

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
Thursday, Nov. 16, 2023 7 p.m.
ARC Meeting Room, 1701 W Ash

DRAFT MINUTES

Commission Present: Dan Devine, Ted Farnen, Sue Davis, Chad Henry, Paul Morrison
Commission Absent (excused): Meredith Donaldson, Brendon Steenbergen
Commission Absent (unexcused):

Staff Present: Gabe Huffington, Erika Coffman, Tammy Miller

CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair Ted Farnen called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

AGENDA

Agenda was approved on a motion by Davis, seconded by Morrison. Motion passed 5-0.

MINUTES

Minutes were approved on a motion by Henry, seconded by Morrison. Motion passed 5-0.

MONTHLY REPORT

Recreation Services Manager Erika Coffman shared these highlights: numbers from October 2022 to October 23 have increased for total participations, indoor court usage, golf, classes/special events and ARC visits. Director Gabe Huffington shared park highlights in place of Park Services Manager Zach Nikin: maintenance spent 62 hours on HVAC repairs and inspections, sports turf spent 130 hours on field set up and painting, horticulture spent 40 hours with tree collection planting and mulching, as well as planting 75 trees at various parks; and forestry spent 154 hours with tree removal and pruning.

October monthly report was approved on a motion by Morrison, seconded by Davis. Motion passed 5-0.

STAFF PRESENTATION

Coffman introduced Moira Crowell, recreation specialist over special events and rental facilities. Crowell joined the department in February after graduating from Mizzou in December 2022. She shared information about her background, previous work experience and interests. Crowell coordinates event series: Movies in the Park, Concerts at the Amphitheater and Family Fun Fests, as well as Yappy Hour, Tons of Trucks and Earth Day kids area. She also provides support for Fire in the Sky and Heritage Festival, helps with the intern program and conducts tours of rental facilities.

Davis asked about what the tours entailed?

Crowell said they are for prospective renters, who are interested in what the space looks like and what they can or cannot bring for their rental.

Morrison asked if she were given a blank check, what would she spend it on?

Crowell said she would like to add incentives to Family Fun Fest, such as a free food item, or other free resources for families.

PUBLIC HEARING

Orr Street park property development

Farnen opened the public hearing and asked for the staff presentation.

Huffington shared the history of the site, which used to be owned by Ameren Missouri. The site was cleaned under Department of Natural Resources guidelines in 2014 and was purchased by the City in 2022. The goal is to create a park focused on family friendly access to green space and promotion of the arts, as it is part of the North Village Arts District. A committee of business owners and residents have been involved in assisting with the plans and fundraising for the park. Total project funding is \$1.55 million, mostly from a Department of Economic Development (DED) Community Revitalization grant and the City's Park Sales Tax.

Huffington outlined all of the public meetings and opportunity for input from the planning process. He shared photos of the location and talked about the highlights of the proposed park plan: large outdoor lawn, planting of about 50 trees, themed playground with outdoor seating, outdoor public art, performance area and parking spaces. The art would comprise six unique installations. Photos were shown of the park plans.

Staff made these changes based on community input: parking spaces were reduced, a smaller performance area with permit process to mitigate park noise, sidewalks will be wide enough to accommodate benches, potential location for future restroom will be identified and additional trees will be planted.

In addition to plan recommendation, Huffington asked the Commission to consider recommending a park name to City Council. Staff has discussed the topic with the committee and proposes two names: North Village Park (preferred) or Orr Street Park. The community is known as North Village, so that name would easily identify the location of the park, Huffington said, as well as adhering to the park naming guidelines followed by the department.

Morrison asked about putting Arts in the park name?

Huffington said that may be too close to the North Village Arts District and would steer away from the neighborhood park idea.

Farnen asked about bike racks?

Huffington said they would be included as well as dog bowls with water source.

Farnen commented that he wanted the park to be open and welcoming but also not a place for the transient population.

Huffington said that the park would be developed with clear sight lines and it would also be patrolled by Park Rangers and Citadel, the contracted security firm. The park will be surrounded by streets and businesses.

Henry asked if other city departments would absorb any costs of surrounding infrastructure, such as walkways around the park?

Huffington said that those discussions will occur, once engineering begins.

Davis commented that there is a nursing home in Moberly called North Village, but didn't know if that would matter.

Huffington agreed, saying it is likely far enough away to not be confusing.

Devine asked about a bike boulevard and the notion of discouraging vehicular traffic?

Huffington said there would be some pull-in parking, so there will be a need to co-exist with bikes and vehicles.

Farnen invited the public to make comment.

Richard Burns spoke about the comments made at meetings and via the BeHeardCoMo web site, commending how that input has been addressed. He mentioned the capacity issue for events and activities at the park, which could be a problem with litter and noise for the surrounding area. He said an activity such as Street Fest that attracts thousands of people would create a burden for neighbors of the park. He would like to see crowd limits in place before the plan moves forward, rather than working it out later in the process.

John Ott, spoke on behalf of the park committee and as an area property owner. He said this park is a wonderful opportunity for Columbia to improve a blighted area. He talked about the history of the process, pointing out that an initial stakeholders meeting was held 12 years ago to first discuss the area as green space only. Ott said the North Village Arts district is growing and the park will be a wonderful addition. He said he would like to see small concerts and events there with respect to the businesses and residents in the area. Ott concluded by mentioning the presentation that business owner Kenny Greene made to the Commission several years ago about the area and thanked the Commission for their interest and encouragement.

With no other public, Farnen closed the public hearing.

