PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

Wednesday, November 14, 2012, 7 p.m. ARC, 1701 W. Ash

MINUTES

Commission Present: Marin Blevins, Sue Davis, Terry Kloeppel, Bill Pauls, Dan

Devine, Meredith Donaldson, Linda Hutton

Commission Absent: None

Staff Present: Mike Hood, Mike Griggs, Gabe Huffington, Erika Coffman, Tammy Miller

Blevins called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm.

Agenda: No additions were made to the agenda. It was approved on a motion by Devine, seconded by Hutton.

Minutes: The October meeting minutes were approved on a motion by Pauls, seconded by Donaldson.

Monthly Report: The October monthly report was approved on a motion by Donaldson, seconded by Davis.

Blevins acknowledged Fourth Ward Councilman Daryl Dudley in the audience and thanked him for attending the meeting.

GetAbout/Park Sales Tax Sidewalk and Trail Priorities

Hood reminded the Commission that they had tabled this item to allow for all seven commissioners to be in attendance and to allow for additional information from Allstate Consultants engineering, regarding the route of the proposed Grindstone Creek Trail. Hood introduced John Holmes of Allstate who made a brief presentation.

Holmes showed a map of the Grindstone Trail service area. He discussed the purpose and need of the trail, including safety and usability, encouragement of non-motorized transportation and recreational use, fit into the City's trail network, and mindfulness of environmental impacts.

Ten routes were originally considered with five quickly discarded. Routes were considered weighing impact on adjacent property, impact on specific destinations, impacts to trail users, terrain, public safety, environment and sustainability, maintenance and operations, and initial construction cost.

Three routes were considered on the east side, including the blue and violet alignments, and three on the west side, including orange, green and yellow. The yellow route was discarded because of a 13 percent slope and the green route also was, due to a 5 percent slope. The orange route ended up being the preferred route.

Holmes showed an overhead aerial of the Bakers property and how the route would go through the back. However, engineers have moved the alignment off the Bakers property and would route it much closer to the stream, through common ground owned by the Bluff Creek Homeowners Association. Holmes showed an image of how the trail would fit along the creek with minimal impact. It would essentially be built into the creek bank with the surface within 30 inches of the bottom of the creek. Holmes showed another image of a bridge along the County House Trail, which would be similar to what could be built on the Grindstone Creek Trail.

Blevins asked about flooding on the Grindstone Trail from the creek?

Holmes said the bridge creates no rise for a 100-year flood, but for smaller floods, the bridge design would be able to handle about a foot of backwater.

Devine asked if the realignment would result in increased costs?

Holmes said it would not. There would be a reduction in cost of the bridge, as it would be smaller, but a retaining wall would make up that reduction. So he estimated the cost would be about the same.

Davis complimented Holmes on the work his firm did.

Blevins opened the floor for public comment.

Ken Midkiff, 1005 Belleview Ct, identified himself with the Sierra Club's Osage Group. He stated his concern is that it looks as if living trees are being replaced with dead concrete with this planned trail. He said he was concerned about the creek, but his main concern with the trail is in whacking down trees.

Sutu Forte, 627 Bluff Dale, told the Commission that she felt deeply that the planet has a fever and everything is getting hotter. She said we keep finding excuses to eradicate things that would keep the planet cooler, all in the name of ecology, likening it throwing the baby out with the bathwater. She said she is pleased that the idea would bring people out of their cars and onto bikes, but that she also took time to visit the Bakers and see their property. She is curious as to the 5 percent of bikers that need to use this trail. She does not see the need to destroy this little bit of nature left in Columbia and cited other potential routes such as Stadium and various bike lanes. She played a tape for the Commission with the sounds of a bubbling creek and birds, then asked them not to take these types of sounds away.

Barbara Wren, 615 Bluff Dale, said she also viewed the Bakers property. She said she is glad to see the trail route being moved back but she still feels that with the way their yard is sloped, they would still lose privacy. She said with children playing in their back yard, she would be concerned about people going through there. She said she also has concerns about potential drainage issues making the trail either wet or slick in the winter. She suggested an alternate route that would use sidewalks and cut across the nearby MFA property and may be able to serve even more people. No bridges would be needed.

