

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

Thursday, March 20, 2008, 7:00 p.m.

ARC, 1701 West Ash

MINUTES

Commission Present: Terry Kloeppe, Bill Pauls, Dennis Knudson, Julia Grus, Gary Kespohl

Staff Present: Mike Hood, Gary Ristow, Mike Griggs, Tammy Miller

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

Agenda: The agenda was approved on a motion by Pauls, seconded by Grus.

Minutes: The February minutes were approved on a motion from Pauls, seconded by Kespohl.

Monthly Report:

The February monthly report was approved on a motion from Knudson, seconded by Pauls.

Rezoning: Silver Oak Senior Living

Griggs described the tract as 11.25 acres in size, just north of the Woodridge subdivision. The tract is heavily wooded, so the rezoning request may become a contentious issue with residents in that area. The north half of the site drains toward I-70 and the other half drains toward Woodridge Park. The site would be regraded so that a majority of the drainage would flow toward the highway. At least 25 percent of the trees on the site would need to be kept as a buffer.

Kespohl asked about the nearby creek?

Griggs answered that it was more of a drainage ditch, although it looks like a creek. Silt does wash into the park from the ditch, which is a problem that needs to be corrected.

Pauls asked about the planned development of the site?

Griggs said it would be senior living and some doctors' offices.

Grus said she remembered a similar type of development issue in that neighborhood over the past couple of years.

Griggs commented that residents there are watchful and take an active role in the community.

Pauls made a motion, seconded by Blevins to recommend to City Council that they see no potential adverse impact to parks or trails from the proposed rezoning as long as Best Management Practices (BMPs) for storm water controls are implemented.

All in favor: Kloeppe, Pauls, Knudson, Grus, Kespohl

Motion carried.

Get About Columbia Trail Guidelines

Hood reminded the Commission of Ted Curtis' presentation at the last meeting about proposed trail guidelines for the City.

Pauls asked how these guidelines would be implemented, if they would be all at once? He added that he had been riding his bike on the trails, and acknowledged that transportation corridors were needed. He commented that bike paths needed to be better designated and made safer. Pauls said he thought the draft that Curtis had presented at the last meeting was tone-deaf. He thought that the public had expressed opposition to hard-surface trails and that the guidelines had ignored that. Pauls said he believed that since nothing visible had been completed yet, that the Get About Columbia group wants to pave a portion of the Bear Creek Trail to show some type of progress because it would be easy to do. He commented that he would prefer an emphasis on improving bike paths and bike lanes, rather than emphasizing trail surfaces.

Pauls said he has heard from people in his ward who are opposed to any concrete on the Bear Creek Trail. He called the trail a beautiful, country lane and said 12 feet of concrete would change the character and diminish the beauty of the trail. He added that he had spoken to Councilman Janku and Councilman Skala, and he didn't think paving the Bear Creek would be supported by Council.

Pauls continued that snow and ice on hard trails are much harder to deal with and clear off than on gravel trails. He said he preferred to spend the money on bike lanes and paths, and had heard from the Greenbelt Land Trust that they would pull any easements from trails that were proposed to be concrete.

Hood responded that it was obvious the main sticking point in the guidelines was the concrete. The whole process is a multi-pronged approach and the entire system will be implemented with all parts of the plan. It would be difficult to reach a consensus on all of those components. Hood commented that different trail users have different responses as to the paved vs. non-paved trail question. The nationwide trends seem to be that most new trails are being built hard surface if funds are available.

Hood said his main concern was that Parks and Recreation staff could not maintain all of the miles of new trails that are being proposed if they are a gravel surface. He said his biggest question is do we attempt to add the staff and resources that would be required to keep up with those maintenance demands, or do we turn to hard surface with new trails, or do we stop building trails?

He added that with the trail guidelines, Parks and Recreation staff had suggested the word "standards" not be used since that implies a permanent, inflexible position. With using the word "guidelines" that allows Council to judge each project individually and make those decisions, without restrictions.

Knudson commented that disabled trail users had to be considered as well. He said he personally is not really fond of concrete, but concrete trails are much easier to maintain. Knudson said he thought a combination of gravel and concrete trails would be a likely solution.

