

**CITY OF WARREN PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION**  
**REGULAR MEETING**  
**June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021**



**CALL TO ORDER**

- The meeting was called to order by Chair Mike Suppa at 6:02 p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

Members present were Mike Suppa, Kirk Johnson, Kristine Whitaker, Jackie Angove, Mark Zavinski and Judi Wilson. Also attending from City Staff were Nancy Freenock, City Manager, Mike Holtz, DPW Director, and Kassie Damcott, Recording Secretary. All attendees participated via a Zoom meeting or in person, due to personal preference.

**RECOGNITION OF VISITORS**

- Warren City/County Citizens & Business Owners (In Person):
  - Phil Gilbert (W Fifth Ave & Council)
  - Doug Hearn (Liberty St & Council)
  - Charles Merroth (Buchanan St)
  - Cornelius Gallagher (634 Beech St)
  - Sharon Aldrich (5969 Yankee Bush)
  - James Davis (810 West Fifth)
  - Dennis Davis (14 Hammond St)
  - Milt & Linda Goerlich (405 Park Ave)
  - Pat Evans (1080 Liberty St)
  - Shelby & Joe Maney (760 Beech St)
  - Butch & Cathy Southwell (1650 Liberty St)
  - Michael Lyon (7 Hill St & County Zoning)
  - Kim Exley (114 Russell St)
  - Joe Michaels (206 Oneida Ave)
  - Sandra Rothenberg (1438 Stone Hill Rd)
  - Sharon Albrecht (1517 Stone Hill Rd)
  - Barry Keller (303 Jackson Ave)
  - Gary Sawtelle (315 Liberty St)
  - Bob Perrett (646 Beech St)
  - Sherry Johnson (20 Elm St)
  - Jonah Huffman (6 Terrace St)
  - Rich Hatfield (607 West St)
  - Andy Georgakis (114 Conewango Ave & Cycle Shop Owner)
  - Jim Decker (123 Redwood St & WCCBI Director)
  - Jacob Gambino (423 ½ Hickory St)
  - Zachery Armstrong (403 Mohawk Ave)
  - Cathy & Keith Martin (22 Glade Ave)
  - Wendy McCain (201 East St)
  - Bruce Swanson (11 Conewango Ave)
  - Eileen Wilson (508 Liberty St)
  - Barb McCullough (890 Liberty St)
  - David Winans (508 West Third Ave)
  - Curt Maney (672 Beech St)
- Non-City/County Attendees (In Person):
  - Concetta Young (Sherman, NY)
  - Jaime Lauffenburger (11 Elliott Dr Jamestown NY)

- Zoom Attendees:
  - Michael Campbell
  - David Snyder
  - Adam VanOrd
  - Jane Dunshie
  - Michael Campbell
  - Alex Fore
  - Rebecca Seymour
  - Barbara Scott
  - Kyle Sweet
- Times Observer Reporter: Josh Cotton
- Your Daily Local Reporter: Andy Close
- Engineering: Matt Lokay, Mackin Engineering

### **MINUTES**

- Chairman Mike Suppa made a motion to approve the minutes. Motion was unanimously passed, with one correction needing made: addition of present members Jackie Angove and Mark Zavinski at April meeting.

### **CORRESPONDENCE**

- Committee members were provided with any correspondence received prior to June meeting when it was received by the City staff.

### **REPORT OF OFFICERS**

- NONE

### **CITY STAFF REPORTS**

- NONE

### **OLD BUSINESS**

#### A. Washington Park Signage:

- Committee members would like to signage to Washington Park at Third Ave & Liberty St intersection and Market St & Sixth Ave intersection.
- City staff state that there is approximately \$1,000 in funds to purchase the signage.
- U.S. Municipal was contacted by Mike Holtz, DPW Director, to see what kind of signs they may have available and to obtain pricing for the signs.
- Ideas for the signage “Scenic Overlook Washington Park” and “5 miles this way”.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### A. Warren Sign Presentation by Phil Gilbert on behalf of Leadership Warren County

- Gilbert presented a PowerPoint with very basic, beginner ideas for a Warren sign.
- This sign project is the Leadership’s graduating class’s project of choice.
- The intent of the sign is to create a tourist attraction and encourage travelers to inquire about Warren.
- Gilbert asked the Parks and Rec Commission for permission to continue their project planning with the proposed location of the sign being in the grass, on Pennsylvania Ave West, across from the Moose Lodge. This space was found to be most convenient as far as traffic, parking and accessibility were concerned. Chairman Suppa made a motion, with the attending commission members all voting in favor of the location and the approval to proceed with Leadership’s planning and designing process.

