

# PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

Thursday, October 19, 2006

7:00 p.m.

ARC, 1701 West Ash

MINUTES

**Commission Present:** Bill Pauls, Terry Kloeppe, Dennis Knudson, Mike Jones, Dan Devine

**Commission Absent:** Julia Grus, Marin Blevins (half meeting)

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

Meeting called to order at 7 pm by Pauls.

**Agenda:** The agenda was approved on a motion from Kloeppe, seconded by Devine.

**Minutes:** The September minutes were approved on a motion from Devine, seconded by Kloeppe.

**Monthly Report:** The September report was approved on a motion from Kloeppe, seconded by Devine.

## **Bicycle /Pedestrian Trails Planning—Ted Curtis**

Hood introduced Ted Curtis to the Parks and Rec Commission. Curtis is senior planner in charge of administering the City's pilot PedNet project.

Curtis opened his presentation by saying he had noticed there were probably over 100 cars in the parking lot at the ARC and only one bicycle. Since one of the chief aims of the project is to increase the number of residents who commute by bicycle or on foot, there was a long way to go, he said. Curtis said in order to meet a requirement of the grant, progress must be shown by 2010. He called it a huge challenge for residents to change behaviors and to achieve a significant modal shift. Curtis showed a pyramid of transportation modes and how residents tend to view biking as transportation, whether they would never consider it (bottom of pyramid) up to whether they use a bike all the time when possible. He said his mandate in his position and as grant administrator was to increase the number of people moving up the pyramid.

Curtis discussed eligible projects which include infrastructure and projects that create a network. He told the Commission that the PedNet Committee has approved a draft of a master plan that includes some aggressive ideas. He said the plan was to get as many items in the draft plan that may be accomplished in 2-3 years. He said the plan is based on a model used in Portland, Oregon, and showed maps of that city and its bike routes. He said Portland officials adopted a "Travel Smart" marketing plan in promoting biking as transportation to its residents. Curtis also shared information about Minneapolis and some of the innovations the city had done to increase bike usage, including signage and bike markings.

Curtis said the draft plan for Columbia includes bike paths as the "backbone" of the system along with an increase in bike lanes and routes. Sidepaths are non-standard elements that are part of the plan as well.

Curtis said that because of the very short timeframe, the committee has had to truncate a lot of the public input process in developing the draft master plan. Some of the ideas have gotten out to the public, such as suggested paving of portions of the MKT. The next stage in the process is to gather public input which will be the goal over the next three-four months.

Devine said he had received some calls from citizens with concerns about paving the trail, with most of the concerns being from runners and walkers who believe a hard surface would be harder on them.

Curtis responded that with a paved trail, there would be increased usage. He said the ideal would be to have a path that is also gravel for pedestrians, similar to the Heels and Wheels concept in St. Louis' Forest Park. He noted the ambience of the trail, and believes that the streams and meandering of the trail may not show up as

well as it could. Curtis acknowledged that concrete can be tough on joggers and he is interested in mitigating these concerns through compromise. He said the concerns raised by joggers are legitimate.

Devine then asked about the process, if it is too fast and what the actual next step would be?

Curtis said a possible idea would be to have a pilot project of some type, maybe a mile or two on the MKT or a loop on the Hinkson Creek Trail to see how residents like the paving. He said the next step will be to submit a staff report to the City Council with the draft master plan. Curtis said he is not sure how it will go, but guidelines are needed to determine where the process is going. He said City Council would have the final say. Hood added that some issues have been discussed in the community already such as the trail paving idea. He said the media tended to focus on that one item rather than all of the other ideas that are under discussion. Hood said that Curtis had been working with parks planners and staff quite a bit.

Curtis also added that neighborhoods affected and developers would be involved in discussions.

Griggs asked Curtis if he had ever dealt with an issue such as gravel-to-paved-trail in another city where he had worked?

Curtis said that in South St. Louis County, they had suggested that for Grant's Trail and faced similar opposition. Nobody wanted the trail paved, but now that it is, it has become very popular and more widely used. Ristow added that in Madison, Wisconsin, he knew of a popular lakeside trail that also has been recently paved and lighted. That has been well-received by the public.

Kloeppel asked Curtis about people who use the MKT for recreational use. He told Curtis he does not believe those users will see his point about increased usage of the trail.

Curtis said that raises the question of can we provide enough side paths for peaceful recreational users? He said that will be a major question.

Kloeppel asked about experimenting with what is there now?

Curtis answered that acquisition can take years and sometimes has to involve condemnation, which can create a public outcry. Curtis said you have to have every parcel of needed land to make the connectors work. He said even with an aggressive acquisition plan, you probably won't see newly built trails until 2008 or 2009 possibly.

Kloeppel then asked about the aggressive timeline.

Curtis said technically that the money does not run out. By law, it cannot be taken away but since this is a pilot project, Columbia is obligated to do the best it can so that the project may be repeated in the future for other cities, which could include Columbia again. Curtis added that the measurement aspect is driving the timeframe, not the threat of losing the money.

Kloeppel said he had received a survey in the mail on transportation use and asked Curtis about it.

Curtis answered that random people in the four cities receiving pilot grants were receiving these from the University of Minnesota and Kloeppel had received one.

Pauls told Curtis that he was a marathoner and that he hated concrete with a passion and much preferred the current surface of the trails. He said he was also a member of the Park Patrol and that they had many problems with bikes speeding on the trail right now. Pauls said he could not imagine the problems they would have if the trail was paved. Pauls added that he was very upset about the idea of paving the trail and he does not like the speed at which the process seems to be moving and more public input into the process is needed. He believes more trails are needed, not just adding concrete or asphalt to existing ones. He said he felt very strongly about this and would argue against the idea in front of City Council. He believes paving would ruin the aesthetics of the trail.