Pauls agreed, but said he thought the recreation trails should remain gravel-surfaced. He said he thought concrete had its place on some trails, but that no one really used the Bear Creek Trail as a transportation corridor to get to work. He said he thought the purpose of the grant was for transportation uses and the Bear Creek would totally lose its aesthetic appeal if concrete is used.

Hood disagreed with Pauls, saying that he believes that concrete trails can still be attractive, if used in the appropriate setting with landscaping and natural features.

Pauls said he just couldn't picture the Bear Creek with concrete and did not like the idea of the trail looking like a concrete slab in his neighborhood. He said he disagreed with staff about the maintenance issues posed by gravel trails.

Kloppel asked Knudson how the Bike Commission felt about the trail guidelines?

Knudson responded that the Commission wanted to see some projects completed and was in favor of bike lanes on the streets. He said some members would use concrete trails if they are available, as cycling is easier on concrete.

Pauls commented he felt like a weak link and felt the need to express his opposition to paving. He stated that the whole tone of the guidelines was frustrating and he feels that many trail supporters will be upset if they see existing trails become concrete. He felt that that Get About Columbia group was suggesting paving the Bear Creek because it was something easy to do to show the public that progress is being made. Pauls said that he would prefer to not even have the grant money if it meant paving trails.

Griggs mentioned that work is being done in other areas. Bids are out right now on bike lanes and they should be painted this summer. He pointed out that it can take up to 18 months of federal review for many of

these projects to just get started.

Hood added that in his 30 years of experience, that trail projects have been some of the most controversial projects he's ever dealt with. Every trail user has a different perspective and there is no right or wrong answer. He said that the MKT Trail was approved on a 4-3 Council vote, so that trail was very controversial in the beginning stages, although it is a popular community feature today. He said if the MKT had been voted down, there might be no trails at all in Columbia. Hood added that he would hate to see the City lose the opportunity for all of these new trails that would be funded by the grant.

Ristow asked about the public input process for the trails guidelines?

Hood said there will be interested party meetings and public hearings on each project. There was a public hearing about a trail through the Bluffdale subdivision which was strongly opposed by most residents.

Grus commented that the obstacles and different constituencies have been identified and they are going through the same thoughts. She said she thought that hikers and bikers often had different perspectives on trail surfaces and controversy arises when the groups want different things. She added that it must be difficult for Curtis and the Get About staff to try to meet not just the needs of everyone, but the needs of the majority, when it is difficult to define the majority.

Pauls reiterated that the whole point of the grant was transportation, in helping people get to work. Hood cautioned that it was just not people going to work, it was people just traveling through the community.

Kloeppel said he believed the Commission could either take action or sit back and wait to see what happens.

Grus asked for clarification on new trail locations?

Hood outlined several:

- Vanderveen to Twin Lakes
- New trail from Cosmo over I-70, then a pedway to the Russell property
- Grindstone Nature Area to Stephens Lake Park
- Stephens Lake east to Woodridge Park, eventually to the Links
- Stephens Lake to downtown to the MKT
- Stephens Lake north to Vandiver

Hood estimated there were probably 30-40 projects in various stages with multiple engineers working on them. The guidelines originated from a need to give consultants the same set of rules to follow when completing projects.

Kespohl said he thought the trail south from Stephens Lake was voted out by the Council?

Hood said that the third phase of the trail, which is strongly opposed by the Bluffdale neighborhood, is in question, but that a final decision by Council has not yet been made and staff is attempting to identify alternatives.

Kloeppel commented he was tempted to wait and see if Council sought a recommendation from the Commission.

Grus asked for staff feedback?

Hood said he thought Curtis was hoping to speed the process by going directly to boards and commissions first, then going to Council. Council may just determine that they will judge each project on an individual

basis and won't adopt the guidelines. Or, there may be two sets of guidelines; one for paved and one for gravel trails.

Pauls commented that after talking to Councilman Janku that Council doesn't seem ready to entertain the issue at this time.

Commission agreed to not take a position on the trail design guidelines, unless asked to by City Council.

Commissions and Boards Questionnaire

The City Clerk's office sent a letter and questionnaire on behalf of Mayor Hindman to all City boards and commissions. The questionnaire was sent to Kloepfel and copies were distributed to other Commissioners. The questionnaire must be completed and submitted by April 30.

Kloepfel said he was open for suggestions on the questionnaire and asked if the item should be placed on the April meeting agenda, after Commissioners had time to review it?

