

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
PARK COMMISSION
CITY OF UNIVERSITY CITY, ST. LOUIS COUNTY, MISSOURI
TUESDAY, MAY 19, 2020**

Agenda Item #1: Call Meeting to Order

Park Commission President, Carl Hoagland called the meeting to order at 6:33 pm.

Agenda Item #2: Roll Call

Those in attendance included Commission President Carl Hoagland, Commission Vice-President Kevin Taylor, Secretary Lisa Hummel, Commission Members Su Schmalz, Jay Redd, James Wilke and Meg Ullman. Also, in attendance was City Council Liaison Steve McMahon and Director of Parks, Recreation and Forestry Darren Dunkle.

Agenda Item #3: Approval of the Agenda

Commission Member Schmalz motioned, and Commission Secretary Hummel seconded to approve the Agenda. The motion was approved with a 5-0-1 vote (Commission Member Ullman didn't have audio) vote.

Agenda Item #4: Approval of Minutes

Commission Secretary Hummel requested that the statement that was associated with her be removed from the minutes, as she didn't believe the statement to be true.

Commission Secretary Hummel motioned, and Commission Member Wilke seconded to approve the minutes of February 18, 2020 as amended. The motion was approved with a 5-0-1 vote (Commission Member Ullman didn't have audio) vote.

Agenda Item #5: Citizen Comments

None

Agenda Item #6: Department Report

Commission reviewed the submitted report and Mr. Dunkle highlighted the following:

- A lot of staff time over the past few months have been spent on dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly the closing of parks, facilities, trails, etc. as well as with staff affected by the pandemic.
- The Fogerty Park project is substantially complete and that the contractor is currently working on punch list items. He further stated that he would like to closeout the project as soon as possible so that the city could file for a reimbursement.
- 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.

Commission Vice-President Kevin Taylor asked why the Pool Doors costs \$70,000 to replace. Mr. Dunkle stated that the doors and frames had to be custom made as they were not a standard size. He further stated that the Facilities Division of Public Works obtained several quotes for the project and that City Council had approved the contract.

Agenda Item #7: Council Report

Council liaison Steve McMahon reported the following:

- Most emails that he had received since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, was when were the parks going to reopen. He further stated by the amount of emails it shows that the parks are very important to the residents.
- Council Meetings are being conducted through video conference on Zoom due to the closure of City Hall and keeping in compliance with CDC and St. Louis County guidelines.
- Budget revenues are down due the closure of retail and restaurants.

Agenda Item #8: Unfinished Business

- a. **Greensfelder Park Concept Plan** – Mr. Dunkle stated that 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 plan 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.

Accordingly, it is staff's recommendation that the Parks Commission support and endorse the Concept plan as presented.

Commission Vice-President Taylor stated that he was concerned about the feedback received from others and if individuals or groups had made written recommendations concerning the plan. Mr. Dunkle stated that feedback received from the public was either received verbally through one public meetings, City commission/committee meeting or from personal contact.

Commission Vice-President Taylor stated that he would like to see the retention/detention area moved back towards the northwest so that there is more greenspace that could be used for open play. Mr. Dunkle stated this was a possibility and it had already been noted from the last public meeting. He further stated that the actual placement would depend on engineering conducted during the design phase that this was just a conceptual plan. Mr. Taylor further asked about the need for a nursery at the park when there was already a nursery on Vernon Ave. Mr. Dunkle stated that the nursery on Vernon Ave. belonged to UCity In Bloom and not the City and that nursery noted within the Conceptual Plan would be for the use of the City to plant and grow our own plant materials thus reducing the cost of purchasing plant materials later. Mr. Taylor asked if UCity In Bloom had made a request to relocate to the site. Mr. Dunkle stated that the intent of the nursery was for City use, however, there was enough space within the plan to relocate UCity In Bloom if they and the City were interested in doing so. Mr. Taylor stated that he would like to see a report that indicated how much money the City would make from the nursery. Mr. Dunkle stated that the City wouldn't make any money from the nursery as it would be for public use only and that City wouldn't be selling any of the plant materials. Mr. Taylor stated that he had a relative that lived at the end of street where there would be a possible connection to the nursery and didn't think that the residents on the street would like to have trucks driving down the street all day. Mr. Dunkle stated that he didn't think that City trucks would be driving down the street all day that due to the nature of the nursery operations that traffic would be minimal.

