

VERMILION PARKS & RECREATION BOARD

Minutes of July 17, 2018 - 7:00pm | Municipal Complex Courtroom (687 Decatur)

Roll Call: T. Parker, W. Warden, B. Scholtz, J. Keck, D. Brudney, Jim Schoene
Not Present: E. Wakefield; Chad Kuhns, REC. DIRECTOR; B. Holmes, COUNCIL REP
Also Present: D. Corogin, PARKS (Mtte. Operations) DIRECTOR; T. Valerius, SERVICE DIRECTOR

T. Parker called the meeting of July 17, 2018 to order.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

B. Scholtz MOVED; B. Warden seconded to approve the meeting minutes of June 19, 2018. Vote 6 YEAS.
MOTION CARRIED.

CORRESPONDENCE/AUDIENCE/COMMUNITY GROUP USE PERMIT:

T. Parker welcomed Jim Schoene who filled the unexpired term of Jonathan Logue. He read into the record the following letter sent to City Council by Mayor Forthofer:

Dear City Council Members:

I request Council approve the appointment of Jim Schoene to the Parks and Recreation Board. This appointment is to replace Jonathan Logue who resigned his position.

Jim Schoene is a resident of Wayne Trail in Indian Ridge. He has a BS in Aeronautical Science, is a career US Army retiree, decorated Vietnam veteran, 16-year career with Boeing, a member of Rotary and a proven volunteer in numerous city efforts including a leadership position in building the skate spot on Devon Drive. I have full confidence that Mr. Schoene will make significant contributions to Vermilion's Parks and Recreation Board. – Mayor Forthofer

G. Fisher said the Parks Board received an email from Katie Lalonde who was present to speak with the Parks Board.

Katie Lalonde said she presented her personal mission to the Vermilion Township back in January, but was stopped according to the Ohio Revised Codes relative to the ownership of Sherod Park. Therefore, she presented data to the Parks Board as she would like to propose a new playground/swing set structure in Sherod Park to be updated. She put out a survey on Survey Monkey in the winter to get a feel of what people in the area were looking for such as how often do they visit a community playground, how many children would go to the playground, and what is their relationship to the child, and what they look for in a playground. She received 134 responses from social media so she could show there is a need for a playground in Vermilion.

She said she is a mother of three and drives to Huron, Amherst, Sandusky, and all the local surrounding parks for her children to play; on top of that she also watches children so she is taking them to these parks as well, so she can have up to six kids at one time aging from 2 – 8. She had pictures of what other playgrounds look like in the surrounding communities. She said Sherod Park is the most convenient park for her but there are a lot of safety issues and the playground equipment is not appropriate for the ages of children she is taking there. It's a neglected playground and at one point there has been water sitting underneath the swings, which has sat there for a long period of time. If they had enough mulch or different padding you probably would not have that issue and kids would still be playing at the playground. She said she drives by Sherod Park two to three times a day and there is never anybody playing at the playground. She measured her children and the safety portion when coming off the slide and it's a good two foot drop from the bottom of the slide to the ground.

She said she contacted Kevin Hinds of Play & Park Structures from Pittsburgh, PA and is proposing that the existing structure at Sherod Park be removed. There are many options to improve the playground and the Parks Board can make it the way they want to make it more feasible and safe, and for all ages. She understands the first questions will surround funding, but she feels there are enough businesses in town and people who would be willing to donate. She feels funding could be easy in a sense but she proposes they go through the process to get something that is safe for the children to utilize because it's not being utilized now.

B. Warden said Maude Neiding Park in Amherst has had complaints due to splinters and Katie Lalonde said her proposal wouldn't be a wooden structure. She said Maude Neiding Park fits all ages, but agrees their structures are not up to date. She said they have a metal slide and a wooden structure. K. Lalonde said Sherod Park has a lot of green space and they love going there, but with it being on the outskirts of town it seems very neglected. She also feels Showse Park needs a lot of love as there is a lot of potential for that park. B. Warden said they have put in about a half million dollar investment in Showse Park within the last 10 years. K. Lalonde said it has a nice playground, but there is a ton of green space which has potential. She said she grew up by West Breeze Park and there is a ton of potential there as well. T. Parker agreed the playground equipment there has seen better days. K. Lalonde said there is open metal at Sherod Park and she doesn't know how a child has never cut their arm or leg.

