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Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting
May 16, 2022

Commissioners Present: Jane DeBarbieri, Scott LaBombard, Peter Lurgio, Kenneth Magarian Vincent Olinski and Michael Tirrell

Commissioners Absent: Douglas Morash and Sara Unger

Staff: Scott Hathaway, Deputy Superintendent and Peggy Goralczyk, Office Head Clerk

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 pm with Michael Tirrell, Chair presiding asking if anyone here tonight that was not listed on the agenda. He also explained the three-minute public participation.

Michael Tirrell asked if anyone had any questions regarding the April 11 minutes and if anyone wanted to set motion. Jane DeBarbieri just wanted to say that we should ask all vendors what they will be selling for any future requests as Kenneth Magarian had mentioned last month.

Motion made by Vincent Olinski to accept the minutes of April 11, 2022 motion seconded by Scott LaBombard Vote as follows: Kenneth Magarian yes, Jane DeBarbieri yes, Vincent Olinski yes, Michael Tirrell yes, Scott LaBombard yes and Peter Lurgio yes All in favor.

Motion passed

Public Participation: Don Wielgus, Dan Knapik, Karen McTaggart and Emily Sanchez, Ann Lentini, Mike Roeden, Mark Fedora and George Barnet

Business or Items for Discussion:

- Michael Tirrell called on Nancy Rubert who did not attend the meeting. He welcomed Emily Sanchez who is here tonight and her request is either to give a \$1,000 donation for a Books Box center or will purchase, build one and donate it from the funds that she collected from last month's April autism month fundraiser. The location she wanted to display is Cross Street playground he asked Emily to go over her request.
- Emily Sanchez said that this is all new to her so she's coming to the commission for advice whether she should donate money or purchase the book center box from her autism fundraising in April and will purchase children's books to go in it and the reason why she wanted to do this is that her daughter has Autism and she loves to read books and Cross Street playground is the area that they would like to display the book box and will also be a great addition to the Cross Street playground that was just renovated. If the commission approves the book box center she went over details how it is filled with children's book and people borrow them to read and return she is also requesting to place a small plaque on it as well with her daughters name in her honor of her.

- Michael Tirrell asked her if she had a blueprint or any pictures of the book box and if she knows if it has to be a certain height or dimensions to hold books or is there just a standard size for these book boxes around other areas of the city. He asked if it has doors to open and most likely many books to choose from and asked if it was a metal type of book box or wood material. He explained that he could meet her over at the Cross Street playground to see where she wants to place the book center box and we could bring it back to the next commission meeting in June and then the commissioners can take a vote. He asked Scott Hathaway if he wanted to meet over there with them as well and if he has any questions.
- Scott Hathaway thought that it was a great idea If she wanted to purchase it on her own or build one they can help install it. Whatever she wants to do if fine with him.
- Michael Tirrell is looking for a motion of support of the idea of a book center box at Cross Street Playground and asked to table it for next month's meeting. He called for a motion.

Motion made by Scott LaBombard to table the book center book box until next month with more details motion second by Kenneth Magarian. Motion. Vote as follows: Kenneth Magarian yes, Jane DeBarbieri yes, Vincent Olinski yes, Michael Tirrell yes, Scott LaBombard yes and Peter Lurgio yes All in favor.

Motion passed

- Michael Tirrell welcomed Don Wielgus on the update of the monument location at Kane/Wojtkiewicz Park and went over details from the last location of the previous meeting held there was discussion of concern near the guard rails near the river.
- Don Wielgus said the Westfield Purple Heart committee has raised 25,000 for the monument and they don't want to put it near the river railings or corner they want to put it on the mound behind the clock over in Kane/Wojtkiewicz Park. (Behind the tree art) He explained they will have gas and electric work with them at no charge to install a light that will shine on the monument they are getting donations from all veterans, businesses, banks and grant funds with help from Ann Lentini the treasurer. They are hoping to have it installed by this August and are looking for approval of the commission. He stated that there are over 4,323 buried veterans in Westfield mostly in the Pine Hill Cemetery. We the Westfield Purple Heart committee is looking for the OK from the commission for them to move forward with the statue and location. Discussion was made on the size of the light that'll be shining down on the monument and discussion was talked about a gas light versus electric however Don Wielgus said that that would be a lot more money and they would have to dig up the road and the gas pipes, hold up traffic but they could certainly look into it. Scott LaBombard said that would look nice. Don Wielgus handed out flyers on the size of the monument and the location it will be 5 feet high in 4 1/2 feet wide the perpetual light will be put in by gas electric and it will look just like the one that's located in West Springfield and Chuck

