

APPROVED
Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Minutes
11/11/2014

Chair Meka Phillips called the meeting to order at 5:21 pm in the Parks and Recreation Community Room in Mayors' Riverfront Park.

Roll Call:

Members Present: Meka Phillips, Travis Bell, 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

Introduction of Guests: Community guests – covered under Citizen Comments

Changes to the Agenda: None

Special Presentations: None

Approval of Minutes: The minutes for the October 22, 2014 meeting were unanimously approved.

Old Business:

Tree removal - Natalie said that the subject of the tree removal was brought before the Board based on a December 2012 request from Adams Outdoor. She said it was approved 4 to 2 to listen to the proposal for the next month.

She said the proposal never came forward because the issue went bigger to the electronic billboard. She said last month Andrea Augustine from Adams Outdoor came forward with a request. The request was that the diseased evergreen trees be removed to improve the sight line to a newly leased billboard, which is on an existing "grow" facility at the bottom of the hill. Natalie motioned to postpone the decision made by the board until the neighbors and citizens concerned about the aesthetics, the real estate value, etc... have an opportunity to respond.

Adams came with no set dollar amount or plan. Natalie said she was offended by the offer for in kind use of their billboards. She did not find the offer satisfactory for cutting down trees that were diseased, but not dead. She said cutting down the trees affects homes and safety concerns. She said citizens should have a say, and be able to share their viewpoints.

John said that the in kind offer by Adams was his idea. He said that it wasn't necessarily the use of a billboard. He said that he would prefer that Adams becomes more of a partner-rather than giving x amount of dollars for x amount of trees. He said that his suggestion was for them to become a partner with the City, and perhaps be a sponsor for an event at Arcadia, which would engage the community. This would mean that Adams needs to make a longer term commitment which would mean more than just throwing dollars to the City.

Travis said they asked Adams to come back with a landscaping proposal or some type of plan. He said that Adams should have a plan to offset what they are doing.

Sean said that the 5-year master plan had a rendering of some of the things that could happen at Crane Park. Natalie said there was no mention of the triangle or the diseased trees. Sean said that if there is a benefit from Adams to us (such as bettering Crane Park while maintaining a curtain), then great. If not, then forget about it. Sean said he will not support the removal with no benefit to the City. He said that Adams is clearly initiating the removal of trees.

Meka said that Todd made it clear that the trees are coming down regardless if they are diseased or not. Sean said it could be 2 years or 5 years before those trees come down. He said that the City may not have dollars to plant new trees there, which is the budget reality. He said that a large turnout of people would be great in front of commissioners at a budget hearing.

Travis said that he is concerned with the Tree Committee carrying any weight with the decision. Sean said he doesn't know how much more weight they have. He said that they are a small group. He said that PRAB makes recommendations up to the City Commission level, but the Tree Committee is not the same as far as further approval. Sean said he will follow up and find the answer to that.

Travis said the Board really needs to hear back from Adams to see if they will engage a Landscape Architect and talk about how to better shield the road, etc...

Meka asked if they will come back in December. Sean said he is unsure of what their plan is at this point. He said he doesn't know if they will submit something in writing or show up.

New Business:

2015 fees/charges recommendations - Sean said we will be bringing the fee schedule to the next meeting. He said there are not a lot of significant changes, but just small percentage increases. Sean said that will include additional fees charged for Kik pool use for summer camps, etc...

New Parks & recreation Advisory Board applicant – Chris Patchell. He said that he has lived in the City for 36 years, and he believes his experience and maturity will make him a good candidate. He said Parks are under a lot of pressure, and that they are a vital part of the community. He said that he is a very "big picture" and "hands on" kind of person.

Travis said he would make a good candidate. John agreed. Natalie said that he has done a lot of volunteer work for years. She said that he did the recruiting for Arbor Day and brought scouts in to do the plantings for the past two years at MLK.

Michael made a motion to recommend appointment to PRAB of Chris Patchell for Jan 1, 2015. All were in favor and the motion carried.

Event Recommendations: None

Comments:

Citizens: Jennifer Ward (lives at 2125 Crane) said that she can see the trees from her house. She said she appreciates the fact that she doesn't have to see the billboard when she goes down the hill. She doesn't want her residential neighborhood more commercialized, and doesn't want to see the property value diminished. She said her main concern is the safety of the hill. She said the trees that are there provide safety because drivers can focus on the road instead of the billboard. She said that if the evergreens are taken down, then they need to be replaced by others. She said it is a steep stretch of road. The trees provide a break from the wind as well- which makes it safer in the winter time.

Mike Siegel (lives at 2333 Crane) said he wants to know what specific disease the trees have. He said they look pretty healthy to him. Sean said that they are Austrian pines that have Diplodia. Mike asked if it was treatable, and the Board did not know. Sean said they would look into it for him. Mike said that if the trees have to be removed, it would be logical to replace them with the State tree- which is the white pine.

Rosemary Candelario (volunteer at Crane Park) said she is concerned about who made the decision that these trees were dying. She said that as a Master Gardener, she hopes that it was an Arborist, or someone knowledgeable about trees. Sean told her that it was Todd Pryor, who is an Arborist and the Forestry Supervisor for the City. She said that when travelling the hill, she is also concerned about the safety that Jennifer mentioned.

Nick Beute (lives at 2222 Crane) said that people are only going to see the billboard Adams has up for a few seconds when travelling. He asked if it was really worth the effort to remove the trees just for 15 seconds.

Greg Veeck (lives at 447 Grandview) said the opinions of the Master Gardeners should carry far more weight than those of the people at Adams Outdoor. He said the beauty of the weddings, and all of the volunteer work done to beautify the park has to be taken into consideration. He said that the gardeners need to be heard first, especially since they have donated so much of their time and effort. He said that the people at Adams don't live in the neighborhood, and don't get to see the trees out of the windows of their homes.