J. Keck asked if she is thinking of a playground that is size comparable to the playground at the schools or bigger. K. Lalonde said those are nice playgrounds. She distributed proposals to the board from Play & Park Structures. Kevin Hinds distributed catalogs to the board and noted he was contacted by Katie during the winter as she is trying to figure out how to get a new playground in this park. He provided a proposal for \$70,432.18. T. Parker said the Parks Board doesn't have any money to spend at the moment, but it doesn't mean they're opposed to the idea at all, but if they can find a way to establish some partnerships...K. Hinds said if Katie Lalonde is able to get \$100,000 donated from businesses then does it need to be put into a trust on behalf of the Parks Board. G. Fisher believed a separate fund would need to be established. However, this would need to be discussed with the finance director. T. Parker said they would establish a fund within the city. G. Fisher said it would probably be set up like how the pool donations fund was established. T. Parker said all the pool donations were put in the pool fund which was held by the city. It was fully accounted, recorded and receipted for, and as expenses come in the money will be moved over into the General Fund from where the checks are written from. He advised Katie that if she creates an organization and handles her funding through it then she will need a non-profit status and will need to keep books. D. Corogin didn't know if they would want to start a sub-committee of the Parks Board and allow Katie to be on it if she was interested. She said the Parks Board could budget \$10,000-\$20,000 or whatever the budget would allow towards the playground. T. Parker said it would be a committee for a specific purpose which could help generate volunteers and fundraising, and if it's through a sub-committee of the Parks Board then it wouldn't be hard for the city to hold the money. Katie Lalonde said she would totally be okay if the Parks Board created a committee.

K. Hinds said he could provide the city with some information on grant opportunities and financing for playground equipment.

Community Event Group Use Permits -

Libby Davis Williams said her daughter is getting married on September 15, and they would like to use East Exchange Park at 5:30 pm and they need an arbor and some chairs which will be removed by the next morning. T. Parker said they are welcome to do this, but the park can't be closed to the public during the ceremony.

B. Scholtz MOVED; J. Keck seconded to approve the Community Event Group Use Permit as submitted. Vote 6 YEAS. **MOTION CARRIED.**

DIRECTOR'S REPORTS:

Service Director Tony Valerius reported that the street department by the end of this week will be installing signs in Nokomis Park directing people to stay away from the bluff as they want to keep people from mowing that close to the edge. He said Dana Corogin met with representatives from ODNR and this was their suggestion due to the erosion situation. Also, two signs will be placed on either end from the end of Eya and Minnie Wa Wa that state "Pedestrians Only". There have been reports with people with bicycles, golf carts, and cars going along the edge. D. Corogin said to maintain the area they may need to purchase a sickle for their tractor. T. Valerius commented there is some growth coming back on the hillside.

D. Corogin reported at Showse Park the transformer, overhead wires, and poles have all been removed. She said the basketball court will have two new LED lights since there are poles in place. These lights are cost effective and they are on a timer. There are two poles they kept which will light the playground area and the field with the pavilion.

D. Corogin thanked Dennis Brudney and Jim Schoene for their work on fixing the Skate Spot. It was absolutely an unbelievable performance and organization on their parts. She noted that J. Schoene wrote up a very thorough report which accounts for every single thing he did, so it's easy when they go to the Erie Metro Parks to do their final grant report. This report is on file with the clerk.

She reported that severe erosion problems due to high water and storms at Showse Park have made access to the lake and pier hazardous. The piers are almost under water because of the high water and she isn't sure it will recede anytime soon. She said money was set aside for this project and Justin Miller hasn't been able to do the revetment repairs, but he will visit it again to assess the situation. She said the stormwater is under control with the new drainage. She said they probably lost 30 cottonwood trees and willow trees at Sherod Park due to significant erosion and the creek is completely blocked. There is not much beach to speak of and a lot of the hillside is overgrown. She said the grass is killed on the walking trails and they will start putting down woodchips in the next week or two as time permits; same with Showse Park. The Vermilion in Bloom volunteers have been out in full force at all the parks trying to make them look nice.

D. Corogin asked the board to approve the allocation of an additional \$3,100 for engineered mulch for the playgrounds. She said in April the board approved \$5,000, but because they need so much more than previous years, she would like them to increase this amount.

B. Warden MOVED; D. Brudney seconded to allocate an additional \$3,100 for engineered playground mulch. Vote 6 YEAS. **MOTION CARRIED**.

D. Corogin said she met with Ann Naugle about the beach market which will be held in a good portion of Sherod Park. She will provide more port a john's this year as well. She noted the Triathlon will be held in Sherod Park again and the Scottish Games, but she hasn't heard from Mark Valenti of the Scottish Games. D. Corogin said she heard the Vermilion Corvette show was very nice and the people were very respectful of the newly planted trees.