Park Commission President Hoagland asked for the item to be placed on a future meeting agenda for further discussion.

b. Park Inspection Reports –

- Commission Member Schmalz reported that the Golf Course was in excellent condition and that staff had been planting flowers and trees. She stated that the reopening of the course has been very positive, however, some individuals could have better social distancing. Mr. Dunkle stated that staff has ordered a concession type window for the pro shop to better serve the customers while protecting the employees. Commission Vice-President Taylor asked why the purchase and/or plan for the replacement of the window wasn't brought to the Parks Commission. Mr. Dunkle stated that it was an operational issue that pertained to the safety and operations of the Golf Course.
- Commission Secretary Hummel reported that the trail at Ruth Park Woods was clear and had little trash. She asked about the need of making the trail one-way like St. Louis County has done at some of their parks. Mr. Dunkle stated that if needed, staff would investigate the possibility.
- Commission Member Redd asked about the opening of the pool. Mr. Dunkle stated that although an official decision has not been made, he feels that it would be very unlikely that the pool would open this summer due to possible CDC and St. Louis County guidelines, staff availability and costs.
- Commission Member Wilke reported that he had inspected both Ackert Walkway/Park and Lewis Park. Mr. Wilke stated that he had taken pictures of both areas and forward them on to Mr. Dunkle. He further stated that it looked like there was work still construction work left to be completed by the contractors. Mr. Dunkle stated that Lewis Park was being constructed in-house by parks staff and that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, reduction in staff, and weather has caused the completion of the project to be delayed. He further stated that the Ackert project was being conducted by the Public Works Department and that he would follow up with them.

c. Parks, Recreation and Forestry Budget

Commission reviewed the submitted report

- Mr. Dunkle stated that sales tax revenues across the region had been reported to be down 25%-30%.
- Mr. Dunkle stated that the Budget within the Commission packet was just a first proposal and that a final proposal to Council would not take place until June 22, 2020.
- Commission Vice-President Taylor stated that several of the divisional budgets didn't include costs for part-time staff. Mr. Dunkle stated that he had been informed that these numbers would be included in a final proposal as more information is being gathered on sales tax numbers and the possible reopening of facilities etc.
- Commission Member Wilke asked why the Parks Maintenance Division Budget for Agricultural Supplies and Contractual Services had risen so much. Mr. Dunkle stated that the increase to Agricultural Supplies was due to the increase in seed, fertilizer, chemicals etc. for improved turf and athletic fields as indicated as a need in the Citizen Satisfaction Survey. He further stated that the increase in the Contractual Services account was mainly due to the UCity In Bloom Landscape Contract and additional Tree Trimming work to be conducted throughout the City.

d. Park Priorities

- Park Commission President Hoagland reported that he and Commission Secretary Hummel had edited the Park Priorities and would like to send them to the City Manager and Council.

Commission Vice-President Taylor stated that he doesn't agree with the process of having two separate documents. He further stated that we now have a Parks Director and that we only need one document as we move forward.

Commission Secretary Hummel motioned, and Commission Member Wilke seconded to support Park Commission President Hoagland's recommendation. The motion was approved with a 4-1-1 vote (Commission Member Ullman didn't have audio and Commission Vice-President Taylor voting no).

- Park Commission President Hoagland stated that we should move forward with the submittal of an application for a Parks Planning Grant for the Ruth Park Golf Course. Mr. Dunkle stated that it was still unclear at this time if the Planning Grant would be available due to the COVID-19 and the reduction in sales tax revenues. Furthermore, Mr. Dunkle stated that the Planning Grant in the past has been only for a maximum of \$6,400.00 with the City having to match 20%, and that the grant may not be enough to conduct a proper plan and costs analysis. The Commission has asked to move this item to a future meeting when more information has been available concerning the Planning Grant.

Agenda Item #9: New Business

- a. **Swim Club Request** – Mr. Dunkle stated that the University City Swim Club a non-profit association has requested use of the Heman Park Swimming Pool for their Swim Club practices for this summer. Mr. Dunkle went on to state that due to the COVID-19 pandemic that it is very unlikely that the pool would open this year, however, if the pool were to open, Mr. Dunkle stated that it is staff's recommendation that if the

University City Swim Club were to be allowed to continue to use the pool during general open hours they should adhere to the guidelines outlined in the memo.

Commission Vice-President Taylor stated that the Swim Club shouldn't be any different than any other user of city park facilities and that they should have to pay to use our facilities. He also stated that they charge participants to become a member of their club, so where does the money go. He further stated that he didn't like the fact that when they addressed City Council that they promoted the need to address the need to teach African Americans how to swim as they are more susceptible to drown etc.

Discussion followed regarding the need to provide Workers Compensation Insurance to the City. Mr. Dunkle clarified by stating that they would only need to provide said insurance if they met the criteria determined by state statutes. Mr. Dunkle also stated that if members of the Swim Club had swim pass memberships there wouldn't be any additional charges.

