

PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD MEETING MINUTES
February 7, 2023

Heather Carmona, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm at 851 South Eton.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Heather Carmona
Pam Graham
Ross Kaplan
Anne Lipp
Ellie Noble
John Rusche
Steve Sweeney

MEMBERS ABSENT: Susan Collins

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT: Zachary Miketa, Seaholm High School
STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES ABSENT: Matthew Windsor, Seaholm High School

ADMINISTRATION: Scott Zielinski, Director of Public Services
Carrie A. Laird, Parks and Recreation Manager
Connie J. Folk, Recreation Coordinator
Leah Blizinski, City Planner
Brendan McGaughey, Parks and Forestry Foreman

GUESTS: Jack Burns, Carolyn Fereday, Kyle Goulding, Andrew Harris, Pat O'Neil, David Young

It was moved by Lipp, seconded by Kaplan, to approve the minutes of the Tuesday, January 10, 2023, regular meeting as submitted.

Ayes, Heather Carmona, Pam Graham, Ross Kaplan, Anne Lipp, Ellie Noble, John Rusche, and Steve Sweeney

Nays, None
Absent, Susan Collins

Carmona recognized and thanked Zachary Miketa and Matthew Windsor from Seaholm High School for their service as the student representatives over the past year.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA:

No comments

No Action was taken by the Parks and Recreation Board**Agenda item #1: Birmingham Little League – Kenning Park Proposed Field Modifications**

Pat O'Neil, past president of the Birmingham Little League, Andrew Harris, President, Birmingham Little League, walked through the details of the proposed modifications to the Kenning Park fields by adding bullpens and electrical.

Before opening for questions, PM Laird added background and shared pictures of potential options for dugout covers.

Carmona asked and confirmed that the proposed dugout cover would be removed at the end of the season and replaced at the beginning of the next season.

PM Laird said the city has safety concerns with the proposed bullpens that have been discussed with Little League. The safety concerns include the proposed bullpens are too close to live play, with the potential for line drives being hit at a pitcher warming up. With his back turned, having only a second to react.

Also, permanent installation of pitcher mounds and plates in foul territory could be potentially hazardous when they are not in use. A player chasing down a ball during a game or practice may not expect them there and may easily slip, trip or fall into a divot created by the pitcher and may become injured.

The public is able to use the fields, but the Little League has first right of refusal and are booked at the beginning of the season. This discussion is to gather comments, not looking for an action, to take an agreement between the Birmingham Little League and the city commission for approval.

President Harris said the league takes heed of the safety concerns and also commented there is already assumed risk playing baseball at this level. Further, this proposal is inline with other fields they have played on at the state level.

Kaplan inquired about the electrical access and would the electrical be open and available for use, not locked. Kaplan asked if the city would review and approve the designs and materials.

DPS Director Zielinski confirmed the city would approved all approval all design and materials.

Kaplan has a safety concern for the pitcher and wondered about a fence for protection.

PM Laird said a fence would be in the field of play and present its own concerns.

O'Neil offered his opinion that a fixed object would be more of a danger.

Graham had questions about the work to install the electrical utility and the overall source of funding.

PM Laird stated the city has budgeted for electrical improvements for city facilities.

Miketa suggested the use of L-screens for bullpen safety.

O'Neil offered his opinion that a fixed object, even moveable, would be a hazard.

Graham was curious about future needs, like lighting, for budgeting. Additionally, she suggested that proposed shade covers could be an opportunity for donation / sponsorship.

DPS Director Zielinski said that lighting is a significant cost consideration, for which we currently do not have a budget. Further, the City has restrictions on sponsorship signage.

Carmona recognized that sponsorship is not part of this proposal; however, it could be something considered down the road and the donor agreement might include preemptive language.

Carmona asked for location clarification of the proposed temporary pitcher plates as well as bullpen location in subsequent seasons.

Graham asked about the complexity of the installation and maintenance of the bullpen pitcher plates which would allow for a "test" this season.

O'Neil said that the bullpen does not require as much grooming as the field and the mounds would not be raised.

PFF McGaughey clarified that the addition or removal of the pitching plates would not be difficult; however, irrigation needs to be considered, maintenance required for divots, and it's the safety concerns that are the issue.

Harris clarified that the bullpens would not require tearing up the sod, just a little carve out for the plates. O'Neil added that there is such an extreme slope between the fields that make bullpen placement inopportune.

Carmona commented that we should look into the feasibility of re-grading the area outside the field of play.

Sweeney asked what other cities have done. Is it common practice to place the plates inside the ballpark fence?