#### B. Washington Park Conceptual Plan, presented by Matt Lokay of Mackin Engineering

- Mackin Engineering was contracted to provide a conceptual plan outlining the possible development available at Washington Park.
- In the plan presented the following opportunities were presented:
  - Option 1: No actions; no improvements.
  - Option 2: Improvements to current entrance road and parking areas, as well as enhance the existing trailheads. Parking at the trailhead would need to be of some hardscape surface to comply with ADA guidelines. This would also create a more organized parking solution at the overlook cul-de-sac.
  - Option 3: Enhance passive hiking and walking trails, create a formal trailhead and improve wayfinding with signage. This option includes the formalization of additional trails for all ages and abilities.
  - Option 4: Active recreation. The active recreation would include the installation of playground equipment built into the existing nature setting and dirt tracks for hiking and biking. Along the trails, a sensory experience for individuals with sensory processing disorder would be implemented, including quiet areas and hands-on experiences.
- After Matt presented the Washington Park Conceptual Plan, the meeting was opened for questions from the Committee and the public.
- Committee Questions:
  - Q.** From Kristine Whitaker “In relations to creating trails near oil wells, will there be a distance requirement of some sort, whether it be legal or administratively prepared?”
  - A.** From Matt Lokay “I am unsure, as that would need to be something the City discusses with their solicitor or the oil well owners.”
  - Q.** From Mark Zavinski 1. “What exactly does development mean in this situation?” 2. “How about timber harvesting – will the runoff impact trails lower than the harvesting sites?”
  - A.** From Lokay 1. “Development is not the creation of formal trails. Development is buildings such as a waterless restroom facility, any playground equipment built, a gazebo, structural creations.” 2. “Runoff is always a valid concern, but it can be combatted with the use of water dams, logs, and water bars so that the residents sitting below the park are not disturbed. The diverted water could then be emptied into a proper stormwater management system such as catch basins.”
  - Q.** From Kirk Johnson 1. “What about the residential issues this will cause? Has anyone spoken to the surrounding residents about their thoughts on using the West Fifth Ave entrance as a secondary trailhead?” 2. “Larimer Park puts in a porta-potty in the spring and summer, would we see something more aesthetically pleasing?”
  - A.** From Lokay “The intent of using the West Fifth Avenue parcel would be to create a small parking lot for the trailhead but anticipate that most people would bike or walk from elsewhere in the city such as their home, a hotel, another parking lot, etc.” 2. The waterless toilet facility shown in the conceptual plan is indestructible, low maintenance and more eye-pleasing than a portable toilet. It would cost approximately \$80,000 to build at current building material prices.”
  - Q.** From Mark Zavinski “Would the Southwell’s still have sufficient access to their oil lease sites?”
  - A.** From Lokay “With the proposed trails, yes they would as the trails would be utilizing the already existing trail system at the park.”
  - Q.** From Nancy Freenock 1. “Would mountain biking be possible given the new trails set-up?” 2. “Will the trailheads be away from the oil wells?”
  - A.** From Lokay 1. “ Yes, mountain biking would be possible with the new trail system. Albeit short trails, but bikers could repeat the loops.” 2. “Yes, they would be.”
- Public Questions:
  - Q.** From Piper VanOrd 1. “Will this presentation be posted publicly?” 2. “Can I get a copy of the meeting recording?”

**A.** From Lokay “Yes, I am sure it will be.”

**A.** From Teena Leary, City Executive Secretary 1. “Yes, we will post the presentation on the City website, so long as Mackin gives us the okay.” 2. “I will look into posting the recording of the meeting or somehow making it available.”

**Q.** From citizen “Will the entrance from Liberty Street continue to be used if the West Fifth Avenue trailhead comes to be?”

**A.** From Lokay “Yes, the plan is to still utilize the Liberty St, main entrance to the park as well as the secondary trailhead location on West Fifth Avenue.”

**Q.** From citizen “Will electricity be installed at the Park?”

**A.** From Lokay “The plan does not propose the installation of any utilities at the Park, but that is something that could be looked into if it was necessary.”

**Q.** From citizen “Is the outparcel a city property?”

**A.** From Lokay “From what I understand yes, it is a city owned piece of property.”

**A.** From Joe Reinke “Yes, it is city owned property.”

**Q.** From citizen “Are the gas parcel roads owned by the Southwell’s or the City?”

**A.** From Joe Reinke “The lease roads are city property, but the OGM’s are the Southwell’s.”

**Q.** From citizen “Where is the West Fifth Avenue access located?”

**A.** From Joe Reinke “If you go up Laurel St, take a left onto West Fifth Avenue, the property is about mid-block on the North side of the street. The address is 714 West Fifth Avenue.”