Blood from Smith monuments will receive the monument and do the engraving. He said the monument will be installed with 4 feet of cement.

- Vincent Olinski mentioned that there was a concern in Westfield with all the bright lights and wondered if the lights there now are bright enough and if the neighbors would mind more lights. Don Wielgus explained that it's not gonna be a bright light it's just going to shine down on it as a soft glow perpetual light it's going to be a beautiful monument.
- Mark Fedora from Westfield gas and electric went over the details of the area near the mound and the lighting he went over the history on how they first started to get this monument fundraising going and they as a group visited potential areas at Kane/Wojtkiewicz Park and found a good spot.
- Michael Roede mentioned that he is the newest member of the veteran's group and the generosity of the banks and businesses and the people in the community have been such great support he did say that once it is built they will take care of the maintenance part and said the stone is coming from India it's a marble red stone and going to ship it to Smith monuments over to Chuck Blood he also said that George Barnet here tonight is a recipient of the Purple Heart medal he's here tonight in support of the monument as well.
- Scott Hathaway suggested placing it on the north side of the city where he wants the bushes removed to possibly think about putting the monument over there because it can be viewed more by the traffic and be more visible to people where you can see it. Discussion was made about the area and Don Wielgus said they will certainly take a look at it. His concern is, they don't want the snow plow to pile snow up against it.
- Michael Tirrell asked Scott Hathaway if there was irrigation at Kane/Wojtkiewicz Park or wiring in the ground. Don Wielgus said they would call dig safe first and Gas and electric will coordinate that. Scott Hathaway responded he believes irrigation is in the whole park but not sure.
- Michael Tirrell asked the commission if there were any other questions and called for a vote to move forward with the ideas presented tonight and possibly meet at the area.

Motion made by Vincent Olinski to move forward with the monument request as presented at Kane/Wojtkiewicz Park motion seconded by Scott LaBombard Vote as follows: Kenneth Magarian yes, Jane DeBarbieri yes, Vincent Olinski yes, Michael Tirrell yes, Scott LaBombard yes and Peter Lurgio yes All in favor.

Motion passed

- Vincent Olinski thanked Don Wielgus and members here tonight and all the Veterans for their presentation, planning and fundraising efforts to bring this monument to the City of Westfield to honor the Veterans along the Purple Heart Trail.
- Michael Tirrell welcomed Karen McTaggart from the Western Hilltown Hikers looking to clean up the trails at the Tekoa Park and asked her to go over it.
- Karen McTaggart apologized for being late she thought the meeting was at the Parks and Recreation office. She went over the details of what the Westfield Hilltown Hikers do and they would like to volunteer to clean up the trails at Tekoa Park. She explained they were at Tekoa Park visiting on Easter Sunday and wished there was more parking because you have to park across the street and walk over due to mass dot state is working on the bridge over there she said the trails are covered with brush and trash and they just want to clean it up that's

what they do as a non profit group. They hike trails and explore and pick up trash along the way. She said they placed little pink ribbon markers along the path they explored on Easter. She suggested that maybe once the state is done with the bridge work that a parking lot could go over there someday so you wouldn't have to cross a busy road.