D. Brudney said his son is the Lieutenant on the Fire Department at Station #2 and they were going to do a practice exercise at Showse Park and they had problems getting through the gate because the lock was in bad shape and they need keys, which they didn't have, so this should be coordinated with the Fire Department. Also, because of the bad erosion at Showse Park they can't take the boat down like they normally would to do a rescue, so they had to rope the boat down into the water, which they normally can do with a fire truck and ladder, but because they aren't allowed to pull a fire truck on the pervious pavers it makes it difficult because they have to park all their equipment across the street in the parking lot. In an emergency they would have to run across and get the ropes and take a lot of extra time to make a rescue. They were hoping the city could look at the situation with the keys. Also, because of the location of the fire hall, when they bring the fire truck down there is such a steep turn off of Edgewater into the park that the fire trucks can't turn in there and they have to

enter through the other way. They have to warn other departments ahead of time who conduct practice sessions that they can't turn there or they will do damage to the new parking lot. D. Corogin asked if they could park in the grass and D. Brudney said he is sure they could but if it's a matter of emergency they don't want to go up and around; they want to do it in the shortest period of time. T. Valerius will handle the key/lock issue.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:

Skate Spot - D. Brudney reported the Skate Spot was completed on June 25 and there were over 350 hours of volunteer time put into renovating the ramps. He said Jim Schoene was the volunteer leader of the project and did an outstanding job. There were a number of people involved from Open Door Church and athletes that skate at the park. He said the kids are really excited as the park turned out really nice. He said they were going to close the park, but it turned out to be a benefit to have the kids skate on the ramps that were completed and to give their input. He said they are planning a Skate Spot Open House on August 9 from 5:30-7:30 pm. They want to get the community and skaters involved and are hoping to have food and door prizes available, and contests. He said they have an alternate date if it rains. They hope to have skate board and bicycle vendors there to donate equipment as prizes.

Jim Schoene, Volunteer Leader of the Skate Spot said they went through many technical challenges as they went through the proof of concept to determine what was the most cost efficient, effective, and long-lasting way to repair the ramps. He said he moved to Vermilion a year ago from Olympia, Washington and they were used to alternative cultures, so he thought he would anticipate a little bit of attitude from the people that use the park regardless of where they are in the age in the social spectrum. However, there was not one bad experience the whole six weeks he was there as everybody was kind, courteous, respectful, and contributed either physically or with technical advice. He was very impressed of the caliber of the athletes from the youngest to folks in their 40's. It's amazing how strong this culture is and the park actually supports five-wheeled vehicle types of sports activity; BMX bikes, scooters, skateboards, and inline skating. He said somebody from Cleveland came to the park that is a premier inline skater who used all the ramps. Other people delivering a jeep from Cleveland also heard about the park and asked what the cost was to use the park and he advised them it was free. They asked if they could bring their radio controlled cars in and he told them they could. They thought it was great and said they would spread the word in Cleveland. He said this park supports five different action sports and he feels they got a lot of bang for their buck because the park is open year round, weather permitting. He said these are athletes doing acrobatics on wheels. With the refurbishment and the half pipe, and what Dana did with the flowers and so forth, and the fence improvement, you can see there is pride reestablished in the Skate Spot which is an excellent launch if they decide to pursue the vision with a destination park in the future.

D. Brudney said there is a little bit of money left over and they are looking to put one more feature in the park. He will pursue the cost to build a pyramid feature with a fun box which may be good for the skateboarders. D. Corogin believed there was around \$1,100 left that wasn't spend as part of the Metro Parks grant along with additional money the Parks Board allocated for the Skate Spot that they didn't end up using for a contractor because of Jim Schoene volunteering the work, so she thinks there is enough to pay for the pyramid and she didn't believe they will need to come back to the Parks Board for more money.

Jim Schoene said Anne Maiden had received a phone call from a 15 year old thanking the city for redoing the skate spot. D. Corogin said there is a new sign coming this week along with a red bench and red trash receptacle. They would like to put the bench at the east end of the porch area where there is shade, so grandparents and parents can be in the shade while watching the kids. G. Fisher said she is still getting kids and teenagers congregating on the portion that leads to her office which blocks access to her office. She said she asked the service director if they could possibly put 'No Loitering' signs in that area because she has received complaints because they are blocking the walk and it's not a good sight when a teenage boy and girl are laying on the sidewalk going up to her office. D. Corogin said they used to have a vending machine there too and wondered if they could put another one at the east end with the bench. G. Fisher said they have to remember this area is a city building and office area and not the park, so they just need to keep it separate as much as

possible. D. Corogin said Dale Reising is getting a price for a camera to monitor the park and to identify the person as it goes right to the police station screen, so this might deter some of this behavior.

T. Parker said the Harborview Project committee is meeting in the morning and noted that Eileen Bulan and Peter Corogin are co-chairing the committee. He said he asked Jon Logue to tell him where things were at the time he resigned from the Parks Board, and Jon sent over summary notes for the board to review which is on file in the clerk's office. He said when Jon was still on the board they were trying to get the Reisinger property presentable and usable for the summer. He noted that Jon had informally said that if Western Reserve will take care of that while they own it; once the city owns it they will reimburse them for the cost of demolition which is \$8,500 which included the grading and the seeding. They will not get the title until the end of August and after that time they can bring this up in the board meeting to approve payment for the demolition. J. Logue also noted in his summary that the conservation easement is being finalized with Erie Metro parks.

