



City of Madison

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

Wednesday, April 9, 2008

6:30 PM 625 Northport Dr. (Warner Park Community Recreation
Center)

I. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

The regular meeting of the Madison Board of Park Commissioners was held on Wednesday, April 9, 2008 at Warner Park Community Recreation Center, 1625 Northport Drive.

Present: 7 -

Joseph R. Clausius; Michael Schumacher; William W. Barker; David L. Wallner; Betty Chewning; Emanuel Scarbrough and Betty N. MacDonald

Parks staff present: Interim Superintendent Richard Grasmick, Si Widstrand, LaVonne LaFave, Kelli Lamberty, Brad Weisinger, Laura Whitmore

City staff present: Joel Plant, Mayor's Office, Ald. Julia Kerr

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Schumacher/Chewning to approve the Minutes of the regular meeting of March 12, 2008 of the Park Commission. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no members of the public who wished to comment on items not on the Agenda.

IV. REPORTS

A. Habitat Stewardship Committee

Habitat Stewardship Committee

A motion was made by Wallner/Clausius to accept the Minutes of the February 7, 2008 meeting of the Habitat Stewardship Committee. MOTION CARRIED unanimously. A motion was made by MacDonald/Scarbrough to accept the Minutes of the March 11, 2008 meeting of the Habitat Stewardship Committee. MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

B. Olbrich Botanical Society Minutes of February 19, 2008 Meeting

Olbrich Botanical Society

A motion was made by Chewning/Scarborough to accept the Minutes of the February 19, 2008 meeting of the Olbrich Botanical Society. MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

C. Warner Park Community Recreation Center

A motion was made by Schumacher/Scarborough to accept the Minutes of the January 24, 2008 meeting of the Warner Park Community Recreation Center Advisory Committee. MOTION CARRIED unanimously. A motion was made by Schumacher/Scarborough to approve the Action Report from the March 27, 2008 meeting of the Warner Park Community Recreation Center Advisory Committee to encourage the WPCRC to provide one hour per week (Monday-Thursday) for the North/Eastside Senior Coalition (NESCO) services. This is not mandatory for the Center. The Advisory Committee will revisit the issue in one year. MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

Scarborough noted the background information submitted with the Action Report indicates that NESCO doesn't have enough space to expand its programming. If NESCO is given permission for additional space for their services then MSCR will be really short of space for their services. These issues both indicate a need for expansion of the facility. It was noted that the above Action Report is a suggestion to WPCRC only and not mandatory to provide additional space for NESCO services. This additional programming slot will "test the market" for additional senior programming of NESCO services.

A motion was made by Schumacher/Wallner to ratify the appointment of Paul Van Rooy to serve as the NESCO representative on the Warner Park Community Recreation Center Advisory Committee by President Barker. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

D. PRESIDENT OF THE PARK COMMISSION

Garver Mill Reuse Committee Recommendation.

President Barker stated that the Committee was extremely fortunate to have two fine proposals and it was incredibly difficult to make a decision. However, after much deliberation the Committee chose the Commonwealth Development Corporation's proposal to convert the facility into an Arts Incubator by a vote of 5-3. He believes they will work with the sustainability group to move their concept forward. Chewning congratulated Barker for his patience in chairing that committee. The committee met weekly from October of 2006 through March of 2008, including three large public meetings.

Appointments to Habitat Stewardship Committee and Long Range Planning Committee

The nominees will be submitted next month.

E. SUPERINTENDENT OF PARKS

Written Report of Supervisors' Activities

A motion was made by Wallner/Clausius to approve the written report.

MOTION CARRIED unanimously.

Informational Items

Update on for new Superintendent of Parks.

Interim Superintendent Grasmick reported there hasn't been any announcement on the new Superintendent at this time. Two finalists were interviewed, one candidate was internal candidate and one from Florida.

LaFollette Batting Cage

Interim Superintendent Grasmick reported this professional style batting cage project is now proceeding off the third base line by Monona Golf Course and will encroach on the course slightly. Prior Parks Superintendent Jim Morgan had approved this project.