- Kenneth Magarian said that he knows Tekoa Park very well because he would coordinate the WSU college students to clear up the paths and explained there are actually two trails and they go to the top and it looks down at the Mass Pike and says he doesn't think it's been clean or cleared in many years and that's something that the department should be looking into yearly and he thanked her and the group for taking on the efforts of clearing the trails and brush because it is an absolutely beautiful view once you're at the top.
- Michael Tirrell asked her are they going to just trim the brushes along the trails or what were they going to do and Karen McTaggart responded that they will bring a chainsaw if there are small trees or limbs on the trails they will cut them up and put them to the side they will also pick up the trash. She explained she drives by that park every day and she went over the history of the park. She said her father who is 88 years old used to go out there when it used to have picnic tables and we would have picnics when she was a child. They would hike and enjoyed the view and it brought back memories to her on Easter. She also mentioned she is a representative of the town of Russell and wanted to do something in her fathers honor by cleaning it up a bit. She stated that the land is in half of Westfield and a half and Russell and that's interesting.
- Peter Lurgio asked about the detail of the cleanup on the trails. Karen Mc Taggart responded they will only cut down small trees that are covering the trails or over-growth areas and they will also pick up any trash that they come across. They did see a lot of trash she also mentioned the sign at the entrance of the park has a bag on it possibly to keep people out until the bridge is completed. She explained the view from the top of the mountain has changed due to the bridge but still is a awesome view to see and hike.

Michael Tirrell asked if there were any questions and if anybody wanted to set motion. Motion made by Kenneth Magarian to allow the Hilltown Hikers group to clean the trails at Tekoa Park as presented tonight motion second by Peter Lurgio. Vote as follows: Kenneth Magarian yes, Jane DeBarbieri yes, Vincent Olinski yes, Michael Tirrell yes, Scott LaBombard yes and Peter Lurgio yes All in favor.
Motion passed

- Michael Tirrell welcomed Dan Knapik and the update of the facility subcommittee meeting that was held April 13, 2022. He went over details of the permits use of area forms that were mailed, emailed and returned from past users and attached survey copies and then they held a meeting of the results from those permit users that came back back from the survey on the April 13 zoom meeting. (See subcommittee report attached) Michael Tirrell responded he will email the commissioners the detailed report that Dan Knapik brought tonight and all his hard work on the permits, talking to permit user groups, putting together projects,

budget expenses and goals to go by at the facility subcommittee meeting from findings from those responses and in his experience working as a previous Mayor and City government on how we can keep these parks and playgrounds updated and in good condition. He really invested a lot of his time and effort in helping us to understand how the city works with budgets and funding in these reports and we appreciate his efforts.

- Michael Tirrell welcomed Dan Knapik and asked him to go over his report of the subcommittee meeting and results received back from study.
- Dan Knapik thanked the commission and as a concerned citizen and time served with private groups presented tonight he explained an introductory letter was put together by Michael Tirrell and himself and Peggy Goralczyk emailed and mailed all use of area applicants and that information came back from users to complete forms and if they wanted to participate in this study effort and it was important to know that the information collected came from the users groups not city departments. What they spent on facilities what they would like the city to help with expenses such as Bullens field, Cross Street playground, Papermill playground, Municipal Playground he said when he was a mayor they had capital project in place to do improvements of these fields, parks and playgrounds and if money was available for free cash and November then we would be ready to go out to bid from the quotes received in advanced. He is suggesting that we work with Tammy Tefft, Purchasing Director and possibly engineering on some of these requests that came back from the users that requested the city to help with costs for improving areas they use and then bring it to the mayors attention to see if we can to do a little bit each year or have a five year plan. Most of the users concern was why can't the City pay for improvements or maintenance. They end up paying a lot of their own private group money to get it done themselves. They don't mind helping to pay but would rather work together with the city to help out with expenses. He said most of these areas that were all done over in the past, fields, fertilization was sub contracted out with the city and that program simply stopped and ever since the fields are not looking good and are neglected. Other areas are just falling apart and they are not keeping up to date on the maintenance he understands that there is a shortage of staff but the areas need to be maintained. He brought up past administrations with the dept. , community development and purchasing who all worked together the department was run with good management skills and David Billips was a good manager and coordination with those departments. They had all their quotes and specs all in place before things went out to bid then it went to the mayor with line items in the budget maintenance of capital projects and that's how things got done. We did the roller hockey rinks at Papermill a brand new playground equipment basketball courts at Municipal and Chapman and now we have the Pickleball courts recently and Cross Street playground was just completed with help from Peter Miller from Community development who can get grants. He went over the private groups that use our facilities and for example Bill Babinski horseshoe club president all he was looking for is a little bit of clay for the horseshoe courts so that's possibly something that the city can provide that doesn't cost a lot of money out of the city budget. He requested ten covers for the courts, a little fence around courts due to vandalizing and