Harris explained that many fields use this proposed design. The recent state tournament he attended used this design, which is why it was proposed this way.

DPS Director Zielinski added that it all just may come down to geometry, how much space is available around the foul lines.

David Young asked about catering during the tournament.

Harris responded that during the regular season there is not catering; however, this tournament is going to be a special event and will go through the City's special event application process and may include concessions with the city's approval.

Carmona clarified that there may be additional considerations forwarded to the City Commission not included in this proposal.

Jack Burns asked if Clover Hill Cemetery would be notified of the tournament.

PM Laird stated that as part of the special event application, business, residential, and commercial properties within a 300 ft. radius must be notified and invited to the City Commission Meeting where the special event application will be reviewed for approval.

Lipp thinks the ideas presented in the proposal are a great benefit to our kids and our City and is excited that we got selected to host the tournament.

Carmona offered that the challenge for the board is that unless we understand the dynamics with the plan, it is tough to comment, which is why she is inclined to support the plan, with the exception being the foul territory changes, if there is a better option.

Graham requested that the Birmingham Little League receive more supporting data, rather than anecdotal, from a state organization or council.

Rusche asked an acquaintance who had been involved with little league for years about the proposed bullpen location in foul territory and learned this placement happens all the time.

O'Neil added he has never seen a bullpen outside of the fenced area, except major league fields.

No Action was taken by the Parks and Recreation Board

COMMUNICATION/DISCUSSION ITEM #1: Trail Section between Baldwin and Willits -Survey Update

PM Laird reviewed the exhibits included with the memorandum and talked about the upcoming survey to confirm the two encroaching items have been resolved.

Kaplan asked if we will be putting chips down on the trail to hopefully help define the park boundary and where people should walk.

DPS Director Zielinski said the city is still endeavoring to understand the complexities of this specific area of the trail and suggested that, considering bank stabilization needs as well as the susceptibility of flooding, stoning is more likely as a future improvement.

Graham is grateful that the city is working on this issue on behalf of its citizens and had questions about fencing ordinances, e.g., whether a fence goes immediately on the property line or if a setback is required. She also appreciates the signs and thinks they could be more prescriptive. Also Graham noticed recently that the path area south of Willits is no longer showing on Google Maps. She would like the city to engage with Google and get it added back for the public to see it and thereby feel more comfortable using the trail.

DPS Director Zielinski said people should go directly to the building department for fencing ordinance clarification, but it was his experience when he was part of the engineering department that fencing can go right up to the property line.

Graham asked about the width of the trail from the shoreline at its narrowest point.

PM Laird said the existing survey indicates a five foot width.

PM Laird also updated the Board to say that the city is still waiting to hear back about the grant: the governing body is suggesting an early February announcement. Additionally, PM Laird is still in the process of setting up a meeting with the Martha Baldwin Park Board to discuss the concept plan and gather feedback, so she is not yet ready to bring the findings back to the Parks and Recreation Board.

No Action was taken by the Parks and Recreation Board**COMMUNICATION/DISCUSSION ITEM #2: Winter Sports Update (verbal)**

PM Laird explained that sledding at Lincoln Hills was open briefly for the recent snow fall, but is now closed due to the warm-up and outdoor skating at Barnum Park is installed and available as long as the weather cooperates.

Noble inquired about skating on Quarton Lake because she has seen people out there recently.

PM Laird has noticed the skaters also and said that the city does not encourage skating or promote it, having notices indicating ice may be unsafe/skate at your own risk.

No Action was taken by the Parks and Recreation Board

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

No unfinished business.

No Action was taken by the Parks and Recreation Board

NEW BUSINESS:

Carmona recognized that today was student Miketa's last meeting and a prior meeting was student Windsor's last meeting. The Board is expecting new students at the March meeting.

Lipp wanted to recognize the Birmingham High School varsity figure skating team. They swept the High School competition series at the "A" levels, which include triple jumps. The team earned a spot at the State championships in March. If they win, it will be the first time in over twenty years. She moved that the Board congratulate and wish them good luck at the championships.

Noble announced that she has decided not to reapply, today is her last Parks and Recreation Board Meeting. She has really enjoyed working with everyone since 2017. Noble will continue to be around Birmingham enjoying the trails and golf.

Carmona thanked Noble for her contributions over the years and indicated the City Commission or Staff will put forth an announcement to fill the seat.

No Action was taken by the Parks and Recreation Board

Carmona stated the next regular meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 7, 2023, at 6:30 pm, at 851 South Eton.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:38 pm
Connie J. Folk, Recreation Coordinator