Darwin Hindman, 1223 Frances, told the Commission he remains very interested in parks and trails. Trails serve as both transportation and recreation, he said, and the Grindstone Trail would fulfill both purposes. He reminded the Commission that the Grindstone Trail was listed to be funded on the 2010 ballot issue and that in his experience, it is very important to make sure that the trail is built to keep promises to the voters. The City has always done what it said it would and Hindman said we don't want to have the next Park Sales tax issue facing criticism if funds were moved from one ballot issue project to someone else's pet project. He added that criticism of a proposed trail is nothing new and that the Bakers had very good points. But now that the trail has been re-routed off their property, he said that parks staff would do a good job of screening the trail with vegetation or whatever means necessary. He pointed out that residents mow a trail back along the creek anyway. He added that he did an unscientific poll, calling 20 homeowners who live along a trail to see what their experiences are. He said all of them were very positive and said they loved living on a trail; that the problems that some people worry about do not occur. He told the Commission that it boils down to honoring a commitment to the voters and doing something good for the community at large. He said if the trail is stopped, he believes there may be no more trails built.

Patrick Ryan, 2610 Pebble Creek Ct, is the former president of the Bluff Creek Homeowners Association, though he is speaking for himself. He thinks that some other trail projects need to be completed before a new one is started. He also thinks an environmental impact study needs to be completed. He prefers the green route alignment for the Grindstone Trail, saying it more adequately fits trail users. He said that trails need to be more destination oriented and that the green route would generate more use. He said he is a sewer contractor and installed the sanitary sewer from Bridge 3 to Richland Road. In his experience, he disagreed that the trail would not affect the waterway. After each rain, he said the creek resembles the Colorado River. The amount of debris would lead to higher maintenance costs, he added. He is afraid the Bakers would have a pile of trees, leaves and debris near their back yard. He would support the green route, he said.

Dan Harder, 1803 Bluff Pointe, said he recently rode the Bear Creek Trail, upon Commissioner Pauls' recommendation. He agreed it is a great trail, which also backs up to many houses. Along his route, he said he saw only one house with a privacy fence. The majority does not have one, and some of the homes are within about 10 feet of the trail. He said he does not use the Bear Creek Trail often because it is on the other side of town from his home. He would like to be able to have a trail closer to him. He is also afraid of the precedent it would set if these funds were used for projects not suited to park purposes.

Cindy Smith, 2211 Bluff Pointe, shared a letter from the Bakers who were not able to attend the meeting due to being out of town for work conflicts. She said that the Bakers were not against trails; they believe the funds would be better off being deferred to the Clyde Wilson Trail (Shepard to Rollins). Since that may also be controversial, the Bakers would like the green route to be considered. They said the route was presented, then put aside, but they believe it is important to consider. It would be less expensive because it would require fewer bridges. It would have more support, would be a shaded walk and would still be ADA compliant. The Bakers pointed out in the letter read by Smith that such a trail would bring some diversity to Columbia's trail system. The Bakers would first encourage the Clyde Wilson trail (Shepard to Rollins), if not that, then the green route of the Grindstone.

Homer James, 2304 Bluff Pointe, said he has lived in Columbia for 50 years and bought his home for the privacy offered in the backyard. He was told there would be nothing behind them. He had moved from another house because of a subdivision going in behind him there. He was disappointed to hear comments that Columbia voters would not be happy. He held up a copy of the sample ballot from 2010 and said there was nothing in the ballot language that mentioned the Grindstone Trail. He voted for the park sales tax because he supports parks for kids, he said. He added that he thought former Mayor Hindman's survey was based on a selective sample but has no proof of that. He said if the trail is built, there will be troubles there. The Bluff Creek neighbors use the mowed strip, which is great because they're neighbors, he said.

William Wise, 2308 Bluff Pointe, stated he is opposed to the proposed Grindstone Trail. He purchased his property in July 2002, at about the same time that the Missouri Department of Conservation purchased their land off of Old Hwy 63. He said he hiked the MDC's land to find a lot of rich natural resources. He cited the different types of wildlife that make that area their home. He said he has observed a decrease in the

wildlife he has seen. He said that building a road and bringing more walkers and bikers will destroy the little valley. The proposed trail would offer no recreational features not already offered in the current trail system. Wise ended by quoting a Joni Mitchell song, saying they paved paradise and built the Grindstone road.

