

APPROVED
Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Minutes
September 6, 2005

Chair Hilliard called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm in the Parks and Recreation Community Room in Mayors' Riverfront Park.

Roll Call:

Members Present: John Hilliard, Lance Ferraro, Larry Haley, Patricia Klein, Gary Wager, Garrylee McCormick

Members Absent: Josh DeBruyn (excused)

City Commission Liaison: Absent

Staff Present: Frances Jewell, Pat Vinge

Procedural Matters: None

Introduction of Guests: Donnell Brown, President, Northside Watch; Mattie Jordan-Woods, Executive Director, Northside Association for Community Development (NACD); Charles Parker, President, NACD; Michael Williams, Executive Director, Douglass Community Association; Orlin Loen, President, Kalamazoo Municipal Golf Association (KMGA); Jim Roschek, Golf Director, KMGA; Bruce Minsley, Special Projects Coordinator, City of Kalamazoo; and Zadie Jackson, citizen.

Changes to the Agenda: The addition of an event to the Event Approvals (the Hispanic American Council, Celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month). The LaCrone Park Master plan discussion was moved to the end of New Business.

Special Presentations: None.

Approval of Minutes: The August 10, 2005 minutes were unanimously approved.

Old Business:

Waiving Fees for Events – Subcommittee Update

Tabled until October 4 meeting.

New Board Member Update

Chair Hilliard indicated that there are 2 board applicants who will be interviewed by PRAB at the October meeting.

New Business

Presentation on potential sale of Eastern Hills Golf Course

Bruce Minsley, City of Kalamazoo Special Projects Coordinator, along with Orlin Loen and Jim Roschek representing KMGA discussed the potential sale of Eastern Hills Golf Course. PRAB members were given information on the potential sale with their September 6 agenda packet (*attached with minutes*). Mr. Minsley shared that City staff has been working with the City Manager's Office and Jim Roschek for over a year to evaluate the financial feasibility of selling Eastern Hills Golf Course and investing

the proceeds from the sale in some form of an endowed, income generating fund. The asking price would start at \$5 million.

A letter from KMGGA to the City Commission strongly recommending that Eastern Hills Golf Course not be sold was distributed to PRAB (*attached with minutes*). Orlin Loen shared that KMGGA has been a City Board since 1924 and that the golf courses have never been an expense to the City. Mr. Loen discussed the KMGGA "debt" to the City that was forgiven. This debt was revenue that KMGGA overestimated it would contribute to the City. The City operates on accrual based accounting so the anticipated revenue was booked prior to receipt and when it was clear that KMGGA had overestimated the contribution to the City, it had to be "forgiven" in order to remove it from the books. In recent years, KMGGA has contributed \$1,475,000 in direct payments to the City. In addition, the courses have covered the annual cost of debt service on the capital improvement bond issue. Mr. Loen shared that the City doesn't have to contribute any funds to the running of the courses, either in cash dollars or time spent by City employees. KMGGA is also actively considering ways of increasing revenue by seeking more leagues and outings, expanding food services, and obtaining a beer and wine license.

Mr. Roschek emphasized that Milham Golf Course has been rated #1 in the State and is the busiest course east of the Detroit area. The sale of Eastern Hills would impact negatively on Milham and Red Arrow Golf Courses. An economy of scale brings operating costs down for all three courses. Red Arrow is an excellent beginners' course and would probably be closed if Eastern Hills is sold.

Mr. Minsley, Mr. Roschek, and Mr. Loen all concurred that a decision should be made as soon as possible in order to avoid a year end revenue loss for KMGGA. KMGGA estimates that this would be more than \$100,000 through uncertainty by members and leagues on whether the course would be available in 2006.

Lance Ferraro cautioned PRAB that the City should look very carefully before giving up assets and that in the past some short term fixes have resulted in long term losses. He also observed that since Eastern Hills is in Richland Township, the sale will not increase property taxes paid to the City. Larry Haley asked if there could be a reciprocal agreement with the Township to return some tax revenue to the City. Bruce said this would be investigated but he doubted it could be done.

Several PRAB members as well as KMGGA representatives present expressed concern that the City Commission may have given KMGGA mixed messages about KMGGA's mission. Although the Commission would like KMGGA to make contributions to the General Fund it has also directed the KMGGA Board to institute resident and non-resident fees. The KMGGA Board has reached general consensus that the resident/non-resident fee structure is more harmful than helpful. It was suggested that the City Commission provide KMGGA with parameters/direction on how the Commission would like to see the golf courses managed.

