



City of Madison

City of Madison
Madison, WI 53703
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Meeting Minutes - Approved BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

Wednesday, December 10, 2008

6:30 PM

1625 Northport Dr. (WPCRC)

I. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

The regular meeting of the Madison Board of Park Commissioners was held on Wednesday, December 10, 2008 at Warner Park Community Recreation Center, 1625 Northport Drive.

Parks staff present: Superintendent Kevin Briski, Si Widstrand, Jim Weinstock, Brad Weisinger, Marla Eddy, Roberta Sladky, Laura Whitmore, LaVonne LaFave

City staff present: Dan Rolfs

Alders Present: Ald. Lauren Cnare, Ald. Marsha Rummel, Ald. Paul Skidmore

President Barker called the meeting to order at 6:38 p.m. A quorum was present and the meeting was properly noticed.

Present: 5 -

William W. Barker; David L. Wallner; Betty Chewning; Emanuel Scarbrough and Betty N. MacDonald

Excused: 2 -

Joseph R. Clausius and Michael Schumacher

II. PARKS EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH

Superintendent Briski reported this is a new initiative in the Parks Division to recognize staff. Nominations come from their fellow employees, are reviewed by a Parks staff committee and the finalists are then presented to the Superintendent. All of the recipients are valuable assets to the Parks Division and share a common vision and passion for parks. In October, Kristin Mathews was selected, in November, Raquel Aleman-McRae was selected and in December, Dennis Heidenreich was selected. Unfortunately neither Ms. Mathews nor Mr. Heidenreich could be with us this evening; both are with West Parks Maintenance. Ms. Aleman-McRae is here to accept her Certificate. She works at Warner Park Community Recreation Center as a Customer Service Representative at the front desk.

PUBLIC HEARING – 6:45 P.M. - DISEASED AND DEAD ELMS AND OAKS ON PRIVATE PROPERTY, 2008 REQUIRING CONDEMNATION

President Barker declared the Public Hearing open at 6:45 p.m. MOTION CARRIED.

There being no registrants, the Public Hearing was declared closed. MOTION

CARRIED

A motion was made by Chewning/MacDonald to declare the list of diseased and dead elms and oaks a public nuisance in accordance with City of Madison General Ordinance 23.40(4)(B) and to direct City Forestry to issue removal notices. MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by MacDonald/Chewning to approve the Minutes of the regular meeting of September 10, 2008 of the Park Commission. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

President Barker thanked members of the audience who came to speak on issues before the Park Commission. There were no members of the public who wished to comment on items not on the Agenda.

A motion was made by Scarbrough/Chewning to take item IX. B out of order. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

11799

Communication dated August 26, 2008 from Ald. Cnare on behalf of a group of neighbors of the Door Creek Park re: referral of the topic of Door Creek Park ski trail construction and placement to the Board of Parks Commission Agenda, September 10, 2008, for further discussion.

Superintendent Briski reported that pursuant to the Park Commission's recommendations at the September meeting, Parks staff and the neighbors have worked out the issues with regard to the placement of the ski trail to the satisfaction of the neighbors. The agreement is detailed in the Memorandum of Understanding that was distributed this evening.

Registered Speakers:

Ald. Lauren Cnare Neutral
David Robb – resident of Thorstrand Rd. support
Steve Pullara – resident of Bluff Point Dr Neutral
Sarah Hole – resident of Riverside - not speaking support
Steve Gaffield – resident of Winnebago support
Karen Matteoni – resident of Yahara Pl. support
Jim Weber – resident of Bluff Point Dr support
David Calhoon – resident of Boundary Rd. support
Pete Anderson – Nordic Ski Club support
Brock Woods – Madison Nordic Ski Club support
Ald. Paul Skidmore Opposes any changes to Master Plan

Commissioners indicated they were happy with the compromise solution obtained via a good public process. A motion was made by Wallner/Chewning to approve the plan and wording in the Memorandum of Understanding.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

V. REPORTS

A. Ad Hoc Committee of Park Commission to Study Problem of Alcohol and Related Behaviors in City Parks

Commissioner Scarbrough thanked the Ad Hoc Committee for their hard work and, in particular, thanked LaFave for writing the report. He also thanked the citizens that attended the meetings and provided information that allowed the Committee to better understand the different problems and behaviors associated with alcohol in parks. Staff from other city departments also helped with the report. The Report contains five major points: how did the issue come about; what was the charge of the committee; what were the agreements from the committee; what can and/or can't the Park Commission do; and what did the committee learn. Finally, what policies could be implemented based on the Report.