Alice Asmus (part of the Master Gardner program) said she loves going to work at Crane Park. She said she and her husband are sensitive to road noise, and the trees help block that. She said she loves driving through the area, and seeing the historic homes, and believes the billboard doesn't need to take away from that.

Norma Smith (2722 University Ave.) said she has lived in the area for 50 years, and bought in that area because of the part. She said the only benefit she sees is to Adams. She agrees with the other citizens on the issues of safety and beauty that the trees bring to the park and the neighborhood.

Sue Beute (2222 Crane) said she loves the park and walking by the trees. She said that they are part of the beautification of the parks and entrances. She said the City would be sending a poor message to the residents if the trees were removed so that billboards can be seen.

Britt Sydnes (1924 S. Westnedge) said that her east window looks right at the Austrian pines. She said that it may be selfish, but she doesn't want them removed. She also agrees on the safety issues. She said that she loves the neighborhood but if the removal happens, she may move away.

Derek Wisner (306 Grandview Ave.) said he's here with an open mind. He said he loves Crane Park. He said the triangle area is not as beautiful as the park, but wondering what could be there. He said thousands of people drive up every day. He said the median at the top of the hill is atrocious. He asked what could be done- if we were able to sacrifice a tree or two. He asked about ways that Parks and Adams could benefit together.

Zadie Jackson (2610 Winchell) said that if money for the project was raised, City Commission would let the Crane/ Triangle project move to the top of the list.

Commission Liaison: Stephanie Moore, absent

Friends Liaison: Absent

Parks and Recreation Director Monthly Report: Sean said that the Safe Halloween event in Bronson Park on October 25th was very successful. He said the weather was great, and there were about 1500 people that attended. He said there was a wood carver, along with a magic act and pumpkin racing.

Sean said the Tree Lighting Ceremony is the day after Thanksgiving this year, Friday November 28th from 5p.m. to 8 p.m. in Bronson Park. He said the Candy Cane Hunt is Saturday, December 07.

Sean said we are currently reviewing our 2014 budget to see where we are as far as expenses and revenue. He said that our purchasing will probably end December 05-with the exception of emergency purchases. He said we like to end early to get an idea of our budget.

Sean said that the new Recreation Manager, Patrick, will be starting December 08. He comes from the PGA Tour. He currently works champion tour events and travels a lot. He has family here, and wants to would like to be home more.

Sean said that he is excited that we are purchasing new registration software for facilities and programs, called Active Net, which will allow online registration. He said staff training will begin after the first of the year, and the program will be up and running by spring. He said a lot of training will be needed on the new software. The new Recreation Manager will be the System Administrator, and will be working with Lisa to make sure everything flows smoothly.

Sean said that Ryan will be at the next meeting.

Sean said that the Steering Committee is Wednesday, November 12th) and the Focus Group (PRAB) is Thursday, November 13th at 5p.m. with the Bronson Park master plan process.

Staff: None

Board Members: Natalie made a motion to form an Ad Hoc Committee and invite citizens to participate when looking at the alternatives/future design for triangle of Crane Park.

Michael wanted to amend it by saying that the ideas that come from PRAB are just ideas- we don't necessarily have funding for it to take place.

John piggy backed on that by saying that there is a master plan and prioritizing what parks are refurbished at what point. He said he wouldn't want citizens to believe that those priorities are going to be shifted because Adams wants to cut trees down in Crane Park. All were in favor, and the motion carried.

Michael made the motion to appoint Natalie as the chair of the Ad Hoc Committee- with a deadline of March 01, 2015, for a plan put in place. All were in favor, and the motion carried.

Travis said that we should communicate to Adams that a committee will be formed, and that they should be invited. He suggested that Adams be a part of the committee as well, and help come up with solutions. He said that the first meeting should be PRAB saying that we need a plan with something to present. He said a date in the future should be set for a decision meeting. Sean said that he will touch base with Andrea, and let her know about the committee.

Sean drew a sketch showing the board exactly what Adams wanted. He suggested replacing the trees with equivalent sized trees. He said to move them away from the road to keep them away from salt, while maintaining the wind screen.

Sean said that our new Parks Manager, Ryan, is very experienced in working with community groups to develop new ideas. He said he is very visual and can draw something up to depict ideas. He said that he will have Ryan work with the group so that he can come up with a future idea of how Crane Park and the triangle may look.

Natalie said that the Westnedge Hill Neighborhood association has a Facebook page. She said neighbors commented on the willingness to do something to raise funds- for the beatification of the triangle. She said that

before the trees get cut or before Adams tells us what they want done there, we should allow the neighbors to come forward with a plan. She said it should be a 4-season screen, and something that that everyone appreciates in their neighborhood and the park. She said that she would head the group or ask citizens to do so. She said that some fundraising could be done to contribute as much money as possible to plant trees. She said she sees \$5-10k as no problem

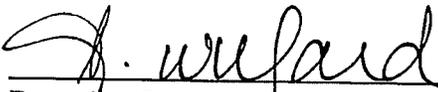
Sean said that he doesn't know how volunteers were recognized for their time beautifying parks in the past. He said that the Michigan Parks and Recreation Association has some volunteer awards. Sean said that he nominated Natalie and her group because of all of the work they did in Crane Park. He said that it was important that the group got their recognition.

Sean said that a park clean-up day for Woods Lake is going to be organized sometime in the spring.

Travis asked citizens to please consider being on the Board. He said that Natalie's term ends in January, so he suggested filling out the application.

Adjournment: 6:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Amy Willard, Recording Secretary



Recording Secretary

Meka Phillips

Digitally signed by Meka Phillips
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Chair