**Q.** From citizen “Will the road to the cul-de-sac be maintained in the winter?”

**A.** From Reinke “The park is always open, but the road is not maintained in the winter months.”

**Q.** From citizen “Would increasing the number of trails lead to increased maintenance?”

**A.** From Lokay “With the increased opportunities to hike and bike, the more people will volunteer to keep the trails clean and free of debris.”

**A.** From Andy Georgakis, Warren Cycle Shop Owner “The need to maintenance the trails aside from picking up any small sticks, would be mitigated by properly constructing the trails to begin with.”

**Q.** From citizen “Would Mackin tell the City how to do the construction?”

**A.** From Lokay “Yes, Mackin would provide the construction guidance and engineering work for the improvements as well.”

**Q.** From citizen “Would the porta-potty (waterless restroom facility) be allowed by the DEP?”

**A.** From Lokay “Yes, it should be. We have installed similar systems elsewhere in the state and so long as you stay under a certain percent of land disturbed it is acceptable.”

**Q.** From citizen “Could you look at using the Beech St connection to the park rather than the West Fifth Avenue parcel?”

**A.** From Reinke “The Beech St connection to Washington Park is used as a stormwater runoff collection site, so it would be very difficult to construct anything at that location to make a trailhead or parking lot. It is also much smaller compared to the West fifth Ave location.”

**Q.** From citizen “How would bikers and hikers use the trail together?”

**A.** From Lokay “There’s no way to get around having steep spots on the trails, considering the grade of the land, but there are switchbacks designed to slow bikers down and give hikers safe spots to exit the trails as well.”

**A.** Andy Georgakis “Sightlines would mitigate the issue with not being able to see a biker or hiker approaching.”

**Q.** From citizen “Why develop here and not out in the Allegheny Forest?”

**A.** From Lokay “We were asked to provide this plan for the city utilizing the Park within the city limits.”

**Q.** From citizen “Is someone going to consult the residents of the immediate area?”

A. From Reinke “Yes.”

Q. From citizen “Will there be a time for open public opinions?”

A. From Mark Zavinski, Chair “Yes, we will move to public opinion time shortly.”

Q. From citizen “Will there be an overhaul of the parking area?”

A. From Lokay “Part of the improvement options was a hardscaped area at the overlook for formalized parking, with an ADA accessible trail attached, which would also encompass the tables and benches.”

Q. From citizen “Will Liberty Street entrance get paved?”

A. From Lokay “Not necessarily. Paving the entrance road is not a necessity tied to funding of the project.”

Q. From citizen “Will implementation of the purple-colored trail in the plan obstruct the view from the overlook?”

A. From Lokay “It sits approximately 50 feet below the outlook, so it would not obstruct the view from the top.”

Q. From citizen “Is there a plan to fence in the park?”

A. From Lokay “It was not part of the plan but is an option that can be looked into.”

- Public Opinion:

**Keith Martin, 22 Glade Ave:** He is a pastor who endorses the use of the trails. He runs a mountain biking group through his church and sees the positive impact it has on adults and children alike. Referenced Dryer Road Park in Victor, NY as a case study. Martin understands the concerns of the adjacent residents of the park, but encourages the development so that “the more good people use the park, the less bad behavior is present at the park.”

**Jonah Huffman, 6 Terrace St:** A recent transplant to the Warren area, he almost didn’t stay here but mountain biking helped him make friends and become part of a mountain biking group. Huffman thinks that the trail proposition at Washington Park is a wonderful opportunity to give young people the chance to make friends and retain younger residents of the area by giving them recreational activities to do locally.

**Andy Georgakis, Cycle Shop Owner & 114 Conewango Ave:** Georgakis addressed concerns that other residents have as well as the oil company’s concerns of vandalism. As an advocate of mountain biking, he believes that having more eyes in an area will deter the bad behaviors of others. As far as vandalism, he stated that Jakes Rocks nearly never sees any vandalism due to the amount of traffic in the area, there’s not much opportunity for damages to occur. Georgakis says that these trails will be good for youth with a great opportunity close to home and the potential for a tourism draw. The location of the park would be convenient to those who don’t have a vehicle.

**Barry Keller, 303 Jackson Ave:** Keller would like to see the general area of the park to be rehabbed and the installation of fixed structures (ie bathroom facility, picnic tables). He also suggested installing security cameras and a dedicated website or City website section highlighting the park.