D. Corogin asked if they were going to form a sub-committee regarding a plan and priority of what they will do with the park levy money as it comes in. Depending on what the city does with their general fund money she wants to make sure they have money for programs, events, and hiring parks personnel. T. Parker noted this was a good suggestion.

FINANCIAL REPORTS:

T. Parker noted that City Council met last night and Council was handed a list by the finance director on projects that have to be done that were not budgeted for and the costs were around \$2.8 million, and city council was shell shocked. The tax budget that was approved and will be submitted to the county showing the need to collect the tax shifts \$120,000 of Parks maintenance expenses from the general fund into the levy fund. In other words, the \$270,000 a year in new money would only be \$150,000 in new money. The city is faced with an enormous amount of debt and he essentially made points in stating this was not one of the deals they took to the voters, and he felt they were being disproportionately taxed to help balance the budget. He felt they were unfairly being taxed to balance the budget and this is not what the levy was created for. He suggested this may not sit well with the voters because this was not what they were promised and he had minutes from the clerk that showed the discussions last June and July and it was right there; \$160,000 in the general fund and \$270,000 from the levy; let the people decide. Obviously, everybody is going to have to give something. He said this is beyond disappointing and it's frustrating, and it's a very bitter feeling. A lot of good people worked very hard to get the levy passed and all of a sudden it's like a cash cow. He noted he received communication of support today from Councilman John Gabriel as he was very active on the levy committee and he said he would do his best to at least get that amount down to half of the amount being lost. T. Parker said this is not an appropriation budget at this point; this is the beginning of the discussion that is going to end up with the appropriation. He said at the council meeting Steve Herron had said he had felt like he had been kicked in the gut. They do by law have to balance the budget. He will continue to do what he can to lobby that all the money doesn't come out of the parks budget.

B. Warden asked if there have been any additional comments on the mayor's proposal relative to a pool grant or anything. T. Parker said he hasn't heard anything further of this as they were just suggestions and a thought. He said the mayor had noted there was money left from this year's donations that will go towards operating the pool next year. His suggestion is that the Parks Board considers creating a pool trust that would take the left over money and the city could possibly contribute \$5,000 a year for the next five years. This trust would be responsible completely for raising the money to operate the city pool. The intent is clearly there with the administration that the pool is not coming back into the general fund and they want to get out from under some of the parks operations. He said this is not a criticism and it is what it is, and this seems to be the way things are moving; other departments are taking a bite too. Even if the Parks Board gets half of that money back they are still taking about a 38% reduction, which seems like a lot. Going forward they will do what they can to keep the communication open and to lobby where they can to get what they thought they were going to get, along with every other department. He noted that health care costs are killing the city; it's \$1.6 million this year alone out of

the budget. Additional items that Amy Hendricks had reported on at the council meeting was that a lot of funds are hampered by debt service; in the road levy income 78% of their expenses is debt service. When they first got the road levy they did as much as they could and they borrowed against future income to do it, so now only 22% which is generated in a given year is available to do a street. There seems to have been a pattern in other funds and they are spending a lot of money to pay debt service. This is money that can't be used for anything else so they are trying to look at ways by refinancing and to do a study to see if they can get better rates of interest. It will be a long uphill climb out of the current situation. It didn't happen overnight but it feels like it did. It started with reduction of the fund for local governments, which is the tax cut from the State of Ohio.

D. Brudney asked if there was decision on food trucks in council last night as this could affect the parks on whether they are allowed in parks or not. T. Parker said he was hearing from council that they really didn't want them on private property, but on public property. G. Fisher said they are discussing on whether they will limit the time on food trucks and if they will be allowed during certain events. It's still being reviewed.

B. Warden asked if there was any way to finance playground equipment based on projected tax revenue in the future. He said maybe they could get a ten year note for \$10,000, which may be more doable instead of paying \$90,000 upfront. T. Parker said they have two more years on the ballfield lease, which is about another \$90,000. This has hurt them in terms of the capital levy for the last 20 years.

B. Warden said the clerk is going to research what other communities do in regards to charging a fee for use of parks by organizations that are essentially for profit. This could be another modest source of income that they could pursue in the future to offset some of their expenses. Kevin Hinder said he could get the board some information on other avenues they can take in financing a playground.

ADJOURNMENT:

J. Keck MOVED; D. Brudney seconded to adjourn the meeting. Vote 6 YEAS. **MOTION CARRIED.**

NEXT MEETING:

August 21, 2018 @ 7:00 pm - Municipal Complex Courtroom (687 Decatur)

~ Gwen Fisher, Boards and Commissions