Pauls strongly stated that he felt residents mistrusted government enough and with no or little public input, it made this mistrust even worse. He said he would like to get involved with the committee to discuss the master plan. He said he had already received many calls about the idea of paving the trail.

Hood cautioned that paving is just one idea of many that are part of the draft master plan. He said the media had chosen to focus on the paving as part of their coverage but there were other ideas worth discussing as well. Ristow added that paving is just one tool in the toolkit that Curtis had mentioned. He said Parks and Recreation staff had heard many people voice opposition to paving, but they have heard from the other side too. Pauls stated he did not think the people in the community have had the chance to learn about all of this.

Knudson, who is on the committee, said he had looked at the map and mentioned the MKT between Stadium and Scott being a very aesthetic walk. He added that he thinks the media had overplayed the issue at this point and that it's unfair that paving is all that is being discussed. Knudson said he believes Curtis will work with the committee and with city staff to preserve what the city has and to develop new ideas, such as developing connective trails to help the transportation system. He mentioned he had been on some of the trails in Portland, and some are gravel, some are paved. Knudson said he believe Council will listen to both sides.

Pauls mentioned that he was a very active trail user, and he could not understand how he did not hear about all of this before reading about it in the paper? He wanted to know why staff had not informed him. Griggs said Curtis' presentation was listed on the agenda for tonight's meeting before the article appeared. Hood added that the PedNet committee has been broken down into subcommittees, which have been meeting over the past few weeks. These meetings are open to the media and this is how the information was open to the press. The ideas are just now being generated and discussed. Hood stressed that none of these ideas have been finalized; they are just ideas at this point. Pauls said he hoped the city's master trail system is a guide with potential connective trails.

Ristow said he likened the paving idea to the idea of widening Broadway. It is a polarizing issue and one can't control what is reported in the media but it is important to be able to discuss ideas.

### **Commissions and Boards**

Hood mentioned that invitations would be coming out soon for the Mayor's Commissions and Boards reception on November 2. The event will be in the lobby of the Daniel Boone Building.

### **Council Items**

Hood told Commissioners that City Council had discussed the March-Hiebel Building at Field Park. He reminded the Commission of the history of the historic building, which is being leased by Mid-Missouri Community Action. The organization plans to restore the building, which is in poor condition, and open it for public use. The lease on the building expired in 2005 and the Council granted the organization a one-year extension. That extension expired in September 2006. At a recent meeting, the Council voted 6-1 to extend the lease as some progress has been made. The organization plans to apply for historic tax credits to aid in the cost of restoring the building and it was in that interest that City Council granted the lease extension.

Blevins asked if there would be an effect on parks staff in regard to maintenance and if the building poses a hazard to park users?

Hood said no, the building is structurally sound and all doors and windows are secure.

In other Council items, Hood told Commissioners that their recommendation regarding the property at Ash and Clinkscales is tentatively scheduled for discussion at a Council work session on November 13.

Agreements for three school playground projects will be on the next Council agenda. The agreements are with Blue Ridge, Ridgeway and Russell. Mill Creek may be added to that list.

### **Capital Projects Update**

Griggs shared updates as follows:

**Stewart and Providence:** area underneath the overpass has been paved

**Cosmo Tennis:** posts have been installed and color coding is being done

**Fairview tennis:** color coding is going on there too.

**Parking lot sealing striping** done at Dexheimer, Skate Park, t-ball, Rainbow, Football, Schwabe Entrance, Nickell clubhouse, Nickell maintenance, MKT Stadium access, Rock Quarry Park, Cosmo-Bethel and Kiwanis

**ARC:** parking lot is being expanded.

**Douglass Pool:** pool shell is being refurbished, as is the slide.

**Again Street Park:** lights have been installed

**Stewart and Providence:** showed photos of mud mat preparation and pour as well as the mortaring of a boulder wall.

**Stephens Lake Park:** a new bench area has been installed.

**Riechmann:** light has been installed on the sign

**SLP spraygrounds:** construction has started.

**Bear Creek Park:** shelter is nearing completion.

**Louisville Park:** hand-formed curbs have been installed, a rain garden is going in there. A shelter is also being constructed.

**Shepard Elementary:** showed photos of the city-school project at Shepard.

**Gentry move:** Downtown staff will move back there on Nov. 7.

### **Commission Comments**

Mike Jones asked about the visioning process?

Hood answered that several fall festivals were held in October to garner public participation. Though there were not huge crowds, some valuable feedback was received. The next event is the BIG meeting, where the group will be reviewing key topics. From that meeting, small committees will start meeting in January.

Pauls asked about the status of the waterfall at Stephens Lake Park?

Hood said that the City has received the donation from the Nall family and staff has met with the family.

Construction will likely start in the spring.

Pauls mentioned confusion at Cosmo Park over one-way streets and asked about arrows being painted.

Griggs said he had talked to the Park Ranger about that and that it will likely be done after the sealing of the lots at Cosmo.

Pauls then asked about using cameras at the Skate Park to catch delinquent behavior.

Griggs said there is no secure place there to store a recording device. Staff has considered a wireless device that would bounce back images to Parks Management Center. Staff did install two “dummy cameras” which worked well until they were stolen. The Park Ranger does have a portable camera, Griggs said, and he would remind her to use it from time to time.

### **Staff Comments**

Hood mentioned a dedication to be held on November 4 at the Nikawa Pavilion at Nifong Park.

### **Public Comments**

None

Meeting adjourned at 8:40 pm.