

Winchester Parks and Recreation
Park Advisory Board Meeting
Monday, February 23, 2015
6:30pm

Meeting Location: Lord Fairfax Room, War Memorial Building

Present: John Bentley (Chairman), Shelly Lee (Vice-Chairman), Jules Bacha, Matt Mintschenko, Kyle Homan and Hector Robertson and Brian Wigley

Absent: Regina Coates and Rosie Schiavone

City Staff: Jennifer Jones, Lisa Hamaker and City Manager, Eden Freeman

Media: Derek Gomes

Guests: None

John Bentley called the meeting to order at 6:33pm.

Approval of December 8, 2014 Minutes:

A motion was made by Jules Bacha to approve the December 8, 2014, minutes as presented; Brian Wigley seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

Public Comments: None

Skate Pavilion Future Plans / Recommendation and Vote

Jennifer Jones, Park Director, gave a power-point presentation to the Park Advisory Board that included the Liaison Report, she recently gave City Council on the Skate Pavilion's monitoring efforts and temporary closure; a National helmet required study, skateboarding injuries, extreme sport participation numbers, National and Virginia locality matrix requiring helmets, design engineer recommendation, estimated relocation costs and finally 5 options for the Skate Pavilion's future.

Upon hearing her Liaison Report on January 3, 2015, City Council requested additional information as well as a recommendation from the Park Advisory Board.

Jones explained the additional information she had collected in the following manner:

- a) Helmet Required National Study reveals out of 1000 skate park policies surveyed, 37.7% indicated that helmets were required.
- b) Skateboarding Injuries; most skateboarding injuries happen to inexperienced skateboarders about 2% of participants per year and the most common injuries among skateboarders are ankles (26%) and wrists (74%). Although 50% of head injuries occur in sports and recreational type activities such as bicycling, skateboarding or skating incidents. Skateboarding ranks 7 out of the top 14 injury related type sport or recreational activity with basketball at # 1. The summary of the skateboarding injury statistics: There are 8.5 million skateboard participants, each year 66,000 are injured which is 2%. Most of the injuries are ankles and wrists and involve novice skaters. Head injuries occur more often on playgrounds, playing contact sports and riding bicycles. The conclusion was that head injuries though not very common, when they do occur during skateboarding tend to be more severe.
- c) Skateboarding ranks # 2 as the most popular extreme sport in the US and # 3 among young adult outdoor activities. The recently received Needs Assessment Report reveals quality of recreation programs for youth and teens ranks # 4 of importance with a continued emphasis placed on them.

- d) No additional insurance is needed for a skate park whether helmets are required or not. Based on past City documentation, the three stated reasons for the helmet required rule is low ceilings, the brick pillars, and the 3" level change between the concrete pad and the pavilion.
- e) The department created a matrix (poling from both National and Virginia localities) in areas that have Skate Parks in operation determining that majority do have fenced areas. Of those polled in Virginia, all 8 parks required helmets though only 3 of 8 enforced the rule with an attendant while 2 loosely enforced the rule and 3 did not enforce the rule at all. In the National Survey, 5 of 8 parks required helmets, 4 enforced the rule through the use of an attendant and one was loosely enforced. Three of the 8 parks only recommend helmets. The skate parks with 100% helmet enforcement had paid attendants/monitors to enforce the rule.
- f) Jones asked a Design Engineer from Painter Lewis to give her a site recommendation, in Jim Barnett Park, if the Skate Park were to be moved from its current location. Tim Painter recommended moving the Skate Park between the BMX Track and Cork Street. He did not recommend the original plan presented to Council that the skate park be placed in the new parking area on the ADA BMX Capital Improvement Project.
- g) Estimated costs to relocate the Skate Park to the recommended area would cost approximately \$73,000. Of that Jones is requesting \$28,152 be placed in the CIP (Capital Improvement Projects) FY 16 budget as part of the BMX ADA project. If that amount were to be funded and approved by City Council she indicated the remaining \$45,000 would become a Community fundraising effort.
- h) Jones indicated a Skate Park monitor would cost approximately \$20,000 annually and that position would have to be hired.

