

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
PARK COMMISSION
CITY OF UNIVERSITY CITY, ST. LOUIS COUNTY, MISSOURI
TUESDAY, JULY 21, 2020**

Agenda Item #1: Call Meeting to Order

Park Commission President, Carl Hoagland called the meeting to order at 6:35 pm.

Agenda Item #2: Roll Call

Those in attendance included Commission President Carl Hoagland, Commission Vice-President Kevin Taylor, Commission Members Su Schmalz, Jay Redd, and James Wilke. Also, in attendance was Director of Parks, Recreation and Forestry Darren Dunkle. Those not in attendance were Secretary Lisa Hummel, Commission Member Meg Ullman and City Council Liaison Steve McMahon.

Agenda Item #3: Approval of the Agenda

Commission Member Schmalz motioned, and Commission Member Wilke seconded to approve the Agenda. The motion was approved with a 4-0 vote.

Agenda Item #4: Approval of Minutes

Commission Member Wilke motioned, and Commission Member Redd seconded to approve the minutes of May 19, 2020. The motion was approved with a 4-0 vote.

Agenda Item #5: Citizen Comments

None

Agenda Item #6: Department Report

Mr. Dunkle highlighted the following:

- 1) Most of the staff time over the past few months have been spent on dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly the closing of parks, facilities, pools, etc. as well as with staff affected by the pandemic.
 - Commission Vice-President Kevin Taylor asked what the Parks Commissions role was in reviewing plans and giving recommendations on the opening and closing of parks and facilities. And does the City/Department have any plans and if so, why hasn't the Parks Commission been involved in those plans. Darren Dunkle, Director of Parks, Recreation and Forestry stated that was something that he would need to address with his Council Liaison, that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a state of emergency within the City and things were very fluid. Mr. Dunkle further stated that staff has developed internal working plans based on CDC and St. Louis County guidelines and were not meant for public distribution at this time as guidelines and dates seem to be changing from day-to-day.
 - Commission Member Schmalz asked why the City conduct exercise/fitness classes couldn't outside like other communities. Mr. Dunkle stated that due to the sales tax implications caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the department has had to lay off and furlough all but one employee within the Recreation Division and that all positions had been frozen.

- Commission Member Wilke asked about social distancing at the golf course and that he had seen more than one person per cart. Mr. Dunkle stated that signs had been placed at the course regarding social distancing and that the city was only allowing one person per cart unless they were an immediate family member. He further stated that it is difficult for staff to really know if people are related are not, however, he would talk to staff about informing patrons about social distancing.
- 2) The Fogerty Park project has been completed and that staff is currently working to close out the project as soon as possible so that the city could file for a reimbursement.
 - 3) The Pool Bathhouse Project (Electrical, Plumbing, Doors) was substantially complete and that the contractor is currently working on punch list items and should be completed within a few weeks.
 - 4) Staff is currently working on the development of several bid documents for projects and items that were identified within the FY21 Budget. Some of these items include: 1) Painting of the Heman Park Pool; 2) Sealing and Striping of parking lots and the trail within Heman Park; 3) Purchase of a wide area mower; 4) Purchase of two zero-turn mowers; 5) Purchase of a ballfield groomer; and 6) The replacement of playground surfacing at Kaufmann, Kingsland, and Mooney parks.
 - Commission Vice-President Kevin Taylor asked how long it had been since the pool had been painted. Mr. Dunkle stated that the pool was last painted around six years ago and that it was recommended to be painted every five years.

Agenda Item #7: Council Report

None

Agenda Item #8: Commission Report

- 1) Commission President Carl Hoagland reported that the Eagle Scout Project at Flynn Park was going well, and that concrete had been placed. Mr. Hoagland further stated that there was a dead tree at Flynn Park that had been taken out.
- 2) Commission Member Schmalz stated that at the last meeting Commission Secretary Hummel had stated something about possibly making the trail at Ruth Park Woods one-way like trails in some other cities. Mr. Dunkle stated that the Ruth Park Woods trail was not a high traffic trail that would deem making it a one-way trail, however, if high volumes were noticed/reported the City could make it a one-way trail.