Change November 12 meeting date

LaFave stated it was necessary to change the date of the November Park Commission meeting due to Council budget deliberations that will be taking place that week.

Annual Park Tour – August 13

Interim Superintendent Grasmick noted the annual park tour is set for the August Park Commission meeting date. Possible sites this year include the new Door Creek Park

Two additional items to note are that the golf courses opened today with the hope that it would attract good weather. The official tally on the carp removal from Lake Wingra stated that approximately 26 tons of carp were removed. This represents about half the carp in the lake. The Friends of Lake Wingra expressed their appreciation for the cooperation of city staff in making this project a success. There has been no report from the DNR regarding the results of the tagged fish that were removed. Finally, the muskies are beginning their annual migration over the dam into Lake Wingra.

A motion was made by Schumacher/Wallner to take item VII. A. Old Business/Brittingham Park Issues out of order. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Brittingham Park Update

Registered Speakers: All in Support

Joel Plant, Mayoral Aide

Ald. Julia Kerr

Shane Siemers

Karen Matteoni

Joseph Lindstrom

Susan Hoffenberg

Nicholaus Chango

Plant presented a plan the Mayor's office has been working on for several months related to the problematic behavior in and around Brittingham Park.

This began back in October when the Mayor received letters from the Brittingham neighborhood and a letter from an advocacy group representing the homeless who frequented the park. The Mayor requested that Plant meet with the stakeholders to develop a plan to address the issues. His goal was to have a plan in place by spring. The plan was distributed to Commissioners at the beginning of the meeting and he was prepared to address it point by point. He noted the various stakeholders were listed at the beginning of the plan.

He reported that he has been working closely with Alder Kerr on some pieces of the plan that are already underway and that other pieces are ideas to be further considered. The goal is to address problem behaviors in and around the park. It is a misperception that the problems are all caused by the homeless when in fact, only some of the problems are related to the homeless population. People who do have a residence but choose to hang out there heavily use the park. The goal is to enhance legitimate use of the park and make the park safe and enjoyable for all users.

He then reported that cameras were being installed in and around the park. His experience is that using high quality cameras for crime prevention is effective. They are used as an investigative tool and are a deterrent that works on a broad segment of the population. He isn't aware of the exact installation date for them. Lighting is a great way to enhance a specific area. Lighting will be installed at the Brittingham boathouse and along the bike path. Lights will remain on as much as possible for visibility to allow police to see better throughout the park.

Different alternatives have been discussed regarding the park shelter, starting with don't touch it, to knock it down, to fence it off, put up permanent walls, to modify it by removing the bathrooms. Discussions will continue on these proposals.

Commissioners questioned how the cameras would be monitored, who was responsible for installation and what happens if the park users move to different parks, would cameras be installed in those parks next? The IT Department is responsible for the placement of the cameras on nearby light poles approximately 30 feet off the ground, they are wireless and will broadcast back to city departments who would retain the images. The Commissioners were bothered by the fact these proposals appear to be a "done deal" with no input from the Park Commission. They also felt it was an infringement on personal rights. Plant acknowledged that displacement of the park inhabitants is a concern and that the cameras alone do not solve problems nor do they necessarily keep people safe, but police have found that violent crime is down 50% since the installation of cameras on State Street and believe the cameras have played a role in that decline. He also stated there is currently no other plan to install cameras in other parks. It is hoped that eventually cameras won't be needed in any park.

Scarborough stated that last month he said cameras wouldn't solve the problem. He suggested that the Commission think about the changing population, the changing economics and society in Madison. More and more individuals are having hard times because of jobs being lost and this in turn causes more stress on the environment. Madison is growing, people are leaving rural areas and coming to urban areas in search of help. Madison needs to start planning now on how it will handle the people coming in and

how we will provide services or we will be in a real crisis.

