

**CITY OF WARREN PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
November 10, 2020**



The meeting was called to order by Mike Suppa. Members present were Jackie Angove, Mark Zavinski, Kris Whitaker, and Judi Wilson (via Zoom). Also attending from City Staff were Nancy Freenock, City Manager (via Zoom), Mike Holtz, DPW Director and Larina Zimmerman Recording Secretary. Brandi Rosselli, Mackin Engineering (Via Zoom), Jim Watenpool, Mackin Engineering, (Via Zoom)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Whitaker made a motion to accept the September 15, 2020 minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Ms. Angove and approved by unanimous vote.

CORRESPONDENCE

None.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Josh Cotton, Times Observer reporter, and Jane Dunshie, Warren Citizen.

DISCUSSION OF DRAFTED PARKS AND REC & OPEN SPACE PLAN

Ms. Rosselli, from Mackin Engineers, asked the Commission if they had any comments regarding the proposed Open Space Rec Plan? Mr. Suppa asked if this plan was specific to just Washington Park? Ms. Rosselli explained to the Commission that the plan involved all the Parks and Recreation Facilities throughout the City.

Mrs. Freenock stated the City originally partnered with Dan Glotz, County Planner, to have a Parks & Rec/Open Space Plan completed with Mackin Engineering. The Parks & Rec Document will then become part of the City's Comprehensive Plan. Mrs. Freenock said there may be an opportunity to get early implementation funding for a site plan to be competed for Washington Park for bike/hike trails. Mackin had applied for the funding on behalf of the City. If the funding is awarded; Mackin will then go ahead and complete the site plan as a supplement to the Recreation Parks & Open Space Plan. The City could then apply for DCNR for construction funding later.

WASHINGTON PARK

Mr. Suppa mentioned that a proposed bike/hike trail system for Washington Park was discussed at the September 15th meeting. Mrs. Freenock asked if the Members if they had reviewed the drafted plan prepared by Mackin? Kirk Johnson, Commission Member, questioned the need to develop Washington Park in an October 19th e-mail sent to the commission members. Mr. Zavinski stated Washington Park has been a Passive Park and with funding being limited, Mark suggested that the City use any funding for active parks as opposed to expanding Washington Park. Mrs. Angove noted she was at the park having lunch and there were six other cars at the park. Mr. Holtz said the proposed plan is for a conceptual plan only to develop bike/hiking trails. The City was not considering building a new playground for the park. Mr. Zavinski said the City does not control oil and gas rights and that Washington Park has limited resources.

Mrs. Freenock asked, funding aside, what are the Commission's thoughts about building bike/hike trails in the Park? Mr. Suppa said he was involved in Washington Park several years ago and feels the park is a lost opportunity. Mr. Suppa said you might be able to leverage a new bike/hike trail at Washington Park along with the Jakes Rocks Trails and you may get more people to stop in the City and spend money.

Mrs. Freenock said that the City would also like to see a bike pump track developed on the Clark Street Pump Station site. This area already has a canoe rental place, a sporting goods store, a climbing facility and a brew pub. If the City had a bike/hike trail in Washington Park that may be enough to keep people in Warren for an entire weekend.

Currently, the plan at Washington Park would be only a conceptual plan. The City is not currently in the position to build these types of trails. Mr. Watenpool stated that he was in the Laurel Highlands at a meeting and several people mentioned that they had been to the Jakes Rocks Trails. If there were other similar trails it may encourage more people to stay in the area.

Mr. Zavinski asked if the City was discussing strictly a conceptual plan or a plan for construction? Mr. Zavinski felt that the City may not be able to find funding for this trail. Mrs. Freenock said there was a lot of public involvement in the building of the Jakes Rocks Trails. Also, the North County Trail Association maybe interested in helping the City with this project. Mrs. Freenock did not know if this project would come to fruition but would like to have a plan ready if an opportunity presents itself. Mr. Suppa agreed with Mrs. Freenock, he knew of several people who were involved in the Jakes Rocks Trails and they may get involved in this project as well.

Mr. Suppa made motion to approve Mackin Engineering to complete a conceptual plan for bike/hike trails in Washington Park, assuming the implementation grant is funded. The motion was seconded by Ms. Wilson and approved by unanimous vote.

LACY PARK

Mrs. Freenock thanked Ms. Whitaker and her committee for the work they did regarding the Lacy Park Grand Opening. The City is going to continue to work with Adam Meneo, from the Rotary Club, on future upgrades to Lacy Park.

Mrs. Freenock mentioned that Adam Meneo has been working with the Pittsburgh Pirates Organization to obtain funding for a soft surface T-ball field to accommodate children with special needs. Lacy Park has open space remaining that could accommodate such a field.

A comment was made regarding the new retention basin at the park. The City is aware that the basin is in the general area of the proposed T-ball field and is aware of the concerns. The City is considering installing a fence and turning the area into a butterfly garden in the Spring of 2021 to make the area safer.