When the Ad Hoc Committee first met, they found a diversity in this city in terms of culture and ethnicity that the city has not seen before. This ever changing United States was also evidenced in the presidential election. Just as the demographics of the country are changing, so too the demographics in the City of Madison are changing and the Report speaks of those changes and the need for policies to reflect those changes. Commissioners expressed gratification with the Report based upon initial concerns of behaviors in city parks. This Ad Hoc Committee worked diligently and the Report that was produced is extremely thoughtful and expressed the problems that had been identified as well as discussed possible solutions. The Report recognized the complexity of the problems and identified that alcohol is only one part of the problem. The different types and sizes of parks each come with their own unique problems and should be evaluated in terms of the types of use and groups using the park. The lists of different strategies and collaborators can be implemented by both city staff and citizens. Encouraging the presence of community activities such as community gardens and sporting activities is another strategy that brings constructive uses into a park.

Commissioners also recognized that the current ordinance banning alcohol should be reviewed to determine if those parks should continue to be alcohol free. A set of criteria should be developed to evaluate each future request to declare a park alcohol free. It was also noted that any alcohol free park can have its status changed upon a request and re-evaluation based on the established criteria.

A motion was made by Wallner/MacDonald to approve the Final Report of the Committee. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY. Parks staff were asked to prepare a set of criteria to be reviewed when future requests to declare a park alcohol free are received.

B. James Madison Park Planning Committee

A motion was made by Wallner/Chewning to refer Report ID#11520 on Conditions for Sale of James Madison Park Property to the January 14, 2009 meeting. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

C. Golf Committee Minutes of September 23, 2008 meeting

A motion was made by Scarbrough/Wallner to accept the Minutes of the September 23, 2008 meeting of the Golf Committee and to approve the nomination of Marge Olson to serve on the Golf Committee. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

D. Olbrich Botanical Society Minutes of September 16 and October 21, 2008

A motion was made by Chewning/Wallner to accept the Minutes of the September 16 and October 21, 2008 meetings of the Olbrich Botanical Society. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

E. President of the Park Commission

President Barker spoke of the beautiful park system in Madison that, for its first fifty years, was a private enterprise begun by the Park and Pleasure Drive Association. It wasn't turned over to the city until the 1920's and it wasn't until many years later that deeds to the lands were given to the city. The park system is a great legacy that is the result of contributions by many people. This evening he spoke of two people who have been instrumental in this park system. The first is Betty MacDonald who is leaving the Park Commission. He thanked her for all of her help over the years, stating he is both heartbroken and gratified for her dedication. The second is Si Widstrand, the Parks Planning and Development Manager, who is leaving after having worked in the Parks Division for more than 34 years. He has given his whole career and heart to the park system. No words can adequately recognize Si's contributions and accomplishments.

Fellow commissioners also conveyed their thoughts and best wishes to both Betty MacDonald and Si Widstrand. MacDonald is a person of great wisdom, always open to new ideas, always articulate and with a deep love for parks that has been evident. She would stand up for what's right and wasn't afraid to ask tough questions. MacDonald noted that this has been one of the most incredible experiences of her life.

Widstrand personifies excellence and commitment to developing projects that are good for all involved. He has style and patience, has always been diplomatic and fair, and always gives straight answers.

President Barker then announced that the Parks Division had received the 2008 Wetland Enjoyment Award from the Wisconsin Wetlands Association

F. Superintendent of Parks

Superintendent Briski commented that the word that comes to mind when thinking of Betty MacDonald is honest and for Si Widstrand it's legacy.