Agenda Item #9: Unfinished Business

- a. **Greensfelder Park Concept Plan** – Mr. Dunkle reported that in October of 2019, the City received a Municipal Parks Planning Grant for Greensfelder Park through the Municipal Park Grant Commission of St. Louis County. The purpose of the grant was to develop a Concept Plan that would be used as a guide for the future application of a Municipal Parks Construction Grant, as well as other grants for the redevelopment of Greensfelder Park.

As part of the requirements of the grant application, the City had to identify and receive an official quote from a prequalified consultant with the St. Louis County Municipal Parks Grant Commission. Accordingly, staff received a scope of work, cost estimate, and contract agreement from Gateway Design Studio, LLC.

From the onset staff had received input from surrounding residents that had stated that they would like to have a more passive park (nature themed, walking trails, playground, etc.) versus an active park (athletic fields, basketball courts, skate park, tennis courts, etc.). This was primarily due to the fact that the park is

located deep within a neighborhood and that they would prefer not to have high traffic volumes, nighttime activities, athletic facility lights, etc., as those activities could take place at Fogerty Park which was more conducive and accessible, and is less than a half mile from Greensfelder Park.

With that in mind, staff along with the consultant began the process of 1) An initial basic inventory/assessment analysis of the site and existing conditions; 2) Met and received input from City staff (Parks, Public Works, Planning and Police); 3) Developed Design Concept Drawings; 4) Held two Community Engagement Meetings (Although light turnout at both meetings, we mainly received positive comments from members of UCity in Bloom, Green Center, Urban Forestry Commission, Tree Tenders, as well as from residents; and 5) Presented and received comments from the Parks Commission, Green Practices Commission, Urban Forestry Commission, and members of the City's Green Team Committee and Great Rivers Greenway; and 6) From the comments received, staff and the consultant made minor adjustments to the plan.

The revised plans (Option A & B) consists of a nature themed park that includes stormwater retention/detention; multi-purpose trails; pavilion/restroom; native plantings (trees, plants, butterfly gardens); educational components (signage); a nature themed adventure playground; open lawn play area; future trail connections to GRG Centennial Greenway and Fogerty Park; and dedicated maintenance space for a possible tree/plant nursery, green houses, and a bulk storage etc.

The City currently doesn't have funds dedicated to the redevelopment plan, however, as outlined within staff's park priorities, staff would identify, analyze and apply for various grants (Metro St. Louis Sewer District, Missouri Department of Conservation, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Municipal Park Grant Commission of St. Louis County, etc.). However, due to the overall cost for the redevelopment of Greensfelder Park (\$1,002,161.20), it would be necessary to receive grants as well as to be phased over several years.

Mr. Dunkle stated that staff request support of the Parks Commission with the proposed Concept Plan.

- Commission President Carl Hoagland reported that staff had made changes to the Concept Plan based on Commission Member comments. Option A was the original plan and that Option B was the updated plan.
- Commission Vice-President Kevin Taylor asked what was the reason for the retention/detention pond, and would it take care of the water runoff issues within the park. Mr. Dunkle stated that the purpose of the retention/detention pond was two-fold in that it would slow down and collect storm water runoff from neighboring properties as well as it could be a park amenity. He further stated that in staff's opinion (Parks and Public Works) that it would achieve both, however, engineering studies and calculations would be part of the next phase (Design Development) and that this was just a concept plan.

Mr. Dunkle further explained the differences between a retention pond (one that holds water all the time and will overflow into another mechanism when needed) and a detention pond (a dry basin that collects rain fall and usually holds water no more that 24 hours where it either seeps into the ground or may slow down and overflow into another mechanism when needed). Mr. Dunkle also further explained that a Concept Plan was just that a concept and that it was the first step in a process, whereas phase II would be a Design Development Plan where you would take the concept and begin design development which entails engineering analysis, design, construction cost estimates, regulations/permitting etc.

Mr. Taylor then asked shouldn't we take care of the flooding issue first then come back with a park plan. Mr. Dunkle stated that it could be counter productive to spend time on money on flooding issues then possibly come back and make alterations due to park plans and MSD requirements

etc., these items need to work in concert as any changes to development in the park would affect MSD requirements.

Mr. Taylor stated that there should be an Option C and ask the Railroad for use of their property to the west to hide the retention/detention pond and have more room within the park.