Toni Kazic, 2308 Bluff Pointe, pointed out her property on the map, shown on the screen. The new route would make a dogleg along the creek and would require the cooperation of the Bluff Creek neighbors, she said. She told the Commission the vertical rise between the floodplain and her house is about 18 feet. She said the foliage to block the view from the proposed trail of her house would have to be very high. Most windows in her home as well as her neighbors face the creek. She has walked the area and counted about 22 trees in the creek bed from one point to another along the proposed route. She demonstrated to the Commission how the debris would be held up in the creek. She said she would support the green route to leave the area around the creek alone. She said that unlike other trails in Columbia, homes along this trail route are high above the area so there is no way to screen for privacy and safety. Alternatives exist to this trail route that would serve greater needs of Columbians, she stated. She added that an alternative needs to be selected for the good of the whole community.

Jim Pursifull, 2212 Bluff Pointe, stated he has been a resident of Columbia for 22 years. He lives near the creek and was astonished to hear that anyone would consider a trail in that area. He is very concerned about future damage to the environment. He mentioned that a criteria named by the engineers was to be mindful of the environment. He wondered if an impact study has been done, even though he understands it is not required. He is also concerned with the high cost. He does not know why so much money would be used on something that was not wanted by local residents. He said when he walks out on his deck, the beauty of the creek and bluffs is breathtaking. The sound of nature is amplified, so he is concerned about sound from the trail also being amplified. He said he worried about what will happen to the quality of his life as well as his neighbors. He said once this is done, there will be no do-over. He believes that anyone who could switch places with him for a day would oppose the trail.

Allan Rodgers, 2108 Bluff Pointe, mentioned the references made to promises made to voters. He said when he developed the subdivision in 1978, the street was the longest cul-de-sac in Columbia and was approved because it allowed for better security and modifications were made to allow larger vehicles down the street. He is worried about the security of the neighborhood if the trail is built because it would be open to anyone. He said he walked the area with the engineer and agreed that it could be done. But just because it could be done doesn't mean that it should, he said. He added that the green route would be the best option.

Dan Schoenleber, 2604 Pebble Creek Ct, said he lived in Bluff Creek and that he did not feel like the neighbors would support the alternate route that would take the trail onto common ground. There would still be the threat of eminent domain on the Homeowners Association. He also said he could not believe that they would consider building the trail into the creek bed. He thought that was ridiculous and can't believe that debris would not clog the trail.

There was no more public comment.

Hood said that the Commission is charged with providing feedback as to whether they support deferring funds for the Grindstone Trail, and also providing feedback on priority order of potential GetAbout projects.

Kloeppel asked about environmental impact from the green route? Holmes answered that it is heavily forested and about 1.7 times as many trees would need to be removed than on the orange route. He was unsure about the yellow route

but since that route was not safe because of slope it was not pertinent.

Pauls asked about the MFA property?

Hood said that the City would have to work with MFA if the green route was chosen. The discussion about the trail routes is still in preliminary stage and the preferred route has not been authorized, so no negotiations have occurred with any affected property owners.

Pauls asked about eminent domain with the alternate route on common ground? Hood said it is ultimately the decision of City Council if the Bluff Creek Homeowners Association is opposed. Historically, Council has authorized eminent domain when common ground is involved.

Pauls said he agreed with former Mayor Hindman that the trail needs to go through. He has talked to the Bakers and heard all the comments from neighbors. He pointed out that when it comes to ballot language, it would be impossible to listed all the projects there. He said the information was on the trails master plan. Pauls said he would support either of the routes but he is not in favor of deferring the funds in any way. He reminded the audience that the Commission is merely making a recommendation, but Council will ultimately make the decision.

