

**Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Minutes  
January 4, 2005**

Members Present: John Hilliard, Pat Klein, Josh DeBruyn, Garrylee McCormick

Guests Present: Commissioner Don Cooney, Honorable Mary Brown, Frances Jewell, Pat Vinge

Chair McCormick called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m.

Pat Klein requested an agenda addition concerning the role of PRAB in community/neighborhood involvement in park activities; accepted by the Chair.

John Hilliard moved that the minutes of the December 7, 2004 meeting be approved, seconded by Pat Klein, unanimously approved by Board.

The election of officers followed. Ms. Klein nominated John Hilliard as chair; Garrylee McCormick nominated Josh DeBruyn as vice-chair. Pat Klein moved the above nominations be accepted, seconded by Garrylee McCormick. The nominations were unanimously approved.

Chair John Hilliard opened discussion to Special Events. There was brief discussion of the Borgess Run for the Health of It, scheduled for Spring Valley Park on Saturday, April 30, 2005. Josh DeBruyn asked if the run was staged from the park with additional running on the streets. The answer was yes. Garrylee McCormick moved the event be approved, seconded by Josh DeBruyn. Motion carried unanimously.

The addition to the agenda concerning the role of PRAB in community/neighborhood involvement in park activities was discussed at some length. There was concern that with the near closing of Woods Lake Park during the City Commission's budget deliberations, that this could result in an "avalanche" of park closings. Ms. Klein had spoken with individuals from several neighborhoods concerning their interest in facilitating keeping City parks open and possibly establishing various "Friends" groups for specific parks. Ms. Klein reported back on her conversations with Gary Wager, Holly Ringle, and Linda Wiernir.

Gary Wager, president of the Oakwood Neighborhood Association, had made several suggestions regarding optimization of Woods Lake Park: resume lifeguards at the beach [this was discontinued in 2001]; provide organized recreation programs including learn to swim at the beach; offer a snack bar; work in partnership with the City.

Holly Ringle, of Westnedge Hill Neighborhood, suggested that additional funds could be raised for Woods Lake Park through user fees and possibly parking fees.

Linda Wiernir, president of Whites/Edgemoor/Bronson Neighborhood (W.E.B.) also advocated keeping Woods Lake Park open.

An individual with the Oakland Drive/Winchell Neighborhood Association suggested that volunteer organizations provide maintenance of the parks and suggested that a park millage be considered.

Ms. Klein indicated that the above individuals were not necessarily representing their neighborhood associations but were speaking for themselves. Pat Klein asked that the role of PRAB in community/neighborhood involvement in park activities be put on next month's PRAB agenda. This was directed to be done by Mr. Hilliard.

Josh DeBruyn asked Frances Jewell what her thoughts were on "Friends" groups for specific parks. She said that her vision of the role of volunteers assisting in maintaining a viable park system was related to raising funds to renovate/rehab parks, rather than to assist in ongoing maintenance. She mentioned the difficulty of relying on volunteers for day to day assistance as opposed to volunteer assistance at a single event. Ms. Jewell also expressed concern that additional "Friends" groups might be confused with or have a negative impact on the volunteer-driven "Friends of Recreation" Municipal Recreation Endowment at the Kalamazoo Community Foundation.

John Hilliard suggested that Pat Klein ask that one or two individuals from concerned neighborhoods come to the next PRAB meeting and explain their thoughts on community involvement in the parks system. Ms. Klein agreed to invite Gary Wager and Linda Wiernir to the next meeting.

Mr. Hilliard asked Frances Jewell for an update on the Friends Endowment. Ms. Jewell said that the amount needed to actually endow the Parks and Recreation Department and eliminate general fund subsidy would be about \$30 million; presently the endowment has, including commitments, about \$1.5 million. Mr. Hilliard observed that this is a long term goal and that the short term revenue shortfalls are like "a noose around our necks."

Commissioner Cooney expressed his concern that we have to charge groups to use the parks. It was unfortunate that organizations with similar goals to the City in terms of youth development, etc., still had to be charged to reserve a park. He said we need to look for ways to have the City facilitate and work with these groups. Frances pointed out that Parks and Recreation generated \$330,000 in fees and charges.

Mr. Hilliard observed that although youth programs were saved in this year's budget, there was no guarantee this would happen next year. He asked if any of the City programs could be picked up by other organizations in the community and if Parks and Recreation works with other agencies to help make Parks and Recreation pro-active rather than reactive.

Ms. Jewell assured Mr. Hilliard that studies have been done and that the youth serving agencies in the community do work together. [The Kalamazoo Youth Development Network (KYDN) meets monthly and is made up of over 75 youth serving agencies with 20-30 organizations regularly attending the meetings.] Frances shared that the Parks and Recreation staff are phenomenal at "pounding the pavement" and soliciting grants ranging from \$100 to thousands of dollars. Frances Jewell gave members a report which documents Parks and Recreation grants and partnerships over the past 9 years.

There are collaborations with 53 outside organizations and governments as well as \$2,719,048 in grant funding for programs and facilities, excluding the annual KMGMA contribution [and excluding the Mayors' Riverfront Park Capital Campaign]. From 1985-1996, the Recreation Division sought and received \$1,474,686 in grant funding for recreation programs and facilities.