Written Report of Supervisor's Activities

A motion was made by Chewning/Wallner to accept the written report of supervisor's activities. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Informational Items

A reminder was given regarding the change of location to Olbrich Botanical Gardens for the January 14, 2009 Meeting at 7:30 p.m. The annual Volunteer Recognition event will be held prior to the meeting. Also the election of Officers and appointments to Committees will take place at the January 2009 meeting. The 2009 Park Commission meeting schedule was distributed, noting that meeting dates for April & November need to be set. The monthly Madison Parks Newsletter was distributed. The Olbrich Botanical Center's Green Team Report on "The Natural Step" was also highlighted. Also received was a letter from the Sports Venue Development Fund of the Madison Convention and Visitors Bureau awarding a Grant for the Breese Stevens Stadium Phase II improvements and letters of interest concerning the Collins House from Susan and Thomas Senatori and Matthew Carroll.

Parks staff has done great job of cleaning up the snow that's already on the ground and they are also getting all of our facilities ready for winter activities.

He reported that Steven Doniger has accepted the position of Community Services Manager effective February 9, 2009.

The Parks Watch Program highlighted in the November newsletter has received good publicity both in the print media and on TV. The goal is to have a friend/partnership group for every park. This program partners with the police "Neighborhood Watch" program.

VII. COMMUNICATIONS

- A. [11688](#) To authorize the Forestry Section of the Parks Division of the City of Madison to apply for and accept a 50% matching fund grant of \$25,000 under the Urban Forestry Grant Program to complete the tree inventory for the City of Madison in 2009. (Various ADs)
- Recommend that the following paragraph be added at the end of the Resolution to read as follows:
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED That the tree inventory budget be increased by \$25,000 of other funding.
- A motion was made by Wallner, seconded by MacDonald, to Return to Lead with the Following Recommendation(s) to the BOARD OF ESTIMATES. The motion passed by voice vote/other.**
- B. [12176](#) Creating Section 8.32 of the Madison General Ordinances to create policies and procedures for removal of personal property from public lands.

The current process used by the Parks Division was distributed. It was noted

that staff frequently finds personal property in our parks that may be discarded by individuals who just use our trash receptacles and the areas near them, or find items left behind after an event. It is difficult to determine whether an item belongs to a homeless individual or was intentionally discarded. Identifying all those probabilities will be challenging as well as determining where posting locations would be needed. In addition, staff required for the task of maintaining an inventory is not included in the budget nor does Parks have a location to store the items for 3 months. The proposed ordinance also requires that postings must be prepared in three languages. Parks Staff are working on identifying a protocol for implementation as well as the costs associated with them. Also, members of the Public Works Divisions are meeting to discuss the implications of this ordinance on their respective work forces.

A motion was made by Wallner/Chewning/MacDonald to refer Ordinance ID#12176 Creating Section 8.32 of the Madison General Ordinances to create policies and procedures for removal of personal property from public lands for 90 days to the March 11, 2009 Park Commission meeting. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

- C. [12311](#) SUBSTITUTE - Authorizing the submission of a Round 10 Brownfield Site Assessment Grant (SAG) Application to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR).

A motion was made by Chewning, seconded by Wallner, to **RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL TO ADOPT - REPORT OF OFFICER.** The motion passed by voice vote/other.

Dan Rolfs, Planning and Development supported the Resolution and was available to answer questions.

- D. [12378](#) Approving new ten-year lease agreement between the City and the Mallards for use of Warner Park Stadium, approving agreement to fund improvements to Warner Park Stadium, and authorizing design expenditures.

This Resolution was RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL TO ADOPT - REPORT OF OFFICER

Vern Stenman, General Manager for Mallards was in support of this Resolution.

- E. [12425](#) To authorize the Mayor and City Clerk to enter into a \$135,000 contract with Ken Saiki Design, Inc. for professional design services for the improvement of Elizabeth Link Peace Park, and increasing the budget authorization by \$35,000. (AD #8)

This Resolution was Return to Lead with the Recommendation for Approval to the BOARD OF ESTIMATES

- F. [12455](#) To authorize a contract between the City and the Madison Metropolitan School District for the provision of programming by Madison School and

Community Recreation at Warner Park Community Recreation Center for 2009.