The question remains what is the role of the Park Commission. Is this presentation tonight informational, is the Park Commission voting on its implementation or has the decision already been made. Plant clarified that some items are already being implemented. The cameras, the lighting, the outreach and social services, the police, the park rangers, and speaking with alcohol retailers are all underway. There are other items that will need further discussion. It was again stated by Commissioners that they were extremely concerned about the use of cameras in a public park. It was their belief that as the Park Commission they should have been more involved than being asked to just rubber stamp these steps that are already being taken.

Plant continued that some decisions have already been made and other options are being explored. Electrical outlets will only be turned on when there is a shelter reservation. Under discussion are changes to landscaping and the installation of play equipment. The best natural guardians are mothers with their children and the stakeholders felt if more play equipment were installed it would increase the use of the park by moms and their children.

He then discussed outreach and social services. The first meeting with the mayor and Operation Welcome Home identified needs related to job training, transportation, consistent employment opportunities, AODA, mental and medical care treatment. A goal is to make the connection between needs and resources. Police can identify some of the individuals in need of services. They will increase their presence in the park through both routine and specifically directed patrols. They are increasing presence in the parks and will enforce all applicable laws, including the prohibition of alcohol possession and consumption that has been on the books since 1991. Commissioners believed that non-enforcement of existing laws plays a big part in the problems occurring in the parks. Plant interjected that at his meetings he asked if the stakeholders were willing to help maintain the ban on alcohol and they responded they would help. The community is also responsible for maintaining these laws.

Scarborough noted the difference between different cultures, Madison natives go home after work and drink and can be functional alcoholics while people in other cultures drink outside. They come up here and continue to drink outside. He suggested that an educational component is needed in addition to enforcement but questioned whether Madison was ready to undertake that educational component regarding various cultural norms.

Plant then discussed an investment in transitional and permanent housing through the city's CDBG offices. The city spent close to \$1 million on housing, homeless prevention and related programming and services in 2007. The Parks Division is adding an additional Park Ranger to increase a parks presence in Brittingham and other parks. They will receive training and be able to access a clearinghouse of resources to address the needs they may encounter and serve as an authority figure in the parks. The Rangers are not police officers but are ambassadors for the parks and will open and close park facilities. Weisinger added that in previous years there were two rangers on duty from approximately 3 p.m. to 10 p.m. who patrolled the East side parks and the West side parks. This year there will be a third ranger on duty stationed out of Brittingham Park.

Plant explained that the city will continue to work with alcohol retailers to limit access to individuals who habitually misuse or abuse alcohol. Some individuals purchase alcohol near the parks where they go to consume it. Some individuals purchase alcohol several times a day to bring it to Brittingham Park. He has spoken with retailers about preventing sales to intoxicated individuals and to prevent the availability of alcohol to people with problematic behaviors. Kelly's Market has voluntarily chosen to discontinue selling 4-packs of low cost beer at the request of Ald. Verveer.

The city will work with service providers to better coordinate employment opportunities for job training and transportation. It is very clear that transportation is a key issue to maintaining employment. There are service providers that can take people to work when buses aren't running and there are some companies that will come and pick up steady employees.

Another suggestion was that vendors be located along the bike path, or by the boathouse or shelter. Suggestions included food, soft drinks, canoes and kayaks. These suggestions are within the Park Commission's purview to explore.

Another proposal would be a park ban similar to the ban used by police on State Street. It is a part of the bail condition or parole/probation condition that covers a specified area if the offense is from behavior in that particular area. Police can take individuals into custody on a probation hold and that has been effective in curbing unwanted behavior on State Street. A police or probation officer would be needed to identify the individuals and take them into custody. The offense would have to be a circuit court criminal offense related to a particular park and not a municipal ordinance offense.

Scarborough reported he recently met with a group of people with the advocacy group Welcome Home. Part of the problem is people on work release walk through the park and look for certain things, the demand is there and the supply comes to them. This route is the quickest way for them to get from the Huber Center to the downtown area where they will be working. A solution is to inform the individuals they cannot cut through the park on their way to and from work.

Plant also discussed prosecution initiatives such as holding a ticket in abeyance and if the judge doesn't see the person for a set period of time the ticket would be dismissed, however, if the judge does see them within that time frame a new ticket is added to the prior ticket. While this tool won't work for everyone, it should be explored.

