

CITY OF WARREN PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
March 1, 2016



The meeting was called to order at 4:35 PM, March 1, 2016. Members present were Dennis Crandall, Jackie Angove, Kirk Johnson, Mark Zavinski, and Judy Wilson, and Todd Ristau. Mike Suppa was absent. Also attending: Mary Ann Nau, David Hildebrand, Nancy Freenock, Ellen Nelson, and Jessica Roudybush.

VISITORS

Representatives from Leadership Warren: Alex Shreffler, Brian Wenger, Steve Sigmund.

MINUTES

Upon a motion and second to accept the minutes of the December 1, 2015 regular meeting, the minutes were unanimously approved.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Mr. Crandall asked for nominations to the committee. Upon no nominations being made he made a motion that the committee cast a vote to keep the members the same. Motion was seconded by Ms. Wilson. Vote was all in favor. Dennis Crandall, Chairman; Todd Ristau, First Chair; Jackie Angove, Secretary.

CORRESPONDENCE

Ms. Nau presented a request from Amber Sharp, Leadership Warren, to attend the meeting in order to address the members regarding a proposed project. Ms. Sharp was unable to attend the meeting but sent others in her place.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Leadership Warren / Adopt-a-Park Program

Alex Shreffler and Brian Wenger were in attendance as representatives from the current Leadership Warren class. Mr. Shreffler advise the group that each year the Leadership Warren class selects a project that will benefit the Warren Community. This year's class has met with Mayor Cashman and he has expressed his desire to get rid of a couple of the City parks because upkeep is a burden. In light of this Mr. Shreffler stated that the Leadership Warren class has decided on an "Adopt-a-park" program. The class has not finalized the details of the program and is asking the City for help regarding what is involved in maintaining a park and if there are certain parks that the City felt would benefit from this program. He also expressed concern over how the program will be organized and who will control it (i.e. initiated by the Leadership Warren class but then responsibility would transfer to the City).

Mr. Hildebrand noted that there was a similar program adopted in 1987 and the file for that Adopt-a-Park program is in his office and available for review by Leadership Warren. This program fizzled out shortly after its inception due to lack of interest/volunteers. Mr. Crandall noted that a large problem is that money runs out, people lose interest, weather turns bad, etc.

Ms. Nau stated that the success of a program such as this depends on what you expect volunteers to do. Also, the City is still liable for activity at the Parks so the City still needs to keep an eye on things. Vandalism is always a problem. Ms. Freenock pointed out that volunteers cannot take work away from DPW under the collective bargaining agreement. Ms. Nau reviewed a list of tasks that volunteers could do (no mowing, operating equipment, etc.). Also volunteer groups should be recognized for their work. The City has 23 active and passive parks. She noted that a project like this is a long-term commitment.

Ms. Freenock suggested a different project for the Class to take on. She has been researching how to best preserve the Birdstone Monument. It is not salvageable at this point and cannot be restored to its original state. The City must come up with a plan on what to do with it. She has been in contact with the artist that designed the monument and he is willing to help in the restoration and/or preservation process. There should also be a sign that explains that the monument is a tribute to the Seneca Nation and the history behind it.

Mr. Shreffler stated that this would be a good alternative if the Adopt-a-park program does not move forward. Mr. Ristau also thinks this is an excellent idea and that it would go a long way in relations between the City and the Seneca Nation.

Mr. Hildebrand explained that when the Birdstone was installed in 1986-1987, the trail was put in along the river with ornamental bushes, etc. This section of the park (Heritage Point) has not been maintained and could use fixing up (city records are available to assist with details of the installation). Ms. Nau asked Ms. Freenock if there was another group that was interested in fixing up that area but Ms. Freenock said the hospital and cancer center were looking at a project at the other end of the park. Mr. Hildebrand also explained how the City uses grant funds and City general funds to maintain and improve the active parks vs. inactive parks.

Mr. Shreffler said that he thinks the two ideas could be merged – preserve the monument and then continue to maintain Heritage Point under an adopt-a-park program. He advised the Commission that he will keep them updated on what the Leadership Warren class decides to do.

Leadership Warren/River Landing

Steve Sigmund was in attendance as a representative from the Leadership Warren class that initiated the River Landing project. He distributed a handout of the finalized site plan for the project. There are nine agencies that they need to approach in order to obtain proper permits, the first being the DEP. The River Landing committee has been meeting on a regular basis. They want the aesthetic to tie into the entire downtown feel. It will have a strong visual element when approaching the landing from the river. They are moving forward with grant applications with help from the City, WCCBI, the county zoning office, and other agencies.

