

APPROVED
Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Minutes
10/22/2014

Chair Meka Phillips called the meeting to order at 5:20 pm in the Parks and Recreation Community Room in Mayors' Riverfront Park.

Roll Call:

Members Present: Meka Phillips, Travis Bell (arrived at 5:21 p.m.), Michael Markel, John Johnson and Natalie Patchell

Members Absent: None

City Commission Liaison: Stephanie Moore, absent

Friends of Recreation Liaison: Kathy Wiedmayer, present

Staff Present: Sean Fletcher and Amy Willard

Introduction of Guests: Andrea Augustine, Adams Outdoor Advertising (Todd Pryor – City Forestry Supervisor)

Changes to the Agenda: New Year's Fest added under Event Recommendations

Special Presentations: Andrea said that she is here based on a request that came before the Board in December of 2012, related to the requested removal of pine trees in Crane Park (triangle adjacent to Crane). Adams Outdoor came before the Board in December requesting removal of trees. She said that it was approved 4 to 2, and the recommendation was to go before the Tree Committee. She said that Adams Outdoor has recently acquired an agreement to market the billboard that is on top of the "grow" facility at 450 Maple Street, and visibility is an issue for them. She said they went before the tree committee in September, and had unanimous recommendation to remove the 5 Austrian pines that are there. They also had the recommendation to trim and prune the apple tree.

Todd said that upon replanting in the triangle, it's an area that would be better suited for flowers. He said that a motion that was previously made wasn't to restrain the Boards decision on what was to be done there, but rather to let them decide what the exchange for those trees would be.

Andrea said that she didn't come with a specific proposal, but rather here to have an open conversation with the Board. She said that it is a different project from when Adams was there before, and what they are able to pay for is slightly different. She said they are open to different options and talking through what would make the most sense in terms of replacement or cost.

Natalie said she would like to have the minutes from that 2012 meeting be brought forward to refresh their memories. She said that it was not approved in 2012. She said that it was tabled for the next meeting. Andrea had a copy of these minutes, and upon seeing them, Sean said that it was voted on then. Natalie said that at that time, Adams Outdoor had offered \$10,000.00. Michael said that Adams had also offered to replant other trees in that area as well.

Andrea said that Adams would be happy to replant trees. She said she is not sure if she can get a full \$10,000.00. She said that this is a very different project for them, and the digital conversion of their billboard has a large financial uptick for the company. She said she wasn't sure if that kind of money was a possibility. She said there is a wide range of options. She said that Sean mentioned a large tree in Crane Park that has to come down as well. She said that maybe while Adams is out there with their equipment, they may be able to help take that down or do some replanting.

Kathy asked about the billboard on top of the building. Andrea said that Adams doesn't own that billboard, and that it's the building owner who does. She said that 4 months ago, Adams signed an agreement with him that will allow them to sell the billboard for payments to him. Natalie asked how long the lease was. Andrea said for 5 years.

Natalie said that there will be a neighborhood outcry. She said there are people concerned about the digital billboard. Natalie said she would like to request a 1 month delay on the decision on taking down trees, so that neighbors can be contacted to express their opinions. She said that the trees block the view of those commercial entities from the people that live on the top of Westnedge Hill. She said it also provides the people who live in the Westnedge Hill Apartments a screen of the traffic on Park Street as it goes down the hill. She said that without a plan, without knowing a dollar amount or neighborhood input, she feels that it would be unwise to make a decision today at the meeting.

Andrea said that a couple of the trees have been recommended for removal already by the Tree Committee. She said that they are sick and at the end of their life. She said that if they are not allowed permission to do it, the City will have the cost of the removal in the future.

Michael said that the City has a forestry department and questioned why it would be an issue.

Andrea said that in this case there are some interests of the City's Forestry division that line up with interests of Adams, so she said that they are willing to pay for that.

Todd mentioned taking the Austrian pines off of the east side of the triangle. He said that there are a bunch of trees that are staying.

Andrea said there would be some pine trees staying, a deciduous tree, an apple tree, and a common hop tree. She said the apple tree would only be pruned and trimmed.

Natalie mentioned making the motion to table the decision. She said that citizens should be heard. She said that as a voice from this neighborhood, she believes most people will be opposed without a definitive plan. She said that Andrea is asking the Board to approve something that isn't a definitive plan. Natalie said that she prefers to stand for the interest of the citizens.