maybe a few rubber mats and the clay will be about \$500 that's something that can certainly come out of the budget if we have money available. He explained with his experience with Babe Ruth and Westfield little league and he has talked to Saint Marys who uses the fields at the Westfield intermediate school and stated they are not in great condition and they were the state champions. He noticed the area is over run down with weeds and brush and it's nice to have a good field play on and the upkeep of these fields have to continue to keep them nice for the people that use them on the permits and for the schools or anyone that uses them. The requested improvements are remove overgrown shrubs behind the field and install new shrubs, rebuild the pitchers mound install the storage unit to house tools in a wheelbarrow to maintain field, rototill and grade the diamond and base paths, remove and trim trees down to the right field line, dug outs, recede and fertilize infield, install a gate behind third base bench to retrieve the balls that go into the woods.

- Peggy Goralczyk stated that our parks and recreation city budget is done by another department and there is no department communication, except through Scott Hathaway and that no quotes are attached to the budget for capital improvements for facilities or department needs and it gets cut every year and come July we work off the budget we are given.
- Kenneth Magarian said the Director use to present the budget. (The acting director/or interim dept. head are the same title) The commissioners did not know the budget was done through another dept.
- Dan Knapik said he also talked to Cindy Gaylord from the Westfield Historic Commission and all she is looking for at the old burial grounds is a light on a flag pole because it's not lit up and she's looking to remove a few trees and plant new ones and that project can be done with DCR by planting new trees to put them back after you take out the old ones. She wants invasive plants removed in the Mechanic Street cemetery a estimate cost 6,000 to 8,000. He also spoke with Westfield on Weekends the concern possibly adding additional electrical for the capacity at Park Square, security cameras (Park Square has a security camera) and at Half Mile Falls Park there is no electric power it would be great to have music events there because it has a nice sound system there's no electricity we had to use a generator at previous events so it would be nice to have electricity put in on the north side for people as there's nothing really available on that side of town. He went over Babe Ruth at Bullens field additional grass behind home plate, new sprinkler for above item, batting cage improvements, rebuild Bullens mound, repair erosion near bleachers along upper campus parking lot, tree removal and tree installed, fence replacement along King and Hubbard Street a multiyear project. He went over Jachym Field that is (under the school department) they like to rebuild the pitching mound, additional grass base pass and backstop, a new backstop and backstop for the bullpens and relocate the bullpens. User group Westfield FC soccer Woronocco fields fertilize seed with weed control two treatments per year they spent \$6,000 to get the fields back into good condition estimate cost is \$1,900 two times a year. He spoke with Mike Raposo, Westfield little league rep and at Cross Street playground a suggestion is to convert the old gazebo to a concession stand, remove existing field house

and concession stand which is very old and replace new bleachers with the press box. Add a new dug out for a field one, and dug out for field two. Papermill playground at third base field were tennis court, skim the infield like at Cross Street, backstop fencing in front of the dugout no outfield fence needed. Sadie Knox Playground, add new dugouts for both fields due to old dugouts are rotted at Hampton Ponds playground.