Commissioner Cooney praised the quality of Parks and Recreation programming as well as the excellent staff. He has worked directly with the staff and programs at the Washington Writers' Academy evening recreation program. Don Cooney also said that Denise Siegel, Recreation Manager, has been terrific to work with and that she comes up with new ways to leverage funds for programming. He also praised the work that Steve Youngblood, Parks and Recreation Aquatics and Special Populations Coordinator, has done with emotionally challenged youth. Ms. Jewell indicated that she is very pleased with the staff and that Denise has done a great job bringing out the best in her staff.

John Hilliard asked about future grant commitments. Frances indicated that the 4 year Juvenile Justice Grant which is funded through FIA will end October 31, 2005. This has helped fund the Youth Development Program Liaison staff person at the Youth Development Center and it will be a challenge to find the dollars to continue this position. Mr. Hilliard commented on what a blessing the local foundations have been to the community.

Mary Brown suggested that Ms. Jewell talk to the United Way about setting "At Risk Youth" as a Funding Priority. It has been about 8 years since it was a United Way Funding Priority. Again, this was when the economy was in a downturn as it is now.

Don Cooney stated that interest in at risk youth is definitely increasing. He cited a day long conference on January 22, 2005 on youth violence and its alternatives. He also said work is being done with the Fetzer group related to alternatives to a new jail in the community—working at prevention and reconnecting juvenile offenders with the community. The \$3 million 10 year millage being proposed would include dollars for prevention and reconnecting juveniles.

Garrylee McCormick shared that LaCrone Park received a grant from the Kalamazoo Community Foundation and that Frances was not aware of this! The \$7,500 grant is being given to the Deacons Conference for a master plan and some renovation work to the park. Both Commissioner Cooney and Ms. Jewell affirmed that the City needs to be involved in this project.

Pat Klein reminded the Board that a member will have to be appointed to the Tree Committee as Garrylee McCormick's term has expired and is not eligible for renewal. Garrylee has offered to continue to serve on PRAB until a replacement can be found and remain on both the Tree Committee and the Herbicide/Pesticide Committee. Both committees meet on an ad hoc basis. Josh DeBruyn asked what the committees did and Garrylee indicated that if a citizen wishes to remove a tree that is in the curblawn space that the committee visits the site and makes a recommendation to Forestry. Frances Jewell indicated that the Herbicide/Pesticide Committee does not deal with routine pest/herb removal but is consulted in a situation such as when Consumers

Power wanted to herbicide a right of way that cut through Blanche Hull Park. The committee was able to meet with and work with Consumers Power on this. Mr. DeBruyn said that if Mr. McCormick is unable to attend a meeting, that he would be happy to fill in and would be interested in serving on the committees when Mr. McCormick leaves the Board.

Mr. McCormick inquired about the Property Review Committee. PRAB and ECC are supposed to be represented on that committee and Mr. McCormick indicated that PRAB had not been invited recently. Frances Jewell said she will check on this and report back at the next meeting.

Members asked why Mr. McCormick could not be reappointed to PRAB and Ms. Jewell indicated that there are term limits for boards and that Mr. McCormick had served consecutively since 1996, having completed his second full term. Ms. Jewell said that rules required that if a board wished to extend a term a memo must be sent to the City Commission indicating the reason for an extension and that anything beyond 6 months was often questioned by the Commission. Commissioner Cooney said that he thought the Commission could make an exception when someone had special expertise in an area. Ms. Jewell said that she felt the Board should look for new members and that if after an effort was made to recruit a replacement and no replacement was found that she would support requesting that the Commission make an exception and appoint Mr. McCormick to a third term. Ms. Jewell said she greatly respects Mr. McCormick and thanked him for his devotion to Parks and Recreation and assured the Board that her desire to look for new members was solely related to supporting the spirit of the rules regarding term limits and was meant in no way to reflect negatively on Mr. McCormick. Don Cooney and all Board members reiterated Ms. Jewell's kudos to Mr. McCormick. It was moved and carried that Ms. Jewell will send a request to the Commission to extend Mr. McCormick's term until June 1, 2005 while the Board actively recruits new members.

Mr. McCormick indicated that the only Board applicant has not returned calls. There are 2 positions open on the Board (Mr. McCormick and Mr. Wilinski) as well as 2 youth representatives. Frances said that when the updated PRAB member list is received that all members will receive a copy.

Commissioner Cooney thanked the Board for their vocal support of Parks and Recreation programs at the recent Commission budget meetings. He said that they played a part in saving the activities that were reinstated into the Parks and Recreation budget. John Hilliard said that the community needs to look at long term fixes for the revenue shortfalls. Pat Klein gave a special thanks to the Commission for reinstating the Parks and Recreation budget cuts. Commissioner Cooney said that the Commission will be looking at new revenue sources including a possible income tax and restructuring of some City services. Josh DeBruyn offered 2 free guest passes to the Michigan Recreation and Park Association (MRPA) Conference in Traverse City February 6 and 7, 2005. He will be exhibiting there for Gove and Associates. Ms. Jewell shared that one Parks and Recreation staff would also be attending.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:50 p.m.