Commission Vice-President Taylor motioned, and Commission Member Schmalz seconded to Have staff have a further conversation with the Swim Club to gain more information regarding their request. The motion was approved with a 5-0-1 vote (Commission Member Ullman didn't have audio).

b. Park Operations –

- Levels of Service – Mr. Dunkle stated that staff is currently working on the development of Management Plans for each park, as such he asked the Commission to think about the levels of service that they would like to see performed at each park. He stated that he would be presenting drafts of the Management Plans at future meetings for review and comment.
- Ancillary Services – Mr. Dunkle stated that beyond the normal maintenance of the parks and facilities, the Parks Maintenance division performs several ancillary services such as Mulch Services, Band Wagon Rentals, and Block Parties. He stated that although these ancillary services are great for the community, they also place a burden both financially and manpower to the department. As such, Mr. Dunkle would like the Commission to consider the following recommendations:
- Mulch Services – Mr. Dunkle stated that the City the City has been providing mulch service to the residents of University City in two different formats. One is the Mulch Delivery Service where the Parks Maintenance Division schedules and makes home deliveries to residents' homes. The other service the City provides is free mulch (leaf compost, shredded wood, and wood chips), which a citizen can pick up at the Heman Park distribution area.

These are ancillary services that are currently being provided by the Parks Maintenance Division, and although these services are beneficial to the community, they create both a financial and manpower problem for the Parks Maintenance Division. Accordingly, it is staff's recommendation that the Mulch Delivery and Leaf Mulch programs be eliminated, as these services can be readily obtained through the private sector. Furthermore, this would free up Parks 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

- 1) Mulch Delivery Service - Since 2016 these services have been provided by the Parks Maintenance Division (Prior to 2016 these services were provided by the Street Division). Although this service has been offered on a year-round basis, the bulk of the deliveries take place during the months of March, April, May and June (The busiest time of the year for the Parks Maintenance Division). Since most of the residents want mulch for weekend projects, all deliveries take place on Fridays (One of our busiest days of the week). The average price per delivery runs around \$96.28, and the average cost per delivery is around \$221.97 per delivery.

As you can see, the City is losing approximately \$126.00 per delivery or a loss of approximately \$17,470.46 per year.

In addition to the financial loss, the Parks Maintenance Division is losing approximately seven manhours every Friday, which basically takes one maintenance worker out of park related maintenance every Friday for four of the busiest months of the year.

Commission Member Wilke motioned, and Commission Member Redd seconded to supports staff's recommendation to eliminate the Mulch Delivery Service. The motion was approved with a 3-2-1 vote (Commission Member Ullman didn't have audio and Commission Vice-President Taylor and Commission Member Schmalz voting no).

- 2) Free Mulch Service - As previously stated, the City 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 has collected as part of our forestry services. The leaf compost is purchased by the City and placed at Heman Park for the use of our residents. Although the leaf compost is beneficial to the residents it does cost the City to purchase the leaf mulch, and we have encountered numerous issues with landscapers and non-residents taking the leaf mulch for their use.

Discussion took place regarding the cost of the leaf mulch and if the other mulch products would remain available to the public. Mr. Dunkle stated that the all other mulch products would remain available and that he would need to check with the Public Works Department on the actual costs as they oversee the purchasing part of the program.

The Commission asked for this item to be placed on a future agenda when actual costs can be presented.

- Block Parties – Mr. Dunkle stated that resident associations within University City can request the City Managers approval to hold a block party. Most of these block parties are put on by neighborhood associations, churches, block units and civic groups. And as part of their Block Party request, they ask for the use of tables, benches, trash and recycling receptacles.

The Block Party Permit and amenities are provided at no charge; however, availability of the amenities is not guaranteed. Most of these events take place on the weekend; therefore, the Parks Maintenance Division will deliver the amenities requested on Friday morning and will pick up the amenities following the event on Monday. Normally a four-person crew can perform these duties in approximately two hours on both Friday and Monday mornings. The time spent performing these tasks of course is based on the number of reservations, number of amenities reserved and available staff to make the deliveries and pickup.

The Parks Maintenance Division averages approximately 45 block parties per year and utilizes approximately 300 manhours per year. The average man hour costs associated with this service is \$190.94 per event and approximately \$8,592.21 per year; with the average equipment costs (trucks and trailers) associated with this service \$161.67 per event and approximately \$7,275.00 per year; totaling an average cost of \$352.60 per event or approximately \$15,867.21 per year. In addition to the financial cost, the Parks Maintenance Division is losing approximately eight manhours every Friday and Monday, which basically takes one maintenance worker out of park related maintenance every Friday and Monday.