This Resolution was Return to Lead with the Recommendation for Approval to the BOARD OF ESTIMATES

- G. [12496](#) Authorizing the execution of an Underground Utility Easement to Charter Communications across a portion of Secret Places Park located at 6001 Sledding Parkway.

This Resolution was RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL TO ADOPT - REPORT OF OFFICER

- H. [12533](#) To authorize the Mayor and City Clerk to enter into an agreement between the City of Madison and the Tenney-Lapham Corporation, Inc. for the transfer of funds for the design and construction of a new Tenney Park Shelter in 2009. (2nd A.D.)

This Resolution was Return to Lead with the Recommendation for Approval to the BOARD OF ESTIMATES

President Barker noted this was a great example of public-private partnerships. Thanks were extended to Terrence Wall for his financial support and Mary Lang Sollinger for her hard work.

- I. [12563](#) To authorize the City to enter into a one (1) year agreement with the possibility of a two additional, one-year renewal terms with Madison Metropolitan School District for the non-exclusive use of city park land for adult baseball and softball programs by the Madison School Community Recreation. (Various AD's)

This Resolution was Return to Lead with the Recommendation for Approval to the BOARD OF ESTIMATES

A five-minute recess was called. Following the recess roll call was taken:

**Members present: Bill Barker, Betty Chewning, Betty MacDonald, David Wallner,
Members absent: Emanuel Scarbrough, Ald. Joe Clausius and Ald. Michael Schumacher**

- J. **Petition from residents near Wirth Court Park to change designation to an alcohol free park.**

Alder Rummel reported that Wirth Court Park is a small neighborhood park near the new Goodman Community Center on the Eastside that is somewhat isolated. The neighborhood is interested in taking ownership of the park and

holding events there. They are willing to clean the brush along the fence and would like better lighting. Lots of drinking and graffiti has been observed there. The neighbors are very interested in having alcohol banned in this park. The neighborhood is changing and there are lots of young kids, especially with the Community Center next door. Although there have not been many police calls, there have been some issues with drug dealing in the neighborhood.

Commissioners felt it was premature for the Commission to act on this request tonight. In light of the approval of the Ad Hoc Committee's report on Alcohol and Related Behaviors this evening, they would prefer to wait until the series of questions has been developed before acting on future requests. The questions will provide a level of equality when future requests to ban alcohol are received. They also are not certain that bans are that effective without police enforcement, citing Law Park as an example of a park where alcohol is banned but drinking continues because there is no enforcement. Parks staff were directed to work with neighbors regarding structural changes such as better lighting and brush clearing.

Alder Rummel responded that she wasn't certain if the drinkers are homeless individuals or are chronic alcoholics. She believes the request makes sense because of the youth programs in the immediate vicinity.

A motion was made by MacDonald/Wallner to refer this request for 90 days, until the March 11, 2009 Park Commission meeting to enable the formulation of relevant questions. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.** Questions such as how many police calls have been made for problems at the park and whether people are afraid to use the park.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Proposed Park Fees for 2008

A motion was made by Wallner/Chewning to approve the 2009 fees for golf, programmed events, mall/concourse events, the Goodman swimming pool and Forest Hills Cemetery. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

IX. OLD BUSINESS

A. Olbrich Park Master Plan

Widstrand stated that staff had gathered information at public meetings on the proposed Master Plan earlier this year and is now ready to make recommendations on the various components of the plan for the Park Commission's consideration. The recommendations are very similar to those shown on the maps displayed at the second meeting held this past October. The first part of the recommendation is to expand the gardens onto the other side of Starkweather Creek into the boat landing and softball area. The

proposal is to eliminate two of the softball fields within the next 5 to 15 years. The reason is that there has been a substantial decline in softball. In 1984, there were 977 softball teams playing in the regular season and, in 2008, that number is down to 444 teams. During softball's peak there were also lighted fields built at Bowman and Elver. Parks can continue to provide fields for MSCR as well as other users. The other aspect is the substantial expense of renovating all four fields at Olbrich for continued use or even renovating two of them and relocating a third when there are other fields that could be used without substantial renovations.

