

VILLAGE OF WESLEY CHAPEL PARKS & REC MINUTES

January 17, 2011-7:00 PM

Wesley Chapel Town Hall

4107 New Town Road, Wesley Chapel, NC 28173

**Committee Members Present:** John Lepke, Bill Bennett, Julie Brown, Elaine Rossof, Marnie Holland, and Pat Utley

**Committee Members Absent:** Regina Hilbert

**Non-Committee Members Present:** Council Member Sondra Bradford, Carol Mullis, Kim Bayhah, Todd Bramblett, John Pallis, Mr. Marton

**John Lepke called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.**

**1. ADDITIONS, DELETIONS, AND / OR ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

Added 15a. Name of Park, 15b. New Members, changed Other Business to 15c. Agenda was approved.

**2. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None

**3. APPROVE MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 15, 2010**

Minutes were not available. They will be approved at the next meeting.

**4. DISCUSSION OF FEEDBACK FROM PUBLIC INFORMATION SESSION AND ANY ACTION ITEMS THAT RESULTED FROM MEETING.**

Between 34 and 50 citizens came to the meeting, including Council members. Jon Wood of Haden Stanziale said that 12 would be great. Verbal comments included questions about security and insurance. Overall feedback on the park plan was very positive.

Elaine Rossof made the motion that the Wesley Chapel Parks & Rec Committee formally support the Dogwood Park project. Marnie Holland seconded. The vote was unanimous.

**5. DISCUSSION/REVIEW OF PART F GRANT APPLICATION ACTIONS/TIMETABLE**

The Council will meet Tuesday to discuss prioritizing the park amenities. Several meetings for local organizations, including HOAs, Scholastic Anglers, and the Optimist Club, have been planned over the next two weeks. Julie Brown and Pat Utley will present at the Potters Trace HOA meeting.

Lepke suggested prioritizing based on the P&R survey results. First focus on needed infrastructure, then paved trails, then the amphitheatre and hiking trails. Holland suggested also prioritizing the play field since it could double as overflow parking, and made it sense to level the field while other earthwork was being done. Southbrook Church would also provide over 200 parking spots if we can come to an agreement with them for special events.

## **6. FEEDBACK ON PARK DESIGN FROM WAXHAW HIKING GROUP**

Todd Bamblett of the Waxhaw Hiking Club provided feedback on the Dogwood Park plan. He liked the contoured topography, and the creek adds scenery. The unpaved trails get you closer to nature. Lepke asked his opinion on the surface used for the unpaved trails. Todd commented that mulch disappears and needs to be replaced. Pea gravel or pit gravel is better because it packs easily but it's easy on the legs. ABC gravel is ok, but he prefers the pea gravel. Mountain bikes will tear up pea gravel, but those will only be allowed on separate trails at this point. Some bike trails in Mecklenburg have a dirt surface, but those require more maintenance.

Todd said a five foot wide hiking trail would be adequate and make you feel more part of nature. In other parks he's been to, the bikes and pedestrian share the trail but bikes go in one direction and pedestrians go in the other.

Lepke asked if Todd's group would be willing to provide volunteers. Todd said probably. The club has 400 members with over 100 regulars. The club started in 2006. They don't do many hiking trips in the cold weather, which would be a good time to do projects.

Lepke mentioned that geocaching is popular, especially with Boy Scouts. Marnie suggests we use Boy Scouts as volunteers also.

Lepke asked Todd if drinking fountains would be helpful. Todd said yes. Overall he likes the park design.

## **7. PROPOSAL FOR WATERFOWL SHELTER AT PARK**

Karen Cohen was planning to present on this item but was not present. She had mentioned that the Waterfowl Shelter in Indian Trail is looking for a permanent home. Karen would like us to enter a partnership with them since we have a pond on the property. This group already has fundraising set up. They are a volunteer organization that rehabilitates injured birds.

Some of the downsides to a partnership would include overpopulation, resulting in unpleasant park conditions. The committee is open to exploring the partnership, and Lepke will contact the Waterfowl Shelter to get more information.

## **8. DISCUSSION REGARDING PLAN TO ADDRESS BEAVER ISSUE AT DOGWOOD**

The beavers living in the pond have positives and negatives associated with them. On the plus side they're an interesting ecological feature. On the downside, they spread organisms in the water (as do most wildlife) and damage the trees. They also are driven to stop running water, so they'll try to block the dam drainage pipe. If we retain beavers on the property we'll need some rebar to try to protect the pipe from blockage. The beavers also tend to burrow into dams.