Hood said he thought it was up to the Commission how to proceed. He explained that City Council is trying to get a better handle on the function of the many boards and commissions in the city. The Historic Preservation Commission is seeking an expansion of their role, and Council decided it was an opportune time to survey all boards to gauge the feeling of members on their role and changes that could be made to improve efficiency and communication with Council.

Kloepfel suggested that Commissioners look at the questions and try to reach consensus on answers at the next meeting. He asked Miller to contact the two absent Commissioners and ask them to review the questionnaire before the next meeting.

Parks and Recreation Branding/Marketing

Hood told the Commission that the department is taking a hard look at its marketing efforts and attempting to position itself better, in preparation for the park sales tax renewal that will be put to voters in a couple of years.

Miller explained that a marketing committee had been formed, comprised of employees from both the parks and recreation divisions. The committee is leading efforts to implement a new department slogan, Creating Community through People, Parks and Programs. This slogan is a segment of a whole marketing campaign implemented by the California Parks and Recreation Society, called the VIP Program. This program has been proven successful by parks and recreation departments throughout California and is now being implemented in some locations in Michigan. The MPRA recently adopted the VIP program as a model for Missouri parks and recreation departments as well.

Miller said that the model offers a blueprint on how to brand a parks and recreation department and educate the public on how important parks and recreation is to a community. She added that the next step in the process is to revamp the department logo and start implementing the plan in ads and promotional items. Hood said that if Commissioners had any thoughts or ideas to share about advertising or promotion, to please share them.

Pauls commented that the best advertisement was the excellence of our department and facilities and always hearing that Columbia Parks and Recreation is one of the best.

Kloepfel said that he could see the need for Parks and Recreation to position themselves with voters, since there will likely be many issues coming before voters in the next two years. He would not want to see the department lose support to other issues.

Ristow agreed, saying that we need to keep our momentum, because it's hard to regain it, once you've lost it. Griggs added that public safety is always going to be a top priority, but staff just did not want to see parks and recreation slide down as a much lower priority.

Council Items

Hood updated the Commission on Council items:

Farmers Market has received \$180,000 in donations for a new structure. They have made great progress toward their goal. Potential donors have indicated that tax credits would be an attractive incentive and under the current agreement, the Market could not apply for the credits. They are required to control the site they are on, and a lease option would solve that problem. Hood said he made a report to Council on March 17 and they gave the go-ahead to move forward.

Heibel Building: The CMCA has withdrawn support for the renovation of the building in Field Park, so responsibility for the building will fall back to the City. Hood said staff would likely be asked to make a recommendation to the Council.

Grus asked if there was any way to preserve the façade of the building or any part of it?

Hood said he did not know, but the issue may be in front of the Commission at some point.

Kespohl asked if Columbia College had any interest?

Hood said it was possible, but in the past, the College had wanted the building demolished.

He added that one of the biggest issues with the building was its lack of parking, which makes public use nearly impossible.

Capital Project Update

Griggs shared these updates:

Antimi shade structures: Are being constructed to avoid underground pipes and wires. They will be in place soon.

Stephens Lake Park: the beach was extended a little to accommodate the sprayground. The pump room is being completed for water treatment for the sprayground.

Grindstone: The shelter has been demolished and a new one (similar to Paquin) will be built.

PMC: Repairs are being made to the exterior wall, which sustained incredible amounts of water damage, much worse than was originally thought.

Trail Maintenance: New rock has been laid on portions of the MKT, Bear Creek and Twin Lake trails. A culvert was replaced on the Bear Creek.

PMC Greenhouse: A new greenhouse is being built to replace one that was displaced by office renovations.

Commission Comments

Kloepfel asked how the MPRA Conference was?

Hood said it was a great conference, and mentioned that ARC Director Erika Coffman was program chair. He was the conference was well-attended and well-received by members.

Staff Comments

Ristow invited the Commission to the Open House at the new Stephens Lake Activity Center on April 2, from 2-7 pm. He mentioned the new Leisure Times activity guide would be out April 2 and described the Wonders of Wildlife (WOW) event on May 2-3 at Twin Lakes.

Griggs told the Commission that 100 applications were made for the two Park Supervisor positions. These were narrowed to four finalists, with decisions being made in early April.

Public Comments

None

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.