**Jim Decker, WCCBI Director & 123 Redwood St:** Decker states that getting more visitors to Washington Park will lower the occurrence of vandalism, littering and illicit activity. Compared to Jakes Rocks, Washington Park will likely not be a destination spot but a nice addition and opportunity to those in town.

**Curt Maney, 672 Beech St:** In his opinion, Washington Park is not the place to be developing. Maney would like to see the parking area paved, a restroom installed. He does not want to create a “fun” place for people to go to and thinks that people will get hurt by inviting visitors to the park if they are to get too close to or play on the oil lease equipment. He would not like to see any trails developed – hiking, biking or otherwise. Mr. Maney expressed his concern over additional stormwater runoff if trails are installed. He also asked whether the residents on West 5<sup>th</sup> Street have been interviewed concerning the project and possible trailhead.

**Kirk Johnson, Commission Member & 220 Center St:** In Kirk's opinion, Washington Park should stay a passive park and no development should take place whatsoever, siding with "Option 1" offered in Mackin's presentation. He gave a short presentation on the changes he would like to see happen at the Park which includes leaving the current established trails as foot traffic only, a possible restroom facility and the prohibition of any timber foresting, phasing out of the oil wells on-site and leave the Park alone to let nature take it's course and conserve the park as a nature preserve. Mr. Johnson referenced Anders Run Natural Area as a Case Study. Also referenced PA State Forest of Natural Areas as a resource.

**Shelby Maney, 760 Beech St:** Mrs. Maney states that developing Washington Park is not worth it because the Park will never get rid of the "bad activities" taking place, nor will it be maintained properly. Mrs. Maney questioned the security and policing of the Park past and present. Maney goes on to say that when the park was logged several years ago, the watrunoff caused issues for residents of West Fifth Ave and that the park was not cleaned up after the tornado a couple of years ago either. In all, Mrs. Maney would not like to see anything happen to the park as far as development goes; she'd like to see the current issues taken care of if anything.

**Rich Hatfield, 607 West St:** Mr. Hatfield would like to see a modest trail system developed and reminds people that this is not on the scale of Jakes Rocks. He says that recreation encourages people to come here and to stay here. Mr. Hatfield referenced 2018 Whitefish Legacy Partner studies stating the growth of "Recreation Counties". He would like to this to be a Hatch Run equivalent bike trail.

**Bruce Swanson, 11 Conewango Pl:** Mr. Swanson said that because kids don't have much to do around town, they need somewhere they can go together and enjoy. He agrees with other residents' statement that adding more good eyes to the park will drive out the bad ones. Mr. Swanson was in favor of the park being gated.

**Pat Evans, 1080 Liberty St:** Mrs. Evans has lived here for 40 years and lives immediately next to Washington Park. When she first heard of what was being presented, she was unsure of what to expect tonight. She loves the restroom idea as well as improving the parking area but would like the park to stay passive. She would also like to see Liberty St entrance be addressed. Winter Maintenance is a concern.

**Charles Merroth, 200 Buchanan St:** As a very traveled individual, Mr. Merroth would like to see better signage to attract visitors to the park. As far as development, he would like to see the Park stay a scenic overlook as it has been for nearly 100 years.

**Dave Winans, 422 East Third Ave:** Mr. Winans understands the issues present at the Park, as he uses it nearly every day. He does believe that the more good eyes in the Park, the better and the bad activity will die down. He likes the idea of a gate at the entrance to deter people from driving down in the winter and getting stuck and to potentially keep others out at night. Mr. Winans questioned the safety of shared trails.

**Dennis Davis, 14 Hammond St:** He agrees with all of what Dave Winans has stated.

**Paula Steinmeyer, :** Mrs. Steinmeyer believes that the problems currently at the Park should be taken care of first before we go spending money on developing or improving the park.

**Concetta Young, Sherman NY:** As an avid traveler and recreationist, Young would like to see an area in Warren she can easily travel to that has the following all in one close space: mountain biking, kayaking, restaurants and hiking and believes with the addition of trails at Washington Park this will be a great tourist opportunity.

**Mike Suppa, Commission Member:** In conclusion, the goal of this meeting was to hear from any and all people in the community to construct a formal plan to present to Council on what to do going forward at Washington Park.

## ADJOURNMENT

- There being no further business to come before the Commission, Mike Suppa asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was made by Kristine Whitaker and seconded by Mark Zavinski.

**NEXT MEETING**

- Meeting is scheduled for August 3<sup>rd</sup>, at 4:30 p.m. In the meantime, if a special meeting is required, the Committee will be advised appropriately.

Submitted by:

Kassie Damcott, Recording Secretary