- Dan Knapik explained issues at Hampton Ponds Field, Sadie Knox, Cross St., and Papermill the press boxes at Cross Street and other concession stands are pretty old and a grill safety in the press box. He also spoke with star fires and their concern is the fence and erosion on the first base line and grandstand you could build up. Dan informed commissioners trees were removed and they would like new trees put back in at Bullens field and that can be through the DCR of planting trees and make that area look beautiful like it used to back in the 1930s and 1940s there was a beautiful row of trees and it brings in shade and it just had a historic charm look and everyone always praised how beautiful Bullens field looks and it would be nice to make it even nicer to visit and play. People all over praise how nice Bullens field is compared to other cities. He went over Jachym field and that needs prefabricated dugouts so that's something that we may be able to design there we have user groups who's talking to the school and mayor for 100,000 a year to kickstart Baseball and then add fertilizer and seed.
- Michael Tirrell explained to commission and Dan Knapik that Jachym Field is under the School department not the Parks and Recreation so possibly Ryan Dunphy could look into that on the school side and anything done at that field needs to go to the school commission committee for approval.
- Dan Knapik said that Babe Ruth is willing to put in \$10,000 and work with the city he went over all the grants of all the playgrounds that came through with the help of community development who can get grants for the parks, playgrounds and fields. He explained that he is happy to go over all of this and be an advocate on his behalf to the commission to get this going.
- Dan Knapik went over the history of when he was younger he worked for Walter Ayers picking weeds and he went over the stories of Tekoa Park that was brought up previous mayors and folks had a pistol clubhouse up there but now it's protected by parklands. So that brought back memories to him when they were talking about Tekoa park. He also said that when he was Mayor of Westfield we had in the budget for seasonal kids to work during the summer on maintenance in the parks they could drive the trucks if they're 18 years of age or older and that's something that should be looked into again to give these kids some experience and also to help all the staff when they are so shorthanded this time of year.
- Michael Tirrell thanked Dan Knapik for his presentation and advice and we will revisit the areas with the information provided tonight. The commission thanked him as well.
- Vincent Olinski mentioned that he has served on several committees through the Parks and Recreation Department the CPA for years and all these maintenance items were talked about then and brought up and nobody from the department

(dept. head) would do anything about it or ask for money he just felt like he was wasting his time. He did praise Dave Billips was a department head/director at the time when the commission wanted something done or the department needed anything he would get it done. Since he left no one had filled his shoes in that capacity, right now we just don't get any response from the acting dept. head and he does not attend any commission meetings to answer our questions.

- Kenneth Magarian said Fran Cain is the acting department head/director and we have questions he's not helping to run the department with the commission goals and he does not communicate with the commission. He says right now we are hearing Scott Hathaway is short of staff who maintain Parks, playground and fields and no one is doing anything about it they've been short of staff for a long time now and this is very frustrating when we hear they only have three or four people working in the (natural resource department) and the question is why is new staff not being hired or what's the problem.
- Scott Hathaway said he has brought this up to Fran Cain's attention and the personnel director and it is very frustrating he says he tries to get people to work for the department but you have to hire or post jobs from within first and he does have a couple people in mind but we're just waiting to move forward on the hiring process he says that his department is not the only one that short of staff Casey Berube at public works and other departments has less staff than they used to as well.
- Kenneth Magarian suggested maybe we should have a meeting with the mayor to find out what the problem is in hiring staff to maintain these parks and facilities. The commissioners concern there's no management or department head doing the job of making sure of replacing staff who have retired or left (Natural Resource Dept.) and to get the staff back up in the numbers like it used to be in the past years for the increased maintenance demands at Parks/ Playgrounds and ballfields for the Parks and recreation dept. And conversation was brought up of their concern of consolidation of departments with the water and public works divisions are simply not working anymore.
- Scott Hathaway says that he has requested in his (Natural Resource Dept.) budget for new staff, new trucks and more money and he just gets frustrated because he's not getting what the department needs and he has contacted the Personnel Director for hiring staff, he has contacted Fran Cain of the concern he is short of staff he does not know what else to do to resolve the issue with the shortage of staff.
- Peggy Goralczyk mentioned that back in the day people would call and ask how to get a job to work for the city and everybody would tell them to go to the personnel department and to get their name on a list of all departments interested in and if something should come up they will be up for an interview from that list. She stated she is not sure if the personnel department still follows that same procedure.
- Scott Hathaway brought up that the (Natural Resource) staff can get their pesticide license and make more money an hour but none of them want to work with the pesticides and that is frustrating because they could be making more money. The staff say that it's not in the job description to have a pesticide license to do the work that they do in the parks and playgrounds and ballfields.
- Peter Lurgio responded possibly because of health issues involved with pesticides maybe that's why they don't want to handle it that could be the reason.
- Michael Tirrell went over the Community preservation meeting with Vincent Olinski and stated there are funds available for the skate park design that was headed up with Jeff Burke and possibly construction that could be used with the CPC funds so that is good news. He asked Vincent Olinski if he wanted to add anything.