John said that the last time this issue was presented, Adams outdoor wanted to give Parks money to get rid of the trees. John said that from his perspective, he would prefer to see Adams contribute to Parks, contribute to Recreation programs, or assist with projects in the future rather than just giving Parks money to chop down trees.

Andrea said that Adams is open to a lot of different options. She said that one of the things that they can do is to help promote the Parks and Recreation programs and activities.

She said that in terms of replacement trees they would be happy to do that. She said that she has heard that the triangle location is not a great place for trees, so she wants input from the Board on what they think the best choice for replacement is.

John asked if Adams would partner with Parks on a project and maybe help with the Woods Lake project or Farmers Market. He said maybe that would make people more comfortable with the situation. He said that it may be more palatable for people rather than to just have money in exchange for the trees.

Andrea said that if they can come up with a certain amount of advertising or volunteering that they can quantify, then they would be happy to do it. She said that Adams would be happy to prune trees that are staying in the park as well.

Natalie made the motion to table the decision. All were in favor and the motion carried.

Natalie said she is hoping Adams will come back with a plan that is more concrete and definitive, along with having the neighbors be heard. She said that an article in the paper and having it on the PRAB agenda would be a good idea also.

Andrea said that she would be happy to come back with a more specific proposal but she wanted to come and talk with everyone to get ideas and keep options open.

Natalie said that since the sign (that Adams has a 5-year lease on) got complaints from people in the neighborhood, she wants to make sure citizens get heard on the issue with the trees. She said that most people want a screen. She said they don't want to look at the roads from the east or the west. She said they like to see the greenery. She said a viable plan put in place would be the best idea. (something green back into the park). She said that when Adams reps came 2 years ago, they came with a \$10,000 offer and a follow-up where there would be a plan. She said those issues were tabled at that meeting. The next step was for Adams to come to the next meeting with a plan, and a plan never came forward.

Sean said the trees that are dead are coming down. Natalie said to let them come down naturally. She said that she is all for beautification of parks, but this area is a gateway to downtown. She said it would be a sad thing to see it stripped of the greenery.

Sean said that no one is suggesting to strip it, but rather to replace the trees with flowers, shrubs, etc....

Andrea said that she would discuss all of this with Adams, and get back to the board.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes for the September 02, 2014 meeting were unanimously approved.

Old Business: Travis asked about the turn out for the 31 Gifts event at Milham Park. Sean said that they don't share that information with Parks staff.

New Business: None

Event Recommendations: The New Year's Fest event at Bronson Park on Wednesday, December 31, 2014 from 5:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. was unanimously approved.

Comments:

Citizens: None

Commission Liaison: Stephanie Moore, absent

Friends Liaison: Kathy let the Board know that Maureen Kelly, Friends' of Recreation Chair, has resigned from her position.

Parks and Recreation Director Monthly Report: Sean said the new Parks Manager, Ryan, started Monday, October 13th. He said that he is doing a great job. Sean said that he knows what the priorities are, and that Woods Lake is number one. Sean would like to invite him to the next PRAB meeting.

Sean said that the new Communications/Marketing Assistant, Marie, started a few weeks ago. He is excited to have 20 hours a week dedicated to marketing.

He said that on Thursday, October 24, there are phone interview being done for the Recreation Manger position. He said there are 12 candidates, and he is hoping to narrow it down to 4 or 5 people. He is hopeful that the position will be filled by December.

He said Parks is working on budget. He said that there is a 6% contingency to plan for. Sean said there will be cuts, but not sure where they are going to come from. He said that for sure no jobs will be cut.

Staff: None

Board Members: Michael said that he is concerned with the registration process for the Recreation programs. He said that the IRS forms that people have to fill out are tedious.

Sean said that we have to have that documentation for certain dollar amounts. Sean said that he wishes there was an easier way. Michael said he is just telling us what he heard, and thinks that may be why there are lower numbers for enrollments.

Sean said that maybe Recreation staff can go out into the community, and help people with these forms .Sean said that maybe he can develop solutions to the tedious registration process.

Natalie said that in 2 months, her position on the board will expire. She is concerned about the shortage. Sean said that something needs to be put on Facebook or Mlive.

John suggested that the Board should talk to friends, relatives, and co-workers to see if they can participate.

Adjournment: 5:53 PM

Respectfully submitted by Amy Willard, Recording Secretary


Recording Secretary


Chair