingness to work on a volunteer program in the city of Oneonta to try to consolidate some of things being done with the different organizations. He said the group agreed to meet again in the short-term and scheduled a meeting for Thursday, March 22nd at 3:00 p.m. in the Skatehouse. He said the commissioners were invited.

Acting Chair Davis stated at the February meeting he had asked for an update on the Applebaugh Funds. He said the commission got some information on it and received an overview of the total budget of what the money had been spent on and what it was designated for this year. He asked Chair Catella to make a request for more specific information and he was working on it.

Recreation Director Andrews stated he spoke to Rehab Building Specialist House about the grant funding for the Wilber Park Bathhouse project and he said that this round of New York State funding from the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (NYSOPRHP) was over and he would apply for the next round of funding. He said in the short-term Mr. House would be making application to put the Bathhouse on the Historic Registry. He said Mr. House thought that would make the grant application stronger.

Acting Chair Davis questioned if that historic status would make it more expensive to renovate it because that would make it more restrictive.

Recreation Director Andrews stated that was a good question for Mr. House.

City Clerk Koury stated that the City Hall building was on the Historic Registry and the city had to be careful in the changes made to it.

Council Member Rissberger stated he would e-mail Mr. House about it. He said he was not familiar with all the repairs that needed to be made to the Bathhouse.

Recreation Director Andrews gave him a brief summary of the existing repair plan.

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NEW BUSINESS

Recreation Director Andrews stated he had plans for three designs of Neahwa Park playground equipment. He said he had talked to five vendors and had plans from three. He said he wanted to share the information with the commission and get a sense of what it would recommend. He said he met with Commissioner McCarthy and showed her the plans. He said he would be going to the Facilities/Technology/Operations Committee for a recommendation. He said his timeline was to have something in place within the next couple weeks. He said once he was officially notified that the New York State contract was picked back up for playground equipment he would proceed to finalize the design, finalize the site in coordination with the Engineering Department and then order the equipment. He said as soon as the weather gets nice and it was all coordinated the equipment would be installed.

Acting Chair Davis suggested that Recreation Director Andrews contact Commissioner McCarthy again about the plans.

Council Member Rissberger questioned if the equipment was already in the budget or how was it being paid for.

Recreation Director Andrews responded \$70,000 was apportioned for the last 2 years in the budget for this equipment. He said several other pieces of playground equipment were found to be unsafe and certified playground inspectors gave a recommendation to remove it. He said in the first round of excavation he had it removed and he would be advocating for some new money to hopefully replace those pieces.

The commission held a brief discussion on the playground equipment.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The commission approved the minutes of the regular meeting held February 6, 2012, as written, without benefit of a motion.

There being no further business to come before the commission, Acting Chair Davis adjourned the regular meeting at approximately 7:45 p.m.

JAMES R. KOURY, City Clerk

JRK/pab