

APPROVED
Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Minutes
February 1, 2005

Chair Hilliard called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Members Present: John Hilliard, Patricia Klein, Josh DeBruyn, Garrylee McCormick, Larry Haley

Members Absent: Lance Ferraro

Staff Present: Frances Jewell, Pat Vinge

Procedural Matters: If there is a need for telephone approval of events, this will be reported in the minutes of the next meeting, giving the number of members contacted and the vote. It was also requested that the minutes reflect members both present and absent at the meeting.

Introduction of Guests: Eric Large and Gary Wager, nominees for the PRAB Board; Raoul Yochim, co-president of the Oakland Drive/Winchell Neighborhood Association, and Frank Wolf, president of Woods Lake Association were introduced.

Changes to the Agenda: Pat Klein requested that the Board member applications be moved to the beginning of New Business.

Approval of Minutes: The January 4, 2005 minutes were approved with the following change: "*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." Frances will verify whether Mr. McCormick may stay on the Board until June 1, even if new members are chosen.

Old Business:

Woods Lake Park—Input from neighborhood groups

Chair Hilliard introduced discussion with the statement that PRAB is an advisory board and is seeking community input on Woods Lake Park. Funding for maintenance of Woods Lake Park was not originally included in the 2005 budget, but was later restored by the City Commission. There is concern about future funding cuts in this area.

Gary Wager, President of Oakwood Neighborhood Association (ONA), said that the Association owns the Memorial Beach adjacent to Woods Lake Park and leases this property to the City. The lease expires in March of 2005 and the Association would like to see the lease renewed. Mr. Wager also invited the City to the Oakwood Neighborhood Association meeting on February 11, 2005 to discuss Woods Lake Park. The Association received a grant from the Northside Ministerial Alliance Training Institute to fund a volunteer coordinator position. ONA would like to see the beach kept open with expanded recreational activities, possibly with lifeguards and a concession. Mr. Wager emphasized that the park is for all City residents, not just the neighborhood. In the short term, the Association will be looking for volunteers to help keep the park

open in 2006 with a longer range plan to seek grant opportunities for expansion of activities at the park.

Frank Wolf, president of Woods Lake Association, discussed the monitoring of water quality in Woods Lake which began over 10 years ago. Mr. Wolf said that 40% of the Woods Lake shoreline is owned by the City and the Oakwood Neighborhood Association. The City paid for a water quality study which has resulted in the Woods Lake Association providing educational programs on watershed issues and paying for chemical treatment of algae in the lake. The Clean Water Act provided \$440,000 for treatment of storm water entering Woods Lake. Mr. Wolf said that there has been a good partnership with the City and that the Woods Lake Association would like to see the park remain open. The Association considers it to be a valuable City asset and closure of the park would be detrimental to the neighborhood.

Mr. Wolf expressed his personal opinion that the City should pay for the basic operation of its parks and encouraged citizens to remind the City Commission that Woods Lake Park is an important asset to the City. Mr. Wolf said that volunteers could be an important part of Woods Lake, however, he thought their work should be limited to non-maintenance duties. He suggested that landscaping and planting ground cover to prevent erosion were areas that volunteers could do well. Also, volunteers could help with recreation activities such as swim lessons and nature lessons.

Mr. Wolf said that renewing the ONA Memorial Beach lease was important and that ONA volunteers would be good partners with the City. In closing, he reported that 2004 E. coli reports show Woods Lake to be a great lake for swimming, with clean, good water.

Larry Haley said that to insure the beach remain open, it will be necessary to “raise the profile of the beach.” He suggested that the Nature Center might be contacted for programming, a beach clean-up day, hire part time lifeguard for a special event swim day for neighborhood youth, Boys and Girls Club, and Edison Neighborhood, etc. Mr. Haley said that a lot of City residents don’t know about the park and beach and suggested that ONA partner with other neighborhood associations to get the word out.

Mr. Raoul Yochim, co-president of the Oakland Drive/Winchell Neighborhood Association, said he favor supporting programming at Woods Lake Park, however, he did not think that the Association could supply many volunteers to help with the work as this is not the focus of the Association. Without some organized activity at the park, he said it could become an eyesore and attract loiterers. He suggested that if the City did not keep it open, that one alternative was selling it to a developer.

Chair Hilliard asked how PRAB could help Gary Wager and ONA on this issue. Mr. Wager asked that PRAB attend the February 11 meeting. Mr. Wager said that attendance and commitment at this first meeting would determine if there would be a second meeting. Mr. Haley asked if ONA was wheelchair accessible and the answer was yes. Mr. Wolf observed that when more organizations are involved in a grant request, the better the grantor views the request. Chair Hilliard said he would try to make the meeting and thanked the guests for their time and input.