Finally everyone needs to be at the table and he is aware of some frustration with steering this plan or putting it into effect but the reality is that some things are under the purview of the police department, some things are under the purview of the city and other things are under the purview of service providers and/or retailers. The city can take action against the retailers but what is best is if the retailers themselves identify what functions they can do that are good for their business. The goal is to enhance legitimate use of the park and make it safe and enjoyable for everyone.

In response to a question by commissioners as to whether the Mayor's office

had looked at the number of families with young children that play in that area, Plant noted the idea came from the neighbors who met with him. It was suggested that before play equipment was installed, that research would determine whether there are enough kids in that area to make a difference. They also noted there were many good suggestions in the proposal that the Park Commission could work with the Mayor's group. The neighbors have committed to do whatever it takes to reclaim the park from monitoring the shelter to conducting monthly clean-ups of the park. It was acknowledged that it isn't known who exactly is dropping the trash in the park. Alder Kerr reported there is a core group of volunteers who have been conducting monthly clean-ups of the park and beach area. There are lots of kids in the Bay View area who tend to stay close to their apartments. There are also kids on Erin and Emerald Streets who can go to either Vilas or Brittingham. It was interjected that a core group of the users in the park are also willing to help with the clean ups.

The following proposals have been implemented: cameras, lighting, amenities (electrical outlets), outreach and social services, police, park rangers, alcohol retailers and, employment training and transportation is about to be implemented. The following proposals are in the discussion stage: park shelter modifications; environmental design (landscaping, play equipment), park ban, and prosecution initiatives. The investments in transitional and permanent housing as well as partnerships are continuing. Nothing has been done about vendors.

Plant also noted the same types of problems are not occurring in other parks. Individuals spending the night in the park occurred with great frequency last year. Superintendent Morgan went through the park every morning on his way to work and would roust between 5 to 15 people daily. He was extremely distressed by this by this use of the park. These activities bring forward the question of what is a legitimate use of a park? Should it include watching t.v., hanging around all day and drinking? Schumacher asked that this issue be placed back on the Park Commission agenda for periodic updates.

Siemers reported that as part of a law school class project they investigated homelessness and he studied the issue at Brittingham Park. It is a work in progress and the conclusions are hypothetical based on interviews with police, users, neighbors and personal observations he made while in the park. Park users who reserve the shelter deal with panhandlers looking for food and/or money, users are accosted in the bathrooms. It has created problems for Parks administration who have had to refund shelter reservations because of aggressive behavior. It's been a problem for local residents because individuals are setting up the shelter as their homes with furniture, electronics, and cooking areas. Brittingham has had for many years a reputation that it is a place to go to gamble, obtain drugs and there has been some prostitution. It is a central location and has paths taken by many people as a direct route leading down Doty from the county jail. It has easy access for cars, a large parking lot and the shelter is wide open with accessible outlets. The configuration of the shelter conceals it from West Washington traffic. People reserving the shelter hand out food and money and there are organizations that argue for that usage.

Matteoni spoke about the homeless encampments along the Yahara River. Schumacher asked for clarification of the encampments. Widstrand noted

many of the encampments are on private land. There is also railroad right-of-way and the parkland.

Ald. Kerr stated she felt the Mayor's office has done an admirable job in putting together the proposal. She noted the park needs to be safe for everyone and that is the goal.

A plan was distributed to the Commissioners from Operation Welcome Home containing a proposal for Brittingham Park programs dated March 28, 2008 that was also submitted to the Mayor. Scarbrough noted that the encampments discussed earlier along the Yahara River are a symptom of displacement and that is going to happen more in the future.

Commissioners then discussed the Brittingham Park issue. It was noted that the immediate needs of the community cannot be neglected while a long-term solution is determined. The last speaker has clearly identified what is happening in Madison. The city is changing and people of different cultures are moving here. The norms of different cultures need to be brought into the discussions. The Park Commission has a subcommittee on Alcohol and Related Behaviors in Parks and the speakers this evening were invited to attend the next meeting to express additional concerns or to engage in a dialogue in a less formal setting.