Jennifer Jones proposed 5 options before the Park Advisory Board for their discussion and recommendation.

- 1) Close the Skate Pavilion and sell the obstacles at an estimated 50-75% resale value.
- 2) Keep the Skate Pavilion open at Family land and hire monitors for the proposed hours anticipating approximately \$20,000 in personnel costs.
- 3) Move the obstacles from the Skate Pavilion and store them at the Park Maintenance compound, incorporate project funds into BMX ADA Capital project and raise the remaining balance. Helmets Recommended.
- 4) Move the obstacles from the Skate Pavilion and store them at the Park Maintenance compound, incorporate project funds into BMX ADA Capital project and raise the remaining balance. Hire a monitor. Helmets Required.
- 5) Move the obstacles from the Skate Pavilion and store them at the Park Maintenance compound, incorporate project funds into BMX ADA Capital project and raise the remaining balance. Helmets Required- Loosely enforced.

John Bentley led the Board discussion asking the Park Advisory Board to view each option individually and comment.

If the Skate Pavilion were to close; Brian Wigley inquired about donated funds. Based on information obtained from the Winchester Park Foundation funds would not need to be returned since the facility was built and equipment was purchased.

Shelly Lee interjected she did not want to see the facility close because it had come so far and there is a population that needs a place to skate.

Jules Bacha commented "children need a place to play freely; do their own thing spontaneously" therefore wearing helmets would be optional.

Brian Wigley pointed out that once a dangerous situation has been identified the City is required to manage that liability. The State of Virginia does not waive negligence. He suggested speaking with the City Attorney. Eden Freeman reinforced the concern the City Attorney has about the City's liability and having the helmets required.

Jennifer Jones commented to the Advisory Board when the Park staff were monitoring the facility kids would rather not come at all, than come and wear a helmet; mainly the high-school age group.

John Bentley wanted to ensure that if more money was to be spent he wanted to see if the complying helmet participant numbers were large enough. Having only 15 kids coming would not support more funding. He stated. "Fifteen kids coming does not support funding for moving the facility to the BMX track nor does it support paying a monitor \$20,000. My intent is not to penalize or be mean to skateboarders. I would rather spend \$93,000 (\$73,000 + \$20,000 for a monitor) to help 150 kids rather than just 15. In other words, if we have any extra money, I would vote to spend it to help kids with programs that can have a positive effect on more children. We cannot open up the park on March 21st unless we can have 100% monitoring."

Matt Mintschenko suggested one more helmet monitoring period from March 21 until end of June to make sure that data collection is accurate. 100% enforcement would take place and documented. At the end of this period a sound decision could be made whether to recommend to City Council the facility stay open and relocate to BMX or close permanently.

Jones expected monitoring efforts to be at a cost of approximately \$5,000 to cover the months of March – June. Shelly Lee voiced that it may be possible to secure a donation for either contracted services or a volunteer.

John Bentley listed the Park Advisory Board's thoughts:

- 1) March 21; no personnel funds to re-open
- 2) Find a Volunteer or secure a donation for 5,000 to have 100% enforcement
- 3) Monitor from March 21- July 1; collect good data
- 4) Make a final recommendation to City Council July 1

Recommendation:

Brain Wigley made a motion to request from City Council the ability to reopen the Skate Pavilion with either; a volunteer or sub-contracted monitor and collect data on usage for a 3 month period. Shelly Lee seconded the motion and it was approved with a 7-0 vote.

Chairman Comments: John Bentley

No Comments

Director's Report: Jennifer Jones

• Needs Assessment Final Report to City Council-

Consultants from GreenPlay LLC will present the final report of the Needs Assessment on Tuesday, February 24, 2015 at 7:00pm during the City Council Work Session.

• Park Projects-

Bridgeforth Field: The scoreboard has been installed and the sign is up.

• 2016 Budget Construction-

Jennifer Jones highlighted some of the FY16 budget requests. Budgeted requests will be presented to the City Manager and then forwarded to City Council for consideration.

- a) A request to increase operating based on results from the Needs Assessment and the Citizens Satisfaction Survey.