- Scott Hathaway mentioned let's not forget all the extra maintenance needs we have to do for the Rail Trail, school grounds, city hall, council on aging dept. mowing and trimming. He asked why these departments areas could not have their own maintenance staff to mow and trim and maintain their own grounds. He said Mike Ayers (Natural Resource dept.) staff has a hard time keeping up with the work for our own areas. He praised Mike Ayers and said you won't find a hardworking employee like him it would be difficult to replace him.
- Michael Tirrell brought up the the signature memorandum renewal authority form from Tammy Tefft Purchasing Director for the FY 23 budget for Francis Cain the acting department head/director with a range of authority of "All" and we need commissions vote and signatures.
- Kenneth Magarian responded we don't even have the acting department head/director attending our Commission meetings anymore and we have to vote and sign this form for him.
- Michael Tirrell responded this is a renewal form and asked if there were any questions and if anyone wanted to set motion.

Motion made by Vincent Olinski to approve the contract authority signature form for FY 23 for Francis Cain, acting department head/director for range of authority "ALL" motion seconded by Peter Lurgio Vote as follows: Kenneth Magarian yes, Jane DeBarbieri yes, Vincent Olinski yes, Michael Tirrell yes, Scott LaBombard yes and Peter Lurgio yes All in favor.

Motion passed

Schedule of bills Vincent Olinski and Michael Tirrell who handed out listing to Commissioners and asked if anyone had any questions.

- Reports- Michael Tirrell asked Scott Hathaway to go over his report.
- Scott Hathaway went over the Pickleball and the Bullens field update the irrigation update he said Bullens is up and running the shed is being built by the Westfield Technical Academy School and that should be completed soon. He spoke with the Star Fire's group who wanted to put up netting and we have extra netting that we could provide and the staff will put it up. All the water in the Parks should be up and running by now and Parker Memorial fountain we are working on it should be up and running before Memorial Day he went over the training for the guys for the pesticide license that was talked about earlier along with the shortage of the staff in the Natural Resource department.
- Michael Tirrell went over Jim Blasak, Program Coordinator. The summer staff applications close Friday, March 6 we began interviews we hope to get them done in the next week or so. The spring programs have gone up this year we had 96 participants and the boys T-ball 27 participants in our girls T-ball program we also had 23 participants in the start smart program on Saturday mornings we have 36 participants in spring peewee soccer clinic and the other programs we have 21 men's and women's adult softball teams this season. The commissioners were impressed with the increased numbers this year.

In closing Michael Tirrell brought up that he did speak to city council and they are working on naming the Whitney field after Bob Veronesi " Chico Field" we have to hold a public hearing and then it goes back to City Council for their approval.

Next meeting due to vacations we would like to change the date starting a week after June 13.

The meeting ended at 8:31pm

Documents used:

Survey of facilities from permit users

Field and Facility Project budget Summary- Dan Knapik

Responses from facility users and improvements

Reports

Permits

Schedule of bills

Approval of minutes by Douglas Morash, Secretary of Commission

Took minutes, typed and organized by Peg Goralczyk, Head Clerk