Commission Vice President Taylor motioned to table the discussion until January of 2021. The motion died from the lack of a second.

Commission Member Wike motioned and Commission Member Redd seconded to table the discussion until the September meeting so that all commission members could be present to discuss and vote. The motion was approved with a 4-0 vote.

b. Park Priorities

- 1) Planning Grant for Ruth Park Golf Course – Mr. Dunkle reported that the Municipal Parks Grant Commission of St. Louis County will be offering planning grants again this year. He went on to state that there isn't a deadline for planning grant applications.

He further stated that funds to match a planning grant wasn't allocated in the current budget and was unsure how much it would cost to create a concept plan for the Ruth Park Golf Course Club House. As such, he recommended that more analysis be conducted on the Club House renovation.

- Commission Vice-President Kevin Taylor stated that we should look at the possibility of thinking big and build a new Club House that could be a revenue generator. Mr. Taylor further stated that he had submitted an idea several months ago regarding this thought. Mr. Dunkle asked Mr. Taylor if he could resubmit his Concept Plan. Mr. Taylor stated that he would email Mr. Dunkle the information.

Commission Member Redd motioned and Commission Member Wike seconded to table the discussion until the September meeting so that all commission members could be present to discuss and vote. The motion was approved with a 4-0 vote.

- 2) Construction Grant for Ackert Park – Mr. Dunkle stated that the Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department submitted a Municipal Park Grant application for this project last year, however, due to the fact that the City had two current grant projects already in progress, the Ackert Park application was denied, as any one city can only have two active grants at one time. As such, it is our desire to apply for the Ackert Park project again this year.

Depending on the level of funding received from the grant, development would most likely include additional perimeter lighting, ADA sidewalk improvements, sculpture playground, park benches, trash cans, drinking fountains, signage, shade structures, landscaping, and a splash pad/fountain.

Director of Parks, Recreation and Forestry requested that the Parks Commission support the submission of a Municipal Park Grant application to complete the improvements contained in the Ackert Park Conceptual Design Plan. If the grant is approved, the expenditure for the reimbursable (\$525,000.00) part, as well as the City's match (\$52,080) will come from the FY2021 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) as outlined in University City's 5-year CIP (Project# PR21-01) and included in the FY2021 budget approval.

- Commission Vice-President Kevin Taylor asked if funds were available for the project. Mr. Dunkle stated that funds were budgeted within the FY21 CIP Budget.

Commission Member Wilke motioned, and Commission Member Schmalz seconded to support staff's recommendation to apply for a Municipal Parks Grant for Ackert Park. The motion was approved with a 4-0 vote.

3) Tennis Courts –

- Commission President Carl Hoagland reported that the tennis courts at Flynn Park were being quite used quite extensively and that individuals had to wait for courts. He asked if there could be a procedure in which individuals could officially be placed on a waiting list. He also stated that classes were being held there in the mornings which were taking up time and space that hadn't been there in the past which compounds the issues. Mr. Dunkle inquired about the classes and what time were they there, as the City isn't running classes and hasn't approved the use of the courts for any classes. Mr. Hoagland responded by stating around 8:00 am.

Mr. Dunkle stated that it was his belief that the increased use of the Flynn Park tennis courts were due to the fact that the City of Clayton had not opened their tennis courts, and that Clayton residents were now using the Flynn Park tennis courts.

- 4) Skate Park – Mr. Dunkle reported that the City has received a request to consider the development of a skate park within the park system for the youth of University City. Mr. Dunkle went on to state that a skate park was identified in the Heman Park Master Plan and was a future consideration, however, it was not listed as a priority within the Five-Year Park Priorities.

No action was taken by the Commission.

c. Park Operations – Leaf Mulch Operations -

The City currently provides residents free mulch (leaf compost, shredded wood, and wood chips) at the Heman Park distribution area. The shredded wood and wood chips are byproducts of trees and limbs the Parks & Forestry Division's has collected as part of our operations. However, the leaf compost is purchased by the City from a vendor who provides and delivers the leaf mulch for a fee of approximately \$3,000.00 annually.