The garden plan south of railroad is close to the 2000 Master Plan and would reorient parking and the visitor entrance to the Botanical Complex so that it's not crammed into the small area along Atwood Avenue. The new main entrance to the complex would be northwest of the current location. One of the biggest changes in the plan would involve the North Plat natural area. It would be expanded from 4.7 acres to 16 acres, with a substantial natural area band along Starkweather Creek between 200-feet to 500-feet deep in a continuous area. The Botanical Gardens maintenance area would be expanded to three acres west of the Garver building, furthest from the creek to include a nursery site, a materials handling site including the leaf mulch operation and a general maintenance area.

The Garver buildings and related parking and access recommendations include parking around the other three sides of the building so that it won't extend into the natural areas very far and the main entry would use the existing access road from Fair Oaks Avenue. That would allow the road to remain on existing stable soil. It is an attractive approach that would come to the front of the north side of the building that Commonwealth has proposed to use as its main entrance and the road won't interfere with the expansion of the natural area along the creek. This is preferable to the alternate access that would have come through the maintenance area.

The future/overflow parking area has been pared down from 3.8 acres to 1.4 acres and is currently designated as an unallocated area. In the future it could be designated for possible overflow parking if it was needed, or for maintenance area expansion, or possible use as a future dog park or future expansion of the natural area. It was also recommended that it no longer be used for snow storage by December 2009.

Natural landscapes and natural shorelines would be expanded by relocating the gardens across the creek and moving the garden maintenance closer to the railroad. The field sports areas along the lakeshore on both sides of Starkweather Creek would be expanded slightly and improved so they are more usable. Current turf is in need of improvement. The five neighborhood parks would be maintained as neighborhood parks according to the existing plan.

Staff does not recommend reductions to the existing parking areas. They are heavily used and the plan is that they will be shared by the different activities within the park. People may have to be directed to find them for different events. Staff recommends that the boat launch site and parking on the softball side be eliminated along the Creek. It is possible to expand the number of launch ramps at the lakeside launch and parking at the lakeside launch by creating two rows of trailer parking on the grass that would only be open on

week-ends, holidays and other special events. Boaters would be directed to other multiuse locations for trailer parking at other times.

Some mowed areas could be improved and added to the field sports area. Other mowed areas could be reduced slightly and added to the natural areas. In an effort to improve connectivity and linkages with walking paths along the wetland, shorelines and creek, the alignments have been changed on the map to recognize the one legal railroad crossing point at Sugar Avenue and it may be difficult to ever get a different crossing from the railroad. The recommendation is that all vehicle, pedestrian and bicycle traffic should cross at that location and come around the east side of the building. The maintenance traffic would go west to the maintenance area but the bike and pedestrian traffic would continue to connect to the road out to Fair Oaks. In the long term there could be a bike trail that goes to a new bridge over the Creek and into the O.B. Sherry neighborhood. That future connection will be better defined by whatever bike trail system is planned further to the north and doesn't have to be constructed immediately. Hiking trail emphasis would be in the natural area along the Creek that would avoid conflicts with the boat launch area and the ditch behind the softball fields and Thai Pavilion, which would again utilize the legal railroad crossing.

Other recommendations included that the sledding hill, street, bike trail and parking lot conflicts be resolved with a better design. Also, that better vegetative buffers be planted along the shoreline so the view of the lake isn't blocked. Some areas have been identified as potential dog exercise areas and that should continue as a separate process.

President Barker commented that it appears this plan will take many years before it is fully implemented. The removal of fields 3 and 4 would happen about 5 to 15 years into the future.

It was then stated that the first step is for Olbrich Botanical Gardens to expand its building complex on the western edge of the property. If this plan, as presented tonight, is adopted, the next step in the process will be to prepare detailed plans for the garden area and arts incubator once the Park Commission approves where the various land uses will be located. These plans will then specifically define the landscaping, trails, parking, roadways, and those types of components.