MULBERRY PARK

Mr. Suppa asked about Mulberry Park. Mr. Holtz said, City Staff has had internal discussion regarding the drainage issues. With funding being limited Mr. Holtz was not sure the City was in the position to undertake a drainage project at Mulberry in 2021. If the park drainage were resolved, there is still a lot of work to be done. The play equipment and the restroom facilities have deteriorated and/or are non-existent. The City has also

discussed Mulberry Hill, this area may be a good area for a disc golf course if the park's drainage was addressed.

A comment was made that Mulberry Hill used to be used for sled ridding in the winter. The drainage issue has halted this activity. Ms. Whitaker asked if some type of off-street parking area could be developed off Glade Avenue or Mulberry Street? She also said if the drainage issues could be corrected the hill could be a safe spot for kids to once again sled ride.

CRESCENT PARK

Mr. Suppa asked about the poor condition of the walking trail and the basketball court at Crescent Park. Mr. Holtz said the Healing Garden Project was to address both issues.

BREEZE POINT PARK

Ms. Dunshie asked what the draft plan recommended for Breeze Point Park and if the potential hotel is addressed? Mr. Holtz stated that the Breeze Point Hotel Project is not part of the Parks & Recs Agenda and the City has not presented this project to this Board. Mrs. Freenock stated there are not any recommendations in the draft plan other than to maintain this park.

Mr. Suppa ask where does the Parks & Rec Open Space Plan goes from here? Ms. Rosselli, from Mackin, said they will take the Boards comments, the drafted recommendations and the data that was collected a year ago and Mackin will then begin to draft a document. Mackin will then have the plan review by the Parks & Rec Commission, then it will go to City Council for final approval

REPORT OF OFFICERS

None.

REPORT OF SPECIAL COMMITTEES

None.

CITY STAFF REPORTS

Mr. Holtz reported 45 new trees were planted a couple of weeks ago throughout the City and six (6) of the new trees in Crescent Park were eaten by beavers. The City will be planting new trees next year with beaver protection.

It was a quiet season for parks & playgrounds due to COVID. The City's 2021 budget has funding allocated for the parks and the pool next year but is not sure if the facilities will be open in 2021. City Staff will review the COVID situation in the spring and see where it stands.

Mr. Suppa asked if there were discussions to scale down the Crescent Project? Mr. Holtz said that project will be discussed next Monday at City Council. Mr. Holtz said the lighting is one of the bigger components of the project and the project might be scaled back depending on funding. This project will be talked about next Monday night. Mr. Zavinski also mentioned the walking trail at Crescent Park is in poor shape.

Mrs. Freenock asked the Commission's opinion; would the Commission choose not to have as many City Blocks paved in 2021 in order to complete the Crescent Park Project with the lights? Ms. Wilson said she would vote to complete Crescent Park. Mr. Zavinski

said he thought the public would choose to pave City streets. Mr. Holtz stated that Crescent Park might be a better choice because the residents would get a longer return on their investment. The Crescent Park Project would last fifteen or twenty years, as opposed to the street paving that may not last as long.

Mrs. Freenock mentioned that the City Staff was under the impression, last year, that Council would allow the City to put the project back in the 2020 Budget, but that did not happen. The City will be paving several blocks next year and there is federal funding in 2021 to pave some the streets. Having \$175,000 less to pave City streets translates into approximately eight (8) City blocks that would be put off until the following year. Nancy said there will be a City paving project in 2021.

Mr. Suppa mentioned that during his 10 years as a hospital recruiter no one asked him about the condition of streets. People would ask him about lodging, parks, school districts and recreation, not the condition of streets.

NEW BUSINESS

The 2020 pavilion report was reviewed. The overall numbers were lower than last year due to COVID, but the numbers were better than expected.

MISCELLANEOUS

Ms. Dunshie wanted to let the Commission know that the view from her balcony overlooks Breeze Point Park. She has seen the gazebo used by pre-school children, High School prom photos and for weddings. Residents of her building also use the gazebo. During COVID, Jane felt the view was a life saver. It is a lovely view and would like to see this view preserved. She felt that a four-story building built in this area would impact the view. She then referenced the 2018 Parks & Rec April Minutes and asked if weddings are allowed in the Gazebo? Mr. Holtz stated, yes, there have been weddings in the past.

Ms. Dunshie stated it is her understanding that the pavilion and restrooms are not in good shape. She asked if there was funding next year for improvements? Mr. Holtz said not at this point, but the facilities are usable. The restroom was not open this year due to COVID.

Ms. Dunshie asked Mrs. Freenock if there are any changes to Breeze Point Park in the draft plan? Mrs. Freenock said that Breeze Point Park is not addressed in the draft plan. Ms. Dunshie stated, she hoped Breeze Point would show up on the plan at some point. She mentioned that Breeze Point was mentioned on a door hanger questionnaire earlier in the year. Ms. Dunshie also said there is a section in the City's Zoning Ordinance that sets aside areas for preservation and that this park part in that area? She was not sure what the implications are with that type of zoning.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Mr. Zavinski made the motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Wilson.

NEXT MEETING

Meeting is scheduled for January 12, 2021 at 4:30pm.

Minutes prepared by Larina Zimmerman