These are ancillary services that are currently being provided by the Parks & Forestry Maintenance Division's, and although these services are beneficial to the community, they create both a financial and manpower problem for the Parks & Forestry Maintenance Division's. It is staff's recommendation that the Leaf Mulch program be eliminated, as this service can be readily obtained through the private sector. Furthermore, this would free up Parks & Forestry Maintenance Staff and allow them to focus on maintenance tasks that have been deferred in the past. The shredded wood and wood chip program would continue as materials remain available.

The Director of Parks, Recreation and Forestry requested that the Parks Commission support staff's recommendation to eliminate the leaf mulch service.

- Commission Member Schmalz stated that the City should place more signage in the area to state the purpose and use of the mulch. She went on to state that she thought the mulch was good for the community in that it provided outside activity for the elderly and this wasn't the right time to end the program.

- Commission Vice-President Kevin Taylor stated that if your furloughing and laying off employees, should you provide this service, and that it wasn't punitive, but the City just can't afford to do it.
- Commission Member Wilke stated that if it was a budgetary issue, we should end the program.

Commission Member Wilke motioned, and Commission Vice President Taylor seconded to support staff's recommendation to end the leaf mulch program. The motion was approved with a 3-1 vote (Commission Member Schmalz voting no).

Agenda Item #10: New Business

- a. Golf Course Fees** – Mr. Dunkle stated that fees and charges have not been changed since 2008, and per policy the golf course is to generate enough revenues to cover 100% of direct, indirect and overhead costs as well as any debt service for the development and future capital needs.

Over the past 12 years the golf course has been able to cover both operating and capital improvement costs; however, with the increase in both operating and staffing costs, as well as projected capital improvement needs, it is imperative that the fees be increased to cover these expenses as well as to stay competitive in the market.

Over the past year, staff has reviewed our current pricing structure and have compared them to the public market and has found that our fees and charges fall short of what other municipal golf courses are currently charging or what they are going to charge in 2021. The proposed recommendation includes an increase of anywhere between two (\$2.00) dollars and three (\$3.00) dollars for residents per round depending on the category, and three (\$3.00) dollars and five (\$5.00) dollars per non-resident per round depending on the category. We have also included a new category of (UC Lion) in which a Centennial Commons UC Lion Member will receive a greater discount on certain fees and charges.

The Director of Parks, Recreation and Forestry requested that the Parks Commission support staff's recommendation of the proposed golf course fees.

- Commission Vice President Taylor asked if this was City Manager driven, as he had heard the City Manager state at a budget meeting that the golf course fees needed to be increased. Mr. Dunkle stated that it had been identified that in order to keep the Enterprise sustainable, a fee increase would be necessary.
- Commission Vice President Taylor asked if the comparisons were made with other cities who had similar courses. Mr. Dunkle stated that a comparison was made of municipal operated course within St. Louis and St. Charles counties based on 9-holes. The cities included St. Ann, Creve Coeur, Bridgeton, Florissant, Ballwin and St. Peters.
- Commission Member Schmalz asked if golf memberships had been considered as part of the fees and charges. Mr. Dunkle stated that at this time the fees included a discount for those who would have a newly proposed membership to Centennial Commons. However, staff would continue to look at other types of memberships.
- Commission President Carl Hoagland stated that the Ruth Park Golf Course fees were not too high.

Commission Member Wilke motioned, and Commission Member Redd seconded to support staffs recommended fee increases. The motion was approved with a 4-0 vote.

- b. Centennial Commons - Memberships** – Mr. Dunkle reported that the COVID-19 pandemic has created a challenge for City operations that could not have been foreseen by staff. In doing so, memberships at Centennial Commons up to this point have been extended by the number of months that the facility has been closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, staff has received some individual request for a

prorated refund of memberships instead of the extension of their memberships. Accordingly, the Director of Parks, Recreation and Forestry asked the Parks Commission for their opinions in awarding refunds.

Discussion followed and most commission members stated that it would be a nice thing to do, however, they felt that the City Attorney should review the contract language before making any decisions.

Agenda Item #11: Adjournment

Commission Member Schmalz made a motion at 8:37pm, seconded by Commission Member Wilke to adjourn. The motion was approved with a 4-0 vote.

MINUTES SUBJECT TO PARKS COMMISSION APPROVAL.

DRAFT