Chewning expressed dismay that the Mayor's office didn't give the Park Commission the courtesy of actually providing input into the plan aside from a small number of proposals. Installing cameras is a big issue and is worthy of a public discussion on the pros and cons. She thanked all the speakers for their input, especially the comments regarding the proposals that were submitted to the Council and then deleted from the budget.

A motion was made by Clausius/Schumacher to accept the discussion tonight, to forward the action to the Ad Hoc Committee of the Park Commission to Study the Problem of Alcohol and Related Behaviors in City Parks and request that an update is provided to the Park Commission periodically. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

COMMUNICATIONS

- A. [09721](#) To declare the week of April 21 through April 25 as ARBOR WEEK 2008.

A motion was made by Scarbrough/Wallner to approve Resolution ID#09721 Declaring the week of April 23rd thru April 27th as ARBOR WEEK. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

- B. [09823](#) Proclaiming April 19, 2008 Earth Day Clean-up Day and endorsing and encouraging citizen participation in the clean-up events at City of Madison Parks.

A motion was made by Chewning/MacDonald to approve Resolution ID#09823 to Proclaim April 19, 2008 Earth Day Clean-up Day and endorsing and encouraging citizen participation in the clean-up events at City of Madison

Parks. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

- C. [09824](#) To extend the closing hours at Garner Park to 11:30 p.m. on Saturday, July 26, 2008 for the 6th annual Opera in the Park event post-concert reception for donors.

A motion was made by Wallner/Chewning to approve Resolution ID#09824 To extend the closing hours at Garner Park to 11:30 p.m. on Saturday, July 26, 2008 for the 6th annual Opera in the Park event post-concert reception for donors. **Park. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

Request from Karra Liddicoat to host Opera in the Park post-concert reception for donors on July 26, 2008

A motion was made by Scarbrough/MacDonald to approve the request from Karra Liddicoat, Opera in the Park Coordinator to host an Opera in the Park post-concert reception for donors on July 26, 2008. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

A motion was made by Scarbrough/MacDonald to approve the request from Karra Liddicoat, Opera in the Park Coordinator to host an Opera in the Park post-concert reception for donors on July 26, 2008. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

- D. [09835](#) Authorizing the Mayor and City Clerk to enter into a Purchase Agreement with the Natural Heritage Land Trust, Inc. for Phase 1 of the City's acquisition of lands for the planned expansion of the Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park and amending the 2008 Capitol Budget to authorize the expenditure of \$605,000 for this acquisition.

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

- E. [09836](#) Authorizing the Mayor and City Clerk to enter into a Purchase Agreement with the Natural Heritage Land Trust, Inc. for Phase 2 of the City's acquisition of lands for the planned expansion of the Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park and amending the 2008 Parks Capital Budget to authorize the expenditure of \$180,000 for this acquisition.

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

Widstrand reported these resolutions cover the two major acquisitions that Parks has been talking about for the past two years in Cherokee Marsh that total 259 acres of wetland and upland. The land will be used for conservation and restoration. Approximately 236 acres is wetland and the remaining 23 acres is mostly upland consisting of prairie and an oak savannah buffer between the current park boundary and the proposed housing development. There will be trails around the periphery of the wetland and some trails and to the river in the upland. The cost represents the city's share of approximately

25% of the total cost, with the State Stewardship Fund paying 50%, and the balance coming from Dane County Conservation Fund of 25%. The funding agencies would provide the money to the Natural Heritage Land Trust who would then close the deal and transfer the real estate to the city.

