

**CITY OF WARREN PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021**



**CALL TO ORDER**

- The meeting was called to order by Chair Mike Suppa at 4:37 pm.

**ROLL CALL**

- Members present were Mike Suppa, Kirk Johnson, Kristine Whitaker, Jackie Angove, and Judi Wilson. Also attending from City Staff were Michael Holtz, DPW Director 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. Mrs. Whitaker made a motion to approve the agenda and Mrs. Angove seconded. All present were in favor.

**RECOGNITION OF VISITORS**

- Warren City/County Citizens & Business Owners (In Person):
  - Jim Davis (810 W. Fifth Ave)
  - Andy Close (231 Liberty St) (Your Daily Local)
  - Danielle Flasher (716/720 W Fifth Ave)
  - Andy Georgakis (114 Conewango Ave) (Warren Cycle Shop)
  - Alex Fore (13 Hertzal St)
  - Rich Hatfield (607 West St)
  - Josh Cotton (Times Observer)
- Additional Guests (via zoom)
  - Matt Lokay (Mackin Engineering)

**MINUTES**

- Mrs. Whitaker made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021, meeting and Mrs. Angove seconded. Mrs. Angove made a motion to approve the October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021 special meeting minutes. Mrs. Whitaker seconded that motion. The motion carried unanimously, with all those present in favor.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

- NONE

**REPORT OF OFFICERS**

- NONE

**CITY STAFF REPORTS**

- Mike Holtz, Department of Public Works director, updated the Parks and Recreation Commission on the status of the pickleball and disc golf presentations the Commission saw in the October regular meeting. Mr. Holtz stated that half of each projects funding will be presented to Council for budget discussions but expects that Council would like to see the organizations raise the funds themselves with minimal monetary input from the City.

## **WASHINGTON PARK:**

- Matt Lokay with Mackin Engineering attended the meeting to give the Parks and Rec Commission members and the public a final conceptual plan presentation for Washington Park. The purpose of the presentation is to give the City several options for possible development of the park, 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).
- At the conclusion of the presentation, the meeting was opened up for public discussion.

### **A. Discussion / Questions about Washington Park Plan**

- *Comment:* Andy Georgakis stated he would like to advocate for keeping an open mind when it comes to development in Washington Park. He doesn't want mountain bikers to be viewed in a negative way when they are usually the cleanest and most respectful users of trails. Mr. Georgakis would like to see a more open parks and recreation commission, with possibly more members or a more diverse board.
- C: Rich Hatfield thanked the City and Parks and Recreation Commission for taking on this project. He stated we should take note who is the future of the Parks and Recreation Commission board and the way they portray the City, City staff and the Commission on social media.
- C: Alex Fore agreed with Mr. Georgakis and Mr. Hatfield's statements. Mr. Fore says that this area of the State is full of opportunity and would like to see the trails at Washington Park be improved and more accessible.
- *Question:* Danielle Flasher asked about the impact of the Fifth Avenue access point in regard to parking and what that would do for the residents of Fifth Avenue who already have a difficult time finding parking. She also asked who or how will children be protected from sexual predator living next door to the Fifth Avenue access point. Miss Flasher stated that she is firmly against having any access to Washington Park on Fifth Avenue.  
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.
- C. Jim Davis voiced concern of blighted properties in the City. Mr. Davis wishes to see the City spend money on fixing or tearing down blighted properties on Fifth Avenue rather than spend money on developing the Park.
- C. Commission member Kirk Johnson stated that he appreciates Mr. Davis' comments in regard to the blighted properties and the need to address them. He would like to see the blight fixed rather than any money spent on developing Washington Park. He wants to see the park stay a passive park.

## **SECURITY AT WASHINGTON PARK**

- Joe Sproveri, Chief of the Warren Police Department, attended the meeting to speak to the security of Washington Park and statistics pertaining to happenings at the park.
- Chief Sproveri stated that City police patrol the Park as often as they can, which happens nearly every night, call volume permitting. The City police department and Pennsylvania State Police are the only two (2) 24/7 agencies in the County.

- Chief Sproveri stated that 90% of calls at Washington Park are encounters with people simply in the park after hours. He listed the following incident statistics about Washington Park:
  - In 2018, there were sixteen (16) total calls to the park. Of those, three (3) were daytime calls and (13) were self-initiated calls (officers patrolling the park *not* in relation to a request for service) during the night by officers.
  - In 2019, there were 11 total calls at Washington Park. One (1) call was during daylight hours and ten (10) were initiated by officers patrolling the park at night.
  - In 2020, officers received fifteen (15) calls to the park. One (1) call was made during daylight hours and fourteen (14) calls were at night.
  - To date (1/1/21-12/7/21) officers received fourteen (14) calls for service to Washington Park. Three (3) calls were during the day and eleven (11) were at night.
- An alleged sexual assault was brought to the attention of the Commission during public comments about the safety of Washington Park. Chief Sproveri stated that he reviewed the department's calls and did not find any evidence of this assault and suggested that the incident may have taken place in another department's jurisdiction or was never reported to the police, but at this point there is no way to know exactly what that incident entailed.
- Due to the question raised by a citizen of who will protect children using the park when a Megan's Law offender lives next to the Fifth Avenue access point, Chief Sproveri briefly spoke about how Megan's Law works. Megan's Law has different restrictions as well as registration requirements for each offense tier, which includes dictating where they can live. Notifications to the community, including close neighbors are also on a case-by-case basis. The best thing for parents to do is be vigilant of where their children are going and who may live in that area.
- In conclusion, Chief Sproveri said that the more "good people" are using Washington Park, the less "bad people" are going to use the Park for nefarious activities. He also stated that if those activities are still happening, the responsible and attentive park users can make the police aware.

### **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 Mrs. Angove and seconded by Mrs. Whitaker.

### **NEXT MEETING**

- The next regular scheduled meeting will be February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022 at 4:30 pm.

Submitted by:

Kassie Damcott, Recording Secretary