

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Minutes
October 5, 2004

Members Present: Jerry Wilinski, Larry Haley, Patricia Klein, Garrylee McCormick, John Hilliard, Lance Ferraro, Josh DeBruyn

Guests Present: Pat Vinge, Frances Jewell, Mary Ann Ampersee

Chair McCormick called the meeting to order at 5:07 pm. Frances Jewell introduced Pat Vinge to the group and informed them that Ms. Vinge would be taking over the duties of Board Recording Secretary in January 2005. She explained that this change was part of the Parks/Public Services separation which had occurred several years ago.

Ms. Klein asked that copies of event requests approved through telephone polls be included in subsequent Board packets. She also asked that a copy of the correspondence sent to the City Commission on behalf of the Board be distributed. Ms. Ampersee agreed to forward this correspondence.

With a name addition, John Hilliard motioned approval of the minutes of the August 3, 2004 meeting. Patricia Klein seconded his motion which was unanimously approved by the Board.

Ms. Klein then explained to the group that she had submitted correspondence to Parks and Recreation Director Frances Jewell regarding her frustration with the unclear purpose of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board. As stated in her letter, she explained her displeasure with Board meeting cancellations, telephone polls, etc., as well as her feeling that the Board was not functioning in a meaningful way and that staff had misused their authority in canceling the September meeting without knowledge of the Board Chair. She also stated that she had read through the PRAB by-laws in an effort to clarify the role of the Board and the Director and suggested that a subcommittee be formed to more clearly define the duties of the Board as well as the duties of City staff.

John Hilliard stated he had felt underused as a Board member and expressed his desire to become a more active advocate for Parks and Recreation by attending meetings as a guest speaker, promoting parks, programs, budgets, etc.

Ms. Jewell stated that she attended many public meetings and possessed volumes of information which could be passed along to Board members for their use. Further, she welcomed support from the Board and suggested that a list of

service groups be compiled if the Board were indeed willing to commit their time. She also stated that she felt information communicated by the Board carried more weight than that from City employees.

In response to Ms. Klein's correspondence regarding the role of staff, Ms. Ampersee explained that each month she was required to notify the City Manager's office whether or not a meeting would be held the following month. She stated that in this particular instance, no issues were slated for discussion, nor were there any event requests. Ms. Ampersee apologized for not discussing the cancellation with the Board Chair and stated the Board had cancelled meetings in the past based on the same information with the Chair's approval.

Ms. Ampersee then explained that as soon as the notification of cancellation had been sent, several new event requests had been received requiring telephone poll approval. Ms. Ampersee also offered to provide the Board with copies of the by-laws which had been reviewed and revised several years ago. Ms. Ampersee expressed her distress that Ms. Klein had felt it necessary to send written correspondence to the Director with a copy to Commissioner Cooney.

Ms. Jewell stated that she too had been upset by the letter as she had felt the Board had a better working relationship and she had hoped they would be able to talk about their issues and concerns. She also suggested that Board members request that such issues be included on future agendas and recommended that a future meeting be devoted to discuss the role and responsibilities of the Board.

Ms. Jewell encouraged the group to form a sub-committee if they so desired and stated that she would be happy to meet as well. She cautioned the group to be mindful of the open meetings act should they choose to form a sub-committee.

Ms. Jewell then asked if Board members desired a monthly meeting, regardless of the issues. Mr. Haley stated he appreciated Ms. Klein's concerns, but was often happy not to have to meet if there were no issues to discuss. He also stated he felt it is important to continue the discussion among the group informally. Lance Ferraro echoed his concerns and stated he too had been disturbed to realize a City Commissioner had been copied on the correspondence from Ms. Klein. Ms. Klein stated that she felt this was appropriate as Commissioner Cooney is the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board's Commission Liaison.

Mr. Ferraro also stated his opinion that the Board's main purpose was to promote parks, park amenities, etc. He then stated he felt that if more money were spent for Parks, less money would be needed for jails. Mr. Ferraro explained that as a former City Commissioner, he felt that many times the

Commission doesn't understand the importance of Parks and Recreation. He also suggested raising penalties and fees for event sponsors who did not meet the required time frames for event requests.

Ms. Jewell reminded the group that the City Commission no longer approved events but had turned over this responsibility to the City Manager. The group briefly discussed the approval process and the necessary steps required by the City prior to holding an event.

Ms. Jewell again asked if the Board wanted to meet monthly regardless of the agenda. Ms. Klein stated that she was opposed to telephone polls, as they did not allow a discussion of the event by the whole group. Ms. Jewell informed the group that she could not guarantee the need would not arise for telephone polls even if the group met monthly. Josh DeBruyn stated that he felt comfortable with the occasional telephone poll as he had always asked questions and received the necessary information prior to making his decision.

Mr. Hilliard asked if the group could return to the discussion of learning more about the role of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board. He stated that he felt the meeting's discussion had been a good one, and hoped that the Board could look into their role and eventually enhance the Board's function.

Ms. Jewell stated that she would send the Board the proposed Parks and Recreation Department goals for 2005 in the hopes that the group could incorporate these into their vision for the Board.

Josh DeBruyn stated that he had received correspondence from the Westnedge Hill Neighborhood which contained several citizen suggestions for Crane Park. He stated his intention to attend the next meeting both as a Board member and as a neighborhood resident. Ms. Jewell encouraged him to contact Parks Manager Mark Polega as he had also been in contact with this organization.

Larry Haley asked if the City had any plans for the old Douglas Avenue drive-in theatre site. Ms. Jewell stated she understood the property had recently been sold, however, she did not know for what purpose.

In general the Board agreed that further discussions regarding the role and purpose of the Board would be beneficial. Ms. Jewell stated she was more than happy to meet and discuss the issues as well. The group agreed to hold a November meeting with the intent to discuss the Department's goals and budget and their subsequent role.

Ms. Jewell informed the group that the new facility was 99% complete. It was

suggested that the November meeting be held in this new facility.

Ms. Jewell also offered to set up a joint meeting between the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and the Friends of Recreation group who were very active in fundraising. She stated their next project was the planning, development and construction of a dog park in Fairmount Park. Further, she invited those interested to attend a meeting the following day with the "Dog Park Committee" to discuss this issue. Mr. Ferraro asked for a cost estimate and was informed that it would cost approximately \$215,000.

Ms. Jewell invited the group to visit the Youth Development Center to see the newly constructed bridge over the creek which joins the Center with Upjohn Park. She also stated that a partnering effort was underway between volunteers and the Humane Society to address the domestic duck and goose issue at Milham Park.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:35 pm.