Registered Speakers:

Jon Becker in support

Muriel Sims – left prior to item being heard in support

President Barker interjected that the Habitat Stewardship Committee met yesterday and Russ Hefty, the Conservation Resource Supervisor, provided information regarding the proposed acquisition in Cherokee Marsh. The wetlands that are being purchased are on a layer of peat that sits on top of a layer of glacial sands and gravel. The lake levels are elevated above their natural state by the Tenney Park dam. Lake Mendota is 5 feet above its natural level. The lake is now maintained at its summer maximum level, but it frequently exceeds it, and edges of the marsh are flooding and pieces break off. Hefty has been able to prove by aerial photography is that the river channel is expanding at the rate of approximately 3 feet per year on each side. The solution is to reduce the lake levels. The Habitat Stewardship Committee passed a motion yesterday in support of maintaining Lake Mendota at its summer minimum as a stopgap measure. He asked that the Park Commission act on that motion at the May meeting. He also noted that Mayor Dave's State of the City address today also acknowledged that the city needs to address lake levels specifically in regard to Cherokee Marsh wetlands. Schumacher announced that on April 15 at 6:00 p.m. at Cherokee Park Country Club he is hosting a meeting to provide information on Cherokee Marsh and the development in that area.

F. [09878](#)

Request of Ann Brickson dated March 31, 2008 to discuss the Effigy Tree sculpture in Hudson Park.

Registered Speaker:

Ann Brickson Neutral/No opinion

A question was raised about what the original intent was when the sculpture was carved. It was the understanding of some members that it was to be allowed to decay and return to nature. Over time people have become very interested in preserving it.

A motion was made by Chewning/Schumacher to direct staff to research the records to determine what the original conditions were and to report back to the Park Commission in May. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

G. [09879](#)

Request of Dustin Maher dated March 24, 2008 to host Bootcamps in Elver and James Madison Parks throughout the summer on Monday-Wednesday-Friday mornings at 6:00 a.m. and Monday-Wednesday-Thursday evenings at 6:00 p.m. as well as Saturday mornings at 9:00 a.m

Registered Speaker:

Dustin Maher in support

A suggestion was made that Mr. Maher use Brittingham Park for some of the boot camps.

A motion was made by Wallner/Scarborough to approve the request of Dustin Maher dated March 24, 2008 to host Bootcamps in Elver and James Madison Parks throughout the summer on Monday-Wednesday-Friday mornings at 6:00 a.m. and Monday-Wednesday-Thursday evenings at 6:00 p.m. as well as Saturday mornings at 9:00 a.m. based upon sponsor's compliance with staff recommendations. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

- H. [09880](#) Request of Eric Schreiber of Saint Paul's Tijuana Fundraiser dated March 26, 2008 to host a softball tournament at Vilas Park on April 26, 2008 (rain date April 27, 2008).

Registered Speaker:
Eric Schreiber in support

A motion was made by Scarborough/Schumacher to approve the request of Eric Schreiber of Saint Paul's Tijuana Fundraiser dated March 26, 2008 to host a softball tournament at Vilas Park on April 26, 2008 (rain date April 27, 2008) based upon sponsor's compliance with staff recommendations. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Request for Expansion of Waunona Park Community Garden

Registered Speakers: all in support
Jane Sadusky
Joe Hennessy
Benjamin Sommers
Paul O'Neal – not speaking
Jim Kellerman – not speaking

There are 14 families on the waiting list and the request is to add 5 additional spots. Widstrand relayed a request from Ald. Bruer that priority be given to neighborhood families and the number of plots for people living outside the neighborhood not be expanded beyond those currently there.

A motion was made by Scarborough/Chewning to approve Resolution #09881 request for expansion of Waunona Park Community Garden. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

VI. NEW BUSINESS

- A. [09550](#) Adopting the Stoughton Road Revitalization Project Plan and the goals, recommendations, and implementation steps contained therein as a supplement to the City's Comprehensive Plan.

It was noted this item is for introduction only with action by the Park Commission in May.

MacDonald commented she drove the corridor and felt that people become so accustomed to what they look at that they don't think there could be room for improvement. Widstrand added that this is the one corridor that looks like a typical highway corridor, others like John Nolen Drive, Northport Drive, East Washington all have a much higher level of aesthetic development.

A motion was made by Wallner/Chewning to commend Dick Grasmick for all of his extra work, long hours and help as Interim Superintendent of Parks these past few months. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY** with applause.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

On motion of MacDonald/Clausius the meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.