- b) Additional Maintenance Technicians
- c) Increase in Part-Time staff funds
- d) 19 Capital Improvement Projects
- e) \$36,000 for Park staff training
- f) Park Maintenance Division had the largest increase request
- g) Outdoor and Indoor Pools- Aging Infrastructure, resurfacing of Pools

• **Annual Report-** The department's 2014 Annual Report was handed out to Park Advisory Board members.

• **Bridgeforth Field Artificial Turf-**

The estimate for the artificial turf, Nike grind infill of the infield, removal of the old irrigation and new fencing down 3rd and 1st base lines total \$195,000. The original plan was to have work begin on August 20, 2015. The City had previously budgeted \$200,000 towards the original plan to install artificial turf for the infield and outfield. The City would pay 2/3 and Shenandoah University 1/3 of the project costs. The initial plan came in over budget. The next step will be to send the information to the User Groups and begin the ITB with the City Purchasing Agent.

Matt Mintschencko inquired about the base path. Jones replied the base path will be brown turf, the infield will be green colored turf and the pitching mound is dirt.

Brian Wigley inquired about the install date and Jones replied the August 20 build date remains the same.

• **General Comments**

Jennifer Jones expressed thoughts of an idea she is working on for the Summer to close Maple Drive to traffic on Saturday evenings starting at the War Memorial Building extending to Familyland and designate the street as a play street for families and more recreational type activities, such as bicycling and skateboarding. The Director is allowed to close Park roads according to City Code, Chapter 18; 46-2-932 but Jones will submit the idea to the City Attorney.

Assistant Director's Report- Lisa Hamaker

• **Programs-**

- 1) Santa received a record number of Santa Letters; over 200
- 2) All of the Christmas events went well
- 3) Winter Jam Fest; 17 teams registered and the event was postponed to February 28 due to inclement weather
- 4) 163 children are enrolled in swim lessons
- 5) All of the self-defense classes have been successful
- 6) 20 children participated in "Parents Night Out"
- 7) The Summer Program Guide will go to print at the end of March

• **Facilities-**

- 1) Outdoor Pool renovations and remodeling is going well. The bathhouse has a ceiling installed and painting is to begin soon
- 2) The Arts and Crafts Room received a simple mini-remodel; the cabinets were re-done and the room was repainted
- 3) The Locker Room area tile was painted with a Rhino type liner to help relieve slippery floors

- 4) The Custodian has taken charge of waxing all of the tile floors in the War Memorial Building. This service will now be done in house.

- **Staff Notes-**

Leslie Bowery recently completed her 2nd year of Event Management School.

The Child Care staff will attend an After School Conference in early March.

Brandon Ware, Aquatics Coordinator is also the department's Acting Facility Coordinator.

- **Special Events Policy**

Lisa Hamaker informed the Park Advisory Board about the newly created Special Events Policy recently presented to City Council and wanted to make them aware of changes it had on the department's event process. The proposed policy has an application fee associated with the event process. The application fee is a tier type fee; \$50.00 base, \$150.00 and \$250.00 tiers depending on the size and requests of the event. She explained in City Code under Section 14 that Parks and Recreation areas are exempt to the overall policy since a large numbers of their gatherings are not special events. Special Events in the Park are those that impact the need for other City services and close streets. The Park only handles about nine Special Events per year. Some of those are events such as Apple Blossom and Girls on the Run will have to pay the application fee under the proposed policy.

Fees collected by the Park for Special Events in the Park cover only Park Maintenance costs of the event.

Board Comments and Idea Sharing:

John Bentley inquired if Johnny Blues would be placed at Yost and Bodie Grim Fields and Brian Wigley inquired if the restrooms would be opened at Bridgeforth Field for the games starting next week.

John Bentley encouraged the Park Advisory Board members to attend the Needs Assessment final report presentation at the City Council Work Session.

Advisory Board Meeting Dates:

Advisory Board Meeting: Monday, March 23, 2015 @ 6:30pm

Adjournment: With no further business to discuss John Bentley asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting; Matt Mintschencko made the motion and it was seconded by Brian Wigley. The motion was approved and the meeting was adjourned at 8:22pm.

Respectfully submitted; Jennifer Stotler; Park Administrative Coordinator