The Commission discussed first the name of the park. Farnen commented that North Village seems more understandable and defining.

Morrison agreed, saying it would likely be referred to that anyway and it fits well.

Devine made a motion, seconded by Morrison, that the Commission recommend to Council that the park be named North Village Park. Motion passed 5-0.

Devine then brought up the park plan and said he would like that motion to include an emphasis on the number of people allowed at park events.

Huffington proposed that staff could create an operations plan for the park and bring it to the Commission. He pointed out thought that it could open up those questions for all parks. He said that if the Commission would be ok with the park plan, staff could then work on the operations plan.

Devine agreed, saying that would be a good place to start.

Huffington said that there is an ordinance in place prohibiting noise at Bonnie View Nature Sanctuary, so an operations plan is not out of line. He said staff could develop that while not holding up the development. He said there is a deadline with the grant from DED and he would be concerned about delaying the project.

Coffman said that from an event standpoint, with the park special use permits, that staff advises the public all the time on recommended uses and what is allowed and not allowed in parks.

Huffington said he thought the Commission was the appropriate body to determine uses at this specific park. Staff will propose an operations plan and bring it to the Commission.

Morrison made a motion, seconded by Davis, to recommend approval of the park plan to City Council. Motion passed 5-0.

OLD BUSINESS

Virtual meeting update

Huffington said there were some policy points to determine and there would be another update in the new year.

NEW BUSINESS

Columbia Sports Fieldhouse phase II funding appropriation

Huffington informed the Commission of the latest with the Sports Fieldhouse. The project balance is \$5.25 million but the cost is \$9.75 million. An appropriation of funds is on the City Council agenda on Dec. 4 to cover the balance. Huffington shared comparisons of the costs of phase I versus phase II: construction is \$2.72 million higher, the metal building is \$894,000 higher and HVAC is \$500,000 higher.

Stuart property acquisition

The Council will consider the approval of an acquisition of a 120-acre tract at 8850 South Stanley Poe Road, owned by Barry and Linda Stuart. It is appraised at \$1.24 million; the Stuarts are proposing a 50/50 donation/purchase of the property for \$653,000. Park Sales Tax land acquisition funds would be used to make the purchase, Huffington said. The property is in the county and is south of the Gates property, so the acquisition is forward-thinking as property values will undoubtedly increase in that area, he said. It's also in line with the City's strategic plan and Climate Action & Adaptation Plan adopted in 2019, as the property is beautifully maintained greenspace.

Huffington shared aerials and a topo map of the property. Stipulations of the agreement are that the land will be a City park named Stuart Park and will be maintained as green space with shelters, restrooms, trails, parking lots and other supporting amenities, as opposed to high impact recreation. No hard surface traffic roads would be constructed but hiking and biking trails may be established, and no motorized vehicles would be allowed beyond the parking area.

Henry asked about the length of time to develop the property?

Huffington said it would take years as funding sources become available after the 2031 Park Sales Tax renewal.

Henry said the stipulations seem a bit overbearing as situations and trends can change.

Devine asked if this would be developed as a park or as a nature area?

Huffington said it would likely be a park, as a nature area limits uses. A park allows for a bit more flexibility.

Devine commented that donation/purchase agreements like this one may give other property owners similar ideas.

Huffington agreed, as long as it would be the right piece of property in the right location, to meet the needs identified in the master plan.

MPRA 2024 registration deadline

The MPRA Conference will be March 5-8 in St Charles. The deadline to register will occur before the Commission next meets in January, so if any Commissioner is interested, please let Tammy Miller know as soon as possible.

REPORTS

Council Items

Huffington informed the Commission of recent and future Council approvals:

Council approved Douglass Park improvements and an agreement with MU on the use of their trademark for the Douglass basketball courts.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Commission Report

At the most recent meeting, staff shared details regarding recent grading and surface improvements at Bear Creek Trail. The Bike and Pedestrian Commission members indicated

an interest in the status of the Columbia COLT Railroad in regard to planning purposes for the future COLT Trail. A request was made for a representative from City Utilities to attend the December meeting in order to provide a status report including planned repairs or other changes to the rail line between Rogers and the northern city limits.

Capital Project Report

Huffington shared these project updates:

Gans Creek Recreation Area preparation for cross country, Cosmo RC track, American Legion Park archery targets, Cosmo-Bethel Park winter trout program, Harmony Bends Hole #18, Flat Branch Park bridge restoration, MU Health Care Pavilion signs, Philips Park tennis and pickleball courts and Lake of the Woods Hole #14 bridge.

Recreation Services Report

Coffman shared these updates and event photos:

ARC holiday hours and personal training promotion for Thanksgiving, Adapted weekly practices and competitions, Aquatics pool hours and swim lessons, Community Recreation programs, Life Enrichment programs, Golf hours and daily play, Sports leagues and tournaments and MSHSAA cross country championships that hosted 1,900 runners.

STAFF COMMENTS

Huffington confirmed that there will be no need for a December Commission meeting.

He added that the building feasibility study for Northeast Regional Park may be on an upcoming Commission agenda.

Huffington reminded the Commissioner of the CoMoGives campaign kickoff on Giving Tuesday, Nov. 28. It will be at Walt's Bike Shop, doors will open at 5:15 with refreshments, remarks, poster unveiling, as well as the opportunity to have posters signed by the artist, Jane Mudd.

COMMISSION COMMENTS TO STAFF

None.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Jan. 18, 2024, 7 p.m. at the ARC

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m. on a motion by Devine, seconded by Morrison.