Hutton said she completely agreed with Pauls. She has lived in Columbia for 55 years and remembers a lot of the same arguments when the MKT Trail was built. She is sympathetic with the neighborhood and said that she lived in the area near the Country Club where developers took out many trees. However, she said a sidewalk is not a trail, and she wants children and families to be able to safely enjoy the trails.

Davis also agreed, saying it is important to keep the promise to the voters. She said it is hard to please everyone and she is sorry that not everyone will be pleased. Davis added that before she was appointed to the Commission, that she used to think about what she wanted but she has realized that it is not just about her or any one person. It is about the best for the entire city.

Blevins read a portion of the lease agreement for the City's lease of the Waters-Moss Wildlife Nature Area. This lease was approved by Council ordinance in January of 2009. The section read addressed the future development of pedestrian trail linking the Grindstone Nature Area, the Waters-Moss Memorial Area, and the South fork of the Grindstone Creek.

Kloeppel said he may be in the minority but he would support partial funding for the trail that would allow it to be built from Grindstone Nature Area to the Waters Moss property, then defer the rest of the funding to GetAbout projects. He thinks there are too many other obstacles and problems to building the whole trail, while at least some other projects could benefit from the funding. But he said this is only one commission making a recommendation and it is up to City Council. He said there may be a similar type or public hearing in front of Council.

Donaldson commented that the Waters Moss property is a rich natural resource and connecting it to Grindstone is essential. She thinks that needs to happen. She is concerned about the lack of the support from the neighborhood for the rest of the trail and the watershed. Her suggestion is to put off the controversial portion of the trail and allow users to enjoy the portion between Waters Moss and the Nature Area and then possibly pursue the orange or green route in the future. She said there are other projects with better support such as the Shepard/Rollins trail that serve both transportation and recreation purposes.

Blevins agreed that the connection between Waters Moss and Grindstone Nature Area is vital. He would also support funding that portion of the trail to get that part constructed. Though it is deferring a portion of the Grindstone money, some of those other projects are important to transportation and public safety. He said by supporting partial funding for the trail, that would help support the commitment the City made to the voters.

Devine said he supports 100 percent funding of the trail with either of the two options, the engineer's proposed route on private property or the alternate route on common ground. He said he fully supports the Parks and Recreation Department. In his years of experience on the Commission, he knows that they have a plan in place for this. He is confident that the department will work with the neighborhood to put the best trail system in place and address their concerns.

Devine made a motion, seconded by Hutton, to support 100 percent funding of the Grindstone Creek Trail, either the engineer's proposed route on private property or the alternate route on common property.

Motion passed 4-3.

In favor: Devine, Hutton, Pauls and Davis Opposed: Blevins, Donaldson and Kloeppel

Following the vote, the Commission went on to discuss the priority ranking of the GetAbout rankings. Commissioners had ranked the projects individually and sent them in to staff, who tabulated the results. Hood showed them how the voting occurred with point values assigned to each of the nine projects, as a basis for discussion. The Commission had asked for staff input as well, so Hood showed them how staff had ranked the projects. Hood said the staff results were amazingly close to the Commission's results.

Donaldson commented that she had tended to rank the trail projects higher because she felt that was the Commission's charge.

Davis added she had ranked Clark Lane higher because it was a major problem for pedestrians.

Hutton said she changed her rankings several times before submitting them. She felt uncomfortable with ranking the sidewalk projects.

Hood acknowledged that GetAbout had been designated to Public Works to administer but that means that pedways, sidewalks and trails are mixed at times. He explained the reasoning behind the additional funding being made available. He said staff also struggled with the list but they tried to consider the community as a whole not just the trail system.

Pauls said he knew that Clark Lane was a nightmare and that having a sidewalk there would ultimately contribute to the trail master plan.

Hood agreed, saying the Clark Lane east sidewalk would offer a connection to the Hominy Creek Trail on that side. The west side would also link, but not as strongly as the east side.

Devine asked how many of these projects would be funded if the Grindstone Trail funds are not deferred?

Hood said based on estimated costs, it looks like about 5 or 6 of the GetAbout projects would still be funded.

