

**CITY OF WARREN PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING
October 19th, 2021**



CALL TO ORDER

- The meeting was called to order by Chair Mike Suppa at 4:35 pm.

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, Michael Holtz, DPW Director, Joe Reinke, DPW Superintendent, Vince DeJoy, Director of Zoning, Codes and Economic Development and Kassie Damcott, Recording Secretary. All attendees participated via a Zoom meeting or in person, due to personal preference.

AGENDA APPROVAL

- Due to new Sunshine Act Laws implemented recently, Mr. Suppa requested a commission member make a motion to approve the agenda at the beginning of the meeting. Mr. Zavinski made a motion to approve the agenda and Mrs. Whitaker seconded. All were in favor.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

- Warren City/County Citizens & Business Owners (In Person):
 - Joe & Shelby Maney (760 Beech St)
 - Jim Davis (810 W. Fifth Ave)
 - Pete Molinaro (608 Beech St)
 - Curt Maney (672 Beech St)
 - Renee Taylor (514 Beech St)
 - Eric Jones (722 W. Fifth Ave)
 - Sarah Cummings (60 Route 957)
 - Andy Close (231 Liberty St) (Your Daily Local)
 - Pat Evans (1080 Liberty St)
 - Cathy & Butch Southwell (1650 Liberty St)
 - Danielle Flasher (716/720 W Fifth Ave)
 - Robert Perrett (646 Beech St)
 - Cornelius Gallagher (634 Beech St)
 - Andy Georgakis (114 Conewango Ave) (Warren Cycle Shop)
- Additional Guests
 - Matt Lokay (Mackin Engineering)

MINUTES

- NONE

CORRESPONDENCE

- NONE

REPORT OF OFFICERS

- NONE

CITY STAFF REPORTS

- NONE

NEW BUSINESS

- NONE

OLD BUSINESS

A. Washington Park Plan Review:

- Matt Lokay with Mackin Engineering attended the meeting to give the Parks and Rec Commission members and the public an update on the Washington Park Plan and the options available to them, should they look for grant funding to improve the park in the future.
- Option 1 – Improve the existing road and parking areas, enhance the existing trailheads with better signage or markers.
- Option 2 – Enhance passive hiking and walking trails and improve way-finding (as well as option 1's improvements).
- Option 3 – Introduce active recreation and trails (as well as option 1 and 2 improvements).
- Mr. Lokay insists that if the City plans to do any kind of improvements that they speak with Mr. Southwell to review the oil lease agreement to be sure it has no interference with his wells.
- At the conclusion of the presentation, the meeting was opened up for public discussion.

B. Public Discussion / Questions about Washington Park Plan

- Q. Why bother spending money on a trailhead on Fifth Ave if there will be no parking available?
A. Andy Georgakis stated that in reality, most people using these trails would be riding their bikes to and from the park, so the lack of parking would not be an issue for them. It will be a great opportunity to have an entrance/exit to the trails that begins/ends in the city.
A. Matt Lokay also stated that the topography of this small parcel of land on Fifth Avenue the City owns, will not allow for a parking lot as it is just too steep and too small of an area to properly construct a parking lot.
- Q. What is the liability held by Mackin Engineering if the City goes through with building trails at Washington Park?
A. Matt Lokay said that all of Mackin's plans are built to state standards, including ADA accessibility. They are only contracted to make the plan and the liability is on the users of the trail to know their skill level.
- Q. What if someone gets hurt on my property when they trespass?
A. Matt Lokay states that if someone is trespassing, that is not the City's liability and that the homeowner should notify police if they feel necessary.
- Q. How wide do you think the entrance road would be? I have concerns with the right of way near the entrance road.
A. Mike Holtz answered this question and let them know that we would have to pull records of the right of way and measure distances to be sure we don't over-build the road.
- Q. When will Conewango Township be informed of these plans?
A. Mike Holtz answered this as well, stating that when we have more concrete ideas as to what funding we could secure, then other departments and places will be brought into the discussion.
- Q. What about safety protocol, better policing, and enforcement at the park?
A. Joe Reinke countered with the question of ideas they have about what could better be done at the park.
A. Resident states they aren't sure what the best idea would be, but something, anything is better than what is happening at the park right now.

- Q. What about a gate?
A. Mr. Holtz stated that a gate is a great option but would have several items we would need to work out before making this a reality. This would need to be proposed to Council. Mrs. Freenock states that a gate, installation, and associated costs would need to be put in the budget for 2022 as well.
- Q. Could someone from the police department or all the involved agencies be present at the next meeting?
A. Mrs. Freenock states that she will try to arrange for our City Police Chief, Joe Sproveri to attend the next meeting.
- What will be done about the water runoff created by installing trails? This has been a 20+ year problem and it has not been properly remedied.
A. Mr. Lokay said that every park development plan that disturbs more than one acre must have the proper permitting and a water mitigation system installed. This would include the use of water dams, downed logs and other permanent fixtures to guide the water to proper drainage solutions.

C. Parks & Rec Commission Opinions/Comments

- At the conclusion of the public discussion and questions, Mr. Suppa asked the commission members to give their opinions and vote on an option presented by Mr. Lokay so that they begin to move forward with Mackin's plans and get things finalized.
- Mrs. Wilson had logged off the zoom meeting, so she was unavailable for any comments.
- Mr. Zavinski would like Washington Park to stay a passive park but would like to see the current trails on the property improved.
- Mr. Johnson stated that he recognizes the need for special needs activities in the parks, but he does not believe that mountain biking trails are appropriate for Washington Park. He would like to see the Park designated as a nature preserve.
- Mrs. Whitaker thinks that they should be concerned with the safety of trail users when it comes to the oil wells on the property, as it poses a liability. She would like to see improved trails, signage and the entrance road upgraded as well.
- Mrs. Angove agreed with Mrs. Whitaker in her statements. She would like to see a somewhat improved trail system for hiking/walking as well as upgraded entrance road and signage.
- Mr. Suppa believes the park is underutilized in its current state and that the potential is there to make the park better and nicer. He would like to see the Park stay a passive park, but also for it to be a place that is enjoyed and used by all ages. Mr. Suppa stated that regardless of the options we may end up with in the future, he would like to see a gate installed at the park and for law enforcement to attend a public meeting to address some of the current issues that residents are concerned about.

D. Parks & Rec Commission Votes

- After all public comments and commission members gave their input as well, Mr. Suppa asked for a motion be made by a commission member and that all present members give their votes so that we may give Mr. Lokay and Mackin Engineering a direction to go with the process.
- Mrs. Whitaker made a motion that the commission accept all three development options as viable choices with the idea that in the future, given the funding available, we may narrow it down at that time.
- Mrs. Angove seconded this motion.
- Mr. Zavinski voted against the motion because he did not support option 3.
- Mrs. Wilson was no longer logged into the zoom, so she was unavailable to vote.
- Mr. Johnson voted against the motion.

- Mr. Suppa voted in favor of the motion.
- Due to three of five present commission members voting in favor of the motion, it was carried.
- Mr. Zavinski made a motion for a gate installation at the Washington Park entrance be presented to council.
- Mrs. Whitaker seconded this motion and all those present were in favor.

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 Mr. Zavinski and seconded by Mrs. Angove.

NEXT MEETING

- The next regular scheduled meeting will be December 7th, 2021 at 4:30 pm.

Submitted by:

Kassie Damcott, Recording Secretary