Ms. Nau mentioned the “BOOM” project that Chuck Gray is working on, a GPS app that is being developed that can guide people around downtown. Mr. Sigmund said that the River Landing will tie into this project as well.

Mr. Sigmund provided an outline of the site plan: The lighthouse will be the focal point and will be designed to resemble old suspension bridge; the boardwalk (to the left of the landing going under the bridge) will most likely be completed during phase 2; the design has been submitted to the DEP, they have asked for more precise drawings, but this is the final overall design. They are now moving forward with fundraising efforts.

Ms. Wilson expressed a concern about lack of parking adjacent to the landing, especially accessible parking nearby. Mr. Sigmund stated that it was purposely designed that way to deter the easy theft of boats from the landing. Ms. Nau pointed out that there is plentiful near-by parking available. Mr. Crandall also expressed his concern about the boardwalk getting flooded. Mr. Hildebrand asked if the River Landing committee had looked at the plans that Columbia County has in place (and offered to get contact information). He said the boardwalk idea was started but abandoned when they put in the new Hickory Street Bridge.

Ms. Nau asked Mr. Sigmund if he was on the agenda to speak to City Council regarding the project. Mr. Crandall said Council's main concern will probably be how is the project going to be paid for. Mr. Sigmund said that most will be grant funded, they are not looking for funding up front but hoping the City would take over maintenance of the landing once the project is complete. Ms. Nau advised that when they are ready to go to Council to let Parks & Rec Commission know so they can offer support.

Mr. Sigmund asked if there were any other comments. Ms. Nau said that the River Landing in Harrisburg is the nicest area in the City. Members said they thought the River Landing committee is going a great job. Mr. Sigmund thanked the Commission for their time.

REPORT OF OFFICERS

No report.

REPORT OF SPECIAL COMMITTEES

No report.

STAFF REPORTS

David Hildebrand – Update on Parks Projects

- Trail and bird observatory from the Hickory Street Bridge to the end of Gen. Joseph Warren Park. The bird observatory will be placed across from the park. Plans have been sent to Harrisburg and should be put out to bid in the spring. Construction hopefully will start this year.
- Betts Park is scheduled for renovations to the concession/restrooms and installation of monument at Musante Field. All improvements have been approved by the State. Project is being funded by a \$75,000 grant which is being matched by the Betts Foundation.
- Grant is being applied for for 2016 and will be used for improvements at Lacy Park. This park was last improved in 1997-98 and the effort was spearheaded by residents of the neighborhood. Possibly looking at new playground equipment, parking area, improvements to the restrooms and pavilion area. City may approach Shur Fine to use a portion of their parking lot for park use. Also looking at creating accessible lanes throughout the park.

Mary Ann Nau – 2016 Summer Playground Program

- Rachel Beech will return as the Summer Playground Coordinator. Letters of interest have been sent to former park leaders that the City would like to have back. Recipients have until March 25 to respond. After that, openings will be advertised to the public. The program will run from June 20 through August 12.
- The municipal pool will be operated again through the YMCA. There are no changes to the pool operations for 2016.
- Disc Golf was purchased for the summer playground program and was a success. However there has not been a lot of interest in the equipment otherwise. This is expected to change as the sport gains more popularity in this area.
- Mr. Crandall asked if there will be any effort to promote the skate park or if there will be any new features added to renew interest. Ms. Nau said that the equipment could be rearranged which would change the landscape of the park. Improvements could be made but there would need to be a fundraising effort in order to pay for them.

NEW BUSINESS

Parks & Recreation Commission Members – Ms. Freenock asked the Commission's opinion on asking a Council member to be part of the Parks & Rec Commission. She would like to ask Elyssa Davis to join. The Commission members agreed. Ms. Freenock will follow up with the Mayor to have Ms. Davis appointed.

Healing Walk – The Landscape Committee wants to develop the area behind Bonnell Field into an extension of the Crescent Park Trail. They would like to create a restful area for patients of the hospital and the cancer center. This is a project that is on the horizon and Ms. Freenock just wanted the Commission to be aware of it. On a side note Ms. Nau stated that the ADA improvements still have to be completed at Crescent Park (bathrooms and parking). Ms. Freenock suggested the 2017 DCNR grant could be used for this (2016 grant is being used for Lacy Park).

NEXT MONTH'S MEETING

Next month's meeting will be Tuesday, April 5, 2016 at 4:35 PM.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Mr. Crandall declared the meeting adjourned.