The softball question is in the 5 to 15 year range since it is still declining about 10% per year. There are 4 fields at Demetral that need some work on the turf but could be better maintained for field conditions. There is sufficient time to complete that work prior to removing the fields at Olbrich. The loss of the two fields at Olbrich would affect LaFollette and East High Schools, however the fields at Demetral are closer to East than Olbrich's fields, and LaFollette could continue to use the two remaining fields at Olbrich.

Superintendent Briski addressed the issue of parking and noted that the plan uses the existing parking spaces. There will be occasions when overflow parking becomes needed and efforts would be made to direct users to other locations. Parking was one of the most important issues in the Garver process.

At this point Commissioner Chewning challenged various aspects of the

current plan with respect to parking and the eight acres of garden space for formal gardens in the North Plat that is now shown as natural landscaping and the formal gardens will move to the abandoned softball fields. She stressed there she was not aware of a formal agreement that the North Plat area would be used for formal gardens. She also questioned the location of the bike path.

Widstrand noted that the commitment was made in the previous plan (2000) to provide formal garden expansion space for the botanical gardens and in addition that Olbrich Gardens would make use of portions of the Garver Building and adjacent area. The current plan provides them with less space for garden development. The rationale for making it a natural area in the North Plat rather than something else is based on the neighborhood comments for keeping it natural along the Creek that were heard during the public meetings. He also noted that the bike path was changed so it wouldn't go through the maintenance area to provide a more direct connection to the roadway and proposed path expansion to the north. A lengthy discussion regarding various locations for the bike path and whether there was any agreement regarding the placement of formal gardens ensued. It was also noted that there is not any financial pressure from the city to Olbrich for expansion of formal gardens. The expansion of the botanical gardens will be determined with the timing and funding that is available to the Botanical Society. The issue is will they have adequate room for future expansion, it's not that they want it immediately and it's not that the Parks Division is trying to pressure them into it, it's that the Parks Division is trying to recognize a commitment that was made for a future expansion site. The specifics of what kind of gardens and how formal they would be were not detailed in the 2000 plan.

Registered Speakers responding to staff recommendation:

Connie Beam read a letter on behalf of Gene Henry, Olbrich Botanical Society
President support
Dick Wagner, Olbrich Botanical Society Advisor support
Ron Arm Oppose removal of softball fields
Tony Castenina Oppose removal of softball fields
Joseph Schraven Oppose removal of softball fields
Janet Loewi, Olbrich Botanical Society support
Ben Manty Oppose removal of softball fields
Toni Baker Oppose removal of softball fields
Dawn Siebert Oppose removal of softball fields
David Arnold Oppose removal of softball fields
Elizabeth Erickson, Olbrich Botanical Society support
Jennifer Nordlof, Olbrich Botanical Society support
Paul Williams, Olbrich Botanical Society support
John Probst, MSCR Registered no position
Amanda Evenstone Oppose removal of softball fields
Susan Stein support Plan
Alder Marsha Rummel Neutral

Alder Rummel asked that the issue be referred to allow additional time for neighborhood associations input.

President Barker suggested that the item be referred to March to allow time to

determine whether any compromises could be reached. Additionally, a new member will probably be on board shortly and it is important that the new person have sufficient time to learn about all of the ramifications of this issue. He then stated his support for Olbrich Botanical Society and that it is critical to continue to foster that public-private partnership and he believes it is unfortunate that this conflict has been set up between the gardens and the softball players. Widstrand reported that the information presented this evening will be on the website this coming week, including the maps and staff recommendations.

A motion was made by Chewning/Wallner to refer action on the Olbrich Park Master Plan for 90 days, until the March 11, 2009 Park Commission meeting. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

President Barker stated in closing that he was impressed with the civility and collegial discussion that took place this evening. If this collaborative mindset carries forward, it will be possible to come to an equitable decision.

X. ADJOURNMENT

On motion of Wallner/Chewning the meeting adjourned at 9:55 p.m.