Donaldson agreed, saying it looked like the Shepard/Rollins project could be funded. Kloeppel made a motion, seconded by Pauls, to recommend to City Council the priority order of GetAbout projects should be:

- 1) Hinkson Creek Trail, Conley to 63
- 2) Clark Lane sidewalk east
- 3) County House Trail Phase 2 west
- 4) Shepard to Rollins Trail
- 5) Providence and Nifong bike lanes
- 6) West Blvd sidewalk
- 7) Clark Lane sidewalk west
- 8) Hominy Trail connection
- 9) Wabash walkway

Motion passed 7-0.

Council Items

Hood shared these updates:

On the Nov 19 consent agenda, the City Council will consider acceptance of a tract of donated land near Eastport Park. Staff showed a map of the area to the Commission. The land would be used to support the existing park, with a portion of it for stormwater control and portion possibly for an open playfield. That is one feature that the current park lacks.

Griggs added that staff would work with the neighbors on what they would like to have.

Park Project Update

Huffington shared these updates:

Gans Creek Recreation Area: main house on the property has been demolished.

Grant and Derby Ridge Elementary: new playground equipment has been installed.

Stephens Lake Park: deep well repaired.

Twin Lakes: bridge replaced and sandblasting occurring.

Lake of the Woods: bunker at #3 has been reconstructed.

Atkins Park: gold field is being converted to ag-lime surface.

American Legion Park: soil stabilization project occurring behind the gold field.

Brown Station Park: new service gate has been installed.

Cosmo: protective structure built over football/lacrosse field lighting controls.

Rainbow: dugout roofing project continues with finishing work.

Bonnie View Nature Area: grading and seeding project going on.

Longview Park: CARP project recently completed there with lakeshore being cleared and 645 plants installed.

3M Urban Restoration site: roof being removed from the structure there.

Scott's Branch Trail: about 250 feet of the boardwalk has been completed to date.

Hominy Creek Trail: seeding along the trail has had good results.

Recreation Services Update

Coffman shared these updates:

Ultimate Frisbee: had great event at Cosmo Park with Missouri Loves Company and MPRA youth ultimate Frisbee event.

CYFL Tournament: closed out the football season at Cosmo.

50+: Osher classes and other events going well. More activities planned to encourage board participation.

Adapted Community Recreation: students painted a mural at Paquin after recent construction work.

Preschool: activities continue to be very popular.

C.A.R.E.: new students joining tutoring program, 18 Missouri Options students at this time.

Holiday Toys for Youth: toy drive ongoing through December 12.

ARC Anniversary: events are planned for Dec 16-19. Commissioners should expect an invitation in the mail to a breakfast on the 19th.

Upcoming Events: Santa Hotline on Dec. 1, City Kwanzaa Event on Dec. 8, Holiday Lights and Sights Tour on Dec. 19, First Night on Dec. 31, and Happy New U on Jan. 1.

Commission Comments

Hutton said she had received an inquiry from Columbia College about making Field Park non-alcoholic.

Hood said there were three parks downtown with that designation (Paquin, Flat Branch and Village Square). Alcohol is only allowed in those parks with a special permit. He said staff could look into that for Field as well.

Hutton added that she believed that police had discussed it with Columbia College officials.

Griggs said that staff had considered ways to improve and redesign landscaping in the park to open it up and get rid of non-visible areas to try to decrease some illegal activities.

Pauls commented that he had heard compliments from pickleball players about being able to use the ARC courts one day a week. However, they would like to have several courts designated on the south side of town. He also asked about mile markers on the Bear Creek? Another one—4.5—is gone now.

Huffington said they are being made. He'll add the 4.5.

Pauls then asked if some signs indicating turns could be removed? They are not really necessary and just lend themselves to vandalism, he said. Staff agreed.

Staff Comments

Hood told the Commission that the City is accepting nominations for the Howard B. Lang Award for outstanding volunteerism. If anyone would like a nomination form, let Miller know.

Hood reminded the Commission that traditionally the December meeting is cancelled. He asked what the Commission would like to do?

Commissioners agreed to cancel the December meeting unless some type of action is needed. The next meeting will be January 17, 2013.

Public Comments

Councilman Dudley asked if there are any plans to design outdoor racquetball courts? Hood said no, but that is something that could be identified in the Master Plan.