Board Member Applications: (from New Business)

The PRAB Board applications of Gary Wager, President of Oakwood Neighborhood Association (ONA), and Eric Large, resident of the Northside Neighborhood, were considered. PRAB Board members interviewed the applicants and both applicants expressed a desire to be part of the planning process for Parks and Recreation in the City. Chair Hilliard thanked them both for their applications and for coming to the meeting.

LaCrone Park/Deacon's Conference Project

Ms. Jewell shared that she had not received a copy of the Deacon's Conference grant application. The Deacon's Conference received \$7,500 from the Kalamazoo Community Foundation for a conceptual design plan for the rehabilitation of LaCrone Park. Ms. Jewell said that Mark Polega, Parks Manager, will work with the Deacon's Conference on the conceptual design work. The residents who live around the park have expressed concerns about inappropriate language and behavior which is seen on the basketball courts. Ms. Jewell suggested that the courts could be relocated to VerSluis/Dickinson Park which is within walking distance of LaCrone Park and is specifically designed as a sports venue. Mr. Haley expressed the concern that if the courts are relocated, they must be accessible to the same youth who play basketball in LaCrone Park.

Liaison to Other Committees

PRAB questioned why a PRAB member was no longer attending the Property Review Committee. Ms. Jewell said that the committee had revised its makeup and that PRAB and the Parks and Recreation Director were no longer members. She offered to speak with Jeff Chamberlain, Community Planning and Development Director concerning this revision in membership and would e-mail Chair Hilliard with her findings. The Board felt that their participation on the Property Review Committee was important.

New Business:

Discussion of Board Member Applications

The Board discussed the applications and interview of the two applicants. Larry Haley said that he appreciated the sense of history of our park system that Mr. Wager displayed. Eric Large currently serves on the Kalamazoo Transit Authority ADA Local Advisory Committee. Ms. Jewell will find out if this would constitute a dual board membership which would disqualify Mr. Large from serving on PRAB. Josh DeBruyn said that he did not realize that the Board would be conducting interviews at this meeting and suggested that the applications be tabled until the next meeting when the Board would know if Mr. Large were a potential board member and the Board would have more time to recruit additional applicants. Mr. DeBruyn said he had been speaking with some members of the Adventure Club who may be interested in serving on PRAB.

Pat Klein felt the position should be filled if the applicant is good and she supported Mr. Wager's application. Mr. Hilliard felt both were strong candidates. A motion was made to vote on the applicants now rather than postponing the discussion until the next meeting. The motion carried 3 to 2. A motion was made to recommend appointment of Gary Wager to the PRAB Board; motion carried unanimously.

PRAB 2004 Annual Report for formal comment and approval

The draft annual report was discussed with the request to add several items. The report will be revised and e-mailed to John Hilliard for final review. There was a motion to approve the minutes contingent upon final review. Motion carried.

PRAB Bylaws Review

The Bylaws review was tabled until March 1, 2005.

Event Approvals: The Board unanimously recommended that the City Manager approve the following special events.

- Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, Art Fair – Bronson Park, June 3 and 4, 2005
- Epilepsy Foundation, Summer Stroll for Epilepsy – Spring Valley Park, June 4, 2005
- Kazoo School, Mayfair – Bronson Park, June 11, 2005
- “Eagle Take Flight” Promotions, Soaring Nationwide for Arts and Crafts – Milham Park, June 25, 2005
- Bronson Healthcare Group, Bronson 27th Annual Health Fair – Bronson Park, September 10, 2005
- American Diabetes Association, 16th Annual America’s Walk for Diabetes – Milham Park, October 1, 2005

Comments: There were no citizen comments. Chair Hilliard passed out an address/phone/e-mail list of all PRAB members. Frances Jewell distributed a copy of the 2005 Parks and Recreation Goals. John Hilliard asked if the Crane Park retaining wall would include any brick walkways. Ms. Jewell said that funds were only available for the retaining wall at this time. She also shared information about the \$2,200 Woods Lake Park budget cut that was restored in the 2005 budget. The figure of \$2,200 only included supplies and utilities for the park, it did not include any staff time. Three Parks staff were eliminated in the 2005 budget. Board members asked what the dollar value of the staff time to maintain Woods Lake Park is. Ms. Jewell said it was approximately \$8,000.

Ms. Jewell said that the City has prepared an Invitation to Bid for mowing of all property that is currently being mowed by City staff. Ms. Jewell stated that her goal is to show that Parks staff are efficient and can do the job at a lower cost than private contractors. Pat Klein observed that privatization would result in job losses which she hoped could be avoided.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Pat Vinge, Recording Secretary