To protect select trees we would need a metal fence 8 inches from the bark.

The NC Wildlife Commission offers a program to assist with beaver control. They don't like to relocate them since it just relocates the problem. The Commission suggests killing them by trapping or shooting. You don't need a permit if you don't sell the meat or fur. We could just destroy the dam in the hopes that would force them to relocate, but that might not prevent them from moving back. The assistance program will visit the site the first time for free and for \$20/visit thereafter. It typically takes an average of 10 visits to mitigate a beaver problem and costs \$125 for dam removal.

Lepke says he would like to keep them and protect the trees if its economically feasible. We need to explore whether the fish could transmit the diseases, assuming we allow park visitors to catch and eat the fish.

One option is to control the beaver population through selective extermination.

Bill Bennett, who has hunted beaver in the past, will visit the site with the Beaver Assistance representative. The Committee will review recommendations at the next meeting.

Lepke made the motion to schedule the Beaver Assistance expert to visit the site and allow Bill to be the liaison. Marnie seconds the motion. The vote was unanimous.

## **9. DISCUSSION OF POST CLOSING GROUNDS MAINTENANCE AND SITE SECURITY (AFTER RESIDENTS MOVE OUT)**

To maintain the park we need to get quotes based on specifications. Lepke has experience through his HOA with writing and biddings these specs. He thinks the maintenance will require \$500-\$1,000 per month.

Lepke will write the specs for the Committee. Council will handle the bidding process. He will take into account experience, equipment available to the applicant, and their price.

As a temporary alternative, the Johnsons already own equipment for yard maintenance, including an aerator and tractor. We could either buy the equipment and hire an independent contractor to operate it or, as a temporary measure until the park construction begins, use volunteers to maintain the groups with the equipment. We would have to ensure that we address the liability of volunteers operating the equipment.

The tractor, a John Deere with 52 horsepower, has less than 500 hours usage. It costs \$18,000 new, \$24,000 with an aerator. Used it typically runs about half price. Lepke suggests offering \$5,000. It has a bucket on the front, a 6 foot cutter, and a 6 foot aerator.

We will need to take over maintenance starting in March, so we need to determine what to do from March to November, when construction would likely begin. Lepke and Bennett said they could volunteer to do mowing if Council approves that route.

Bennett moves to buy the tractor and use volunteers initially to maintain the grounds and to contract with professionals after the site is developed. Lepke seconds the motion. The vote was unanimous.

Lepke also mentions site security and that we should at a minimum put a gate at the entrance as soon as the renter moves out, install motion sensor flood lights on the corners of the house (adjusted so small animals don't set them off), and procure an alarm monitoring system for the house.

Lepke also mentioned that clearing would help make the house visible but that the property will not be ours until March. He has asked the property owners if we could begin clearing earlier. We might only need to clear the trees by the road since the land dips beyond that, and those trees on the incline would probably not obscure the view of the house. Clearing costs \$5,000 per acre, but we could do some ourselves with volunteers if we have the tractor. We could also ask for an inmate crew to do the work, which would be free.

Lepke has also asked whether he could put signs on the 6 acres announcing the coming park.

## **10. DISCUSSION ON SITE PARK ‘INTRODUCTION DAY’**

If the current resident and Council agrees, we could set up a day to let citizens visit the park and get a visual of what will be offered. We could hold a ground breaking ceremony. Marnie knows the lady who owned the property prior to the Johnsons and would like to include her in the ceremony.

We could put out sheets for volunteers and to solicit a buy-a-brick campaign.

Sondra will present this request to Council Tuesday night. If approved, P&R will establish a date for the event in March.

Lepke moves to make a formal request of the seller and tenant to set up an Intro Day. Marnie seconds the motion. The vote was unanimous.

## **11. DISCUSSION OF P&R PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT, SCHEDULE, BUDGET AND ACTION PLAN FOR 2011**

The property will be available for use starting in June, and development likely will not start until November. Lepke asks what P&R can do with the property during that time period. Several suggestions followed:

Community Vegetable Garden – could establish a quarter acre plot of land, get seeds, broken bags of soil and fertilizer donated, and then donate the vegetables to a local soup kitchen. This project would be at no cost to the Village. It would need to start in the Spring to plant at the correct time. Will check with tenant and Council to see if can undertake this program. Future Farmers of America and Key Clubs could participate. Julie mentions working with the Waxhaw Women’s Club and Master Gardeners as well.