John Hilliard said that if the City's ultimate goal is to pay off the Eastern Hills debt and establish a protective endowment that this is already happening with KMGGA paying the debt service as well as generating an annual income for the City which is contributed to the Parks and Recreation budget, thus offsetting General Fund subsidy.

After further discussion, the following three-part motion was unanimously approved:

- The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB) recommends not selling the Eastern Hills Golf Course;
- Further, PRAB recommends that the Kalamazoo Municipal Golf Association's (KMGA) 'Plan For The Future' regarding increasing their revenue stream, be given significant attention;
- Lastly, PRAB recommends the Kalamazoo City Commission make a decision as soon as possible, on both items, so as not to impact negatively on KMGA's current and future revenue streams.

At 6:50, Garrylee McCormick excused himself from the meeting due to another commitment.

LaCrone Park Master Plan

Frances Jewell, Parks and Recreation Director, provided the group with an update on the LaCrone Park Master Plan. The Deacons' Conference and Comm-Unity Responders are working with Parks and Recreation to develop a Master Plan for LaCrone Park. The Deacons' Conference has received a grant from the Kalamazoo Community Foundation for the master plan and have contracted with Larry L. Harris Landscape Architects to assist in the development. Frances passed out a site map and bullet-point summary of the Community Input Meeting that was held on July 20, 2005 (*attached with minutes*).

Mattie Jordan-Woods expressed concern that the current no parking policy around LaCrone Park remain in effect. She said that this has cut down enormously on inappropriate behavior around the park and in the street. Prior to the parking restrictions, some homeowners in the area had said they would sell their property if the noise and disruption was not ended. Mattie also asked if lights at LaCrone were left on later than in other parks and expressed concern that this attracted late night activity in the park.

Mattie asked that another meeting be held to gain public input and that NACD would actively help in getting the word out and being sure that residents affected could voice their concerns and suggestions. The announcement can go in the NACD newsletter and Michael Williams and Charles Parker offered to get it posted in crucial places in the community.

Charles Parker had a number of observations:

- Families are using the park.
- The softball field has little use and could accommodate 20-25 parking spaces; there is also additional parking at New Genesis, Galilee Baptist Church, and on Cobb Street.
- Move softball games to VerSluis/Dickinson Park which is within walking distance of LaCrone.
- Upgrade the track area and play equipment.
- Move the restrooms to a more visible location to cut down on inappropriate behavior.
- Keep one tennis court.
- Turn off the lights to discourage late night activity on the courts.

Michael Williams and Donnell Brown supported on site parking with no parking around the perimeter of the park. Mr. Williams suggested lights for walkers as well as a “sprinkle water park” at LaCrone.

Event Approval

The Board unanimously recommended that the Acting City Manager approve the following six special events.

- New Year’s Fest, Bronson Park, December 31, 2005, 5:30 pm to 12:30 am
- 2006 Kalamazoo Valley CROP Walk, Bronson Park, May 7, 2006 , 1:00 pm to 4:30 pm
- Annual John Daley Memorial One/One Run, Spring Valley Park, January 1, 2006 from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm
- Worship Services and Picnic Activities, Mt. Zion Baptist Church, LaCrone Park, July 29-30, 2006 – 7:00 am until 5:00 pm
- Korean War Veterans’ Association of Kalamazoo, Bronson Park, July 27, 2006, 11:00 am to 11:30 am
- Hispanic American Council, Celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month, Bronson Park, Saturday, October 1, 2005, 10:00 am-7:00 pm.

Comments:

Citizen-Non Agenda Items

None

Commission Liaison

None

Parks and Recreation Director—Monthly Report

Frances shared that the Kings had made the playoffs and had been chosen Frontier League Organization of the Year for the third time.

Staff Comments

None

Board Member Comments

None

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Pat Vinge, Recording Secretary

Attachment included in September 6, 2005 Agenda Packet
Sale of Eastern Hills Golf Course/KMGA Revenue Enhancements

Attachments handed out at September 6, 2005 Meeting
KMGA Letter to City Commission
LaCrone Park Community Input Meeting, July 20, 2005
LaCrone Park Site Plan