These are ancillary services that are currently being provided by the Parks Maintenance Division, and although these services are beneficial to the community, they create both a financial and manpower problem for the Parks Maintenance Division. It is staff's recommendation that Block Party Permits either be: 1) Free of charge without the use of amenities; or 2) Limited to one event per group or organization in a calendar year and a fee per event to recover the cost of manpower.

Commission Vice-President Taylor stated that it would be interesting to see what subdivisions were using these services as didn't think that subdivisions within the third ward were. He further stated that subdivisions should at least pay for the use of manpower when amenities are used.

Commission Secretary Hummel motioned, and Commission Member Schmalz seconded to support staff's recommendation. The motion failed with a 2-3-1 vote (Commission Member Ullman didn't have audio and Commission Vice-President Taylor, Commission Member Schmalz, Commission Member Redd voting no).

- **Band Wagon Rentals** – Mr. Dunkle stated that the Parks Division rents out the use of the Band Wagon to area organizations. Most of these rentals are put on by neighborhood associations, churches, schools, civic groups and municipalities within the St. Louis Region. The Parks Maintenance Division performs the delivery, set-up, and return of the Band Wagon on these occasions. The Parks Maintenance Division makes every effort to accomplish the task during normal business hours, however, that isn't always possible and overtime work is required. Most of these events take place on the weekend; therefore, the Parks Maintenance Division will deliver the Band Wagon on Friday morning and will pick up the Band Wagon following the event on Monday. Normally one person can perform these duties in approximately two hours on both Friday and Monday mornings. The time spent performing these tasks of course is based on the location of the event.

Mr. Dunkle stated the Parks Maintenance Division averages approximately nine rentals per year and utilizes approximately 35 manhours per year. The average manhour costs associated with this service is \$94.68 per event and approximately \$852.12 per year, with the average equipment costs associated with this service \$505.32 per event and approximately \$4,547.88 per year; totaling an average cost of \$600.00 per event or approximately \$5,400.00 per year. He further stated that this is an ancillary service that is currently being provided by the Parks Maintenance Division, and although this service is beneficial to the community, it creates a manpower problem for the Parks Maintenance Division.

Mr. Dunkle stated that it is staff's recommendation that Band Wagon rentals be limited to University City non-profit events only; one event per group or organization in a calendar year; and a fee of \$200.00 per day. It is anticipated that the \$200.00 per day fee would cover all costs associated with the rental of the Band Wagon.

Discussion took place regarding not limiting the UCity School District use of the band wagon.

Commission Secretary Hummel motioned, and Commission Member Schmalz seconded to support staff's recommendation and adding that the UCity School Districts use shouldn't be limited. The motion was approved with a 5-0-1 vote (Commission Member Ullman didn't have audio).

- c. **Memorials** – Mr. Dunkle reported that the City over the years has received numerous donations of trees, benches and plaques as memorials within the parks system, and recently has received a request to place a plaque at the Heman Park Swimming Pool to honor an individual. He went on to state that although memorials have been placed in the past, the City hasn't had any real policies regarding the placement, style, costs, etc. Mr. Dunkle suggested that the Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department develop policies to streamline the process and bring back a recommendation back to the Commission for their review and comment. After a brief discussion the Commission agreed that this would be a good process.

d. Athletic Fields –

- Commission Vice-President Taylor stated that he feels that there needs to be more baseball fields made available for older kids. Mr. Taylor stated that most of the fields within the parks system were designed for either softball or for younger kids and did not meet the base distance requirements for older kids.

Mr. Dunkle stated that he wasn't opposed in exploring the possibility of converting some fields, however, he has not been presented with any data that would support the need of converting any fields at this time. He further stated that the Jack Buck Field that is designed specifically for older kids had more than enough availability to accommodate use for older kids. He further stated that if data could be provided to substantiate the need, staff would certainly consider it.

- Commission Vice-President Taylor stated that most of the fields were not conducive to active use as they needed team benches, grandstands, fences and dugouts. Mr. Dunkle stated that all these items have been identified by staff as well and will be requested for in future budgets. Mr. Dunkle also stated that it is staff's plan to make the Heman Park and Millar athletic fields game fields and place a higher priority of maintenance to these fields. Other athletic fields such as Metcalfe and Fogarty will remain mainly practice and pickup areas.
- Commission Member Wilke asked that since some of the baseball fields at Heman Park have been removed, would it be possible to reconfigure the soccer field so that it does not include the skinned infields of the baseball fields. Mr. Dunkle stated that he would have staff look at the possibility.

Agenda Item #10: Adjournment

Commission Secretary Hummel made a motion at 8:50 pm, seconded by Commission Member Schmalz to adjourn. The motion was approved with a 5-0-1 vote (Commission Member Ullman didn't have audio).

MINUTES SUBJECT TO PARKS COMMISSION APPROVAL.