Art Classes in the house – every Saturday Key Club or another group could hold a kid’s class or programming in the house that would be nature oriented. Maybe painting classes of the trees in the park, hanging some in the house, building bird feeders, etc. Allows community groups to run the program.

Red Box – this outdoor sports program was discussed several times in the past. It could be started as a pilot program with limited spaces available.

Lepke moves to launch the program. Marnie seconds. Vote is 5-1, Bennett dissents. Discussion ensues regarding the lack of bathrooms and parking.

Lepke revises motion to research the program further and present at the next meeting. Marnie seconds. Vote was unanimous.

Volunteer Library – Elaine is part of a book club that would like to meet on the porch of the house on a weekly basis. The club would be open to the public. They would like to organize a book drive and possibly store them on site if possible if it’s agreeable to the tenant. Then they could organize a community lending library. The book drive could be advertised in the newsletter if storage space can be procured.

Science Programs – Lepke suggests letting a photography club take photos of the trees in their different seasons, pictures of the beavers, squirrels, etc. as well, and posting the Latin names on the trees. Could hold a nature program once per month. Julie suggests incorporating the aging population as well to get them involved as volunteers.

Toddlers/Mom's Club – could meet in the house and have storybook readings, etc.

Fishing Contest – maybe an event to open the park? If charged a fee, proceeds could go toward the park. Frank Jennings of Berkley Point would be a good resource for this kind of event, as would NC Wildlife Commission.

Children's Garden – Charleston has a children's garden that is meant to be touched, tasted, and smelled by the kids.

## **12. 2011 VOLUNTEER PROGRAM (UNPAVED TRAIL CONSTRUCTION, POND BANK CLEARING)**

The Committee would like to start recruiting members of Key Clubs, Boy Scouts, and other community groups to volunteer with park cleanup. Julie suggests talking to Wingate to see if we could get a free intern from their recreational program. Kim suggests getting a Frisbee Golf club to set up a course. There are 25 kids in the club at Weddington High School.

Football teams are also required to complete community service. We could set up volunteer days to start clearing and cleaning. We'll need waivers for the volunteers, and we need to ensure our insurance is adequate to cover volunteers.

Marnie knows a trail builder who likes to leverage volunteers to do construction work. Lepke handed out a volunteer sheet so we could reach out to our friends and get them to sign up.

## **13. DISCUSSION POTENTIAL COMMUNITY USES FOR SPACE INSIDE EXISTING HOUSE AND FLOOR PLAN MODIFICATIONS**

Lepke says instead of putting bathrooms in the basement (which might require a pump if we stay on septic), we could put them in the laundry room area where plumbing infrastructure already exists. We could install 2 sinks and 2 stalls in each with access to outside the house. We'll need an ADA ramp to the bathrooms.

Lepke suggests using the front room and dining room for a volunteer library/reading room and classroom combination and using the large room for meetings and classes.

We can ask Haden Stanziale how much they would estimate the cost of installing the bathroom in the home with outside access vs. a freestanding bathroom.

## **14. HOUSTON HOUSE INVESTIGATION UPDATE**

Julie informed the Committee that the Houston House had burned down at 3:15 AM on 12/27/10, and that she was sorry we had lost the opportunity to use the house in the park. The Wesley Chapel VFD responded. She has made contact with the Fire Marshall investigator, who referred it to the Sheriff for an arson investigation. A detective is doing work on the crime. The SBI was also contacted by a citizen for additional oversight. Julie spoke with the Assistant DA as well.

Julie may offer a reward for information. She spoke to the Church of the Redeemer, owner of the property, on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, and she has asked for the sole responsibility of cleaning up and salvaging what's left of the site. She has a team of volunteers with historical preservation experience who will assist her. They can move the chimney whole, and perhaps we could incorporate it into the park.

**15a. NAME OF PARK**

The Parks & Rec Committee would like to solicit ideas for names from the community. For the purposes of the grant applications, it will be referred to as Dogwood Park. At the next meeting the Committee will discuss a process for accepting and choosing suggestions.

**15b. NEW MEMBERS**

Several members of the community would like to join the Parks & Rec committee. We have two openings.

**15c. OTHER BUSINESS**

Marnie mentioned that the Carolina Thread Trail is holding open houses in our community and encouraged the committee to attend.

**16. ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting was adjourned at 10:25 pm.