

**VILLAGE OF PLEASANT PRAIRIE
PARK COMMISSION
Village Hall Auditorium
9915 39th Avenue
Pleasant Prairie, Wisconsin 53158
November 3, 2015
6:00 p.m.**

A regular meeting of the Pleasant Prairie Park Commission was held on Tuesday, November 3, 2015, 6:00 p.m. Present were Michealene Day, Troy Holm, Brock Williamson, Kris Keckler, Cindy Schwab, Jim Bandura (Alternate #1), and Dave Klimisch (Alternate #2). William Mills was excused. Also present were Michael Pollocoff, Village Administrator; Tom Shircel, Assistant Village Administrator; John Steinbrink, Jr., Public Works Director; and Ruth Mack-Stoner, Executive Secretary. No citizens were present.

- 1. CALL TO ORDER**
- 2. ROLL CALL**
- 3. MINUTES OF MEETINGS**

Michealene Day:

In your packet there are the minutes from the last meeting. If there are no additions or corrections may I have a motion to accept?

Brock Williamson:

I have a question. I'm just curious because my first time with this. You guys accumulated quite a bit of money for this outlay as you talked about. Is there going to be like another ten years before you have probably have enough and then do a lot of big improvements.

Mike Pollocoff:

It depends on development.

Brock Williamson:

Just kind of whatever happens?

Mike Pollocoff:

Right.

Brock Williamson:

Just curious.

Michealene Day:

With the impact fees it's how most of the money we get to develop. So hopefully the economy stays well and we can build lots and lots. Were there any other questions or corrections in the minutes?

Kris Keckler moved to approve the Park Commission Meeting minutes of the October 6, 2015 meeting presented in their written form: Seconded by Troy Holm. Motion carried 7-0.

4. CITIZEN COMMENTS

5. DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS REPORT

John Steinbrink, Jr.:

Madam Chair and members of the Parks Commission. As you know we did just complete a tour of some of the Village parks with the Commissioners. Just for the record we visited Brookside Gardens Park, Rolling Meadows Park, the green space near the bike trail. We had a tour of Mompers Woods, drove by it. We went to the community garden plots in Prairie Springs Park. Saw Village of Pleasant Prairie Park. Came back and we saw -- so many parks to remember. We came back we saw Ingram Park and Village Green Park and Sorensen Woods also along that way. And so we tried just to hit a lot of the major parks where the impact fee money would be directed and where we had some funds, some capital improvements potentially happening there. And some of our newer parks just to get the Park Commission familiar with their location. And obviously being a public space you're available to tour them at any time. And if anybody would like to go on something more in detail I'm also available also. That's all I have.

Michealene Day:

Thank you, John.

6. NEW BUSINESS:

- a) **Receive and Review Staff Memo Regarding Community Garden Location, Rules and Maintenance Schedule.**

John Steinbrink, Jr.:

Madam Chair and members of the Committee, back in 2011 we had started the process to establish the Pleasant Prairie Community Gardens. There's really a couple steps that have to happen with this. We need to identify a location, identify rules and maintenance schedules. So we went down and we pulled all the information that we had from past meetings all the way back from 2011. Jean Werbie-Harris really did a lot of work along with other staff members on some different rules, some different talking points, things to consider. We're just going through the slides that we have.

We do have a small community garden, a couple of beds, some smaller beds, some larger raised beds in Prairie Springs Park off of 93rd Place. Here's some pictures of that actually being done at its early stage before we had the fencing up. Another area that we looked at potentially having something would be at Ingram Park. Here's something we had drawn up back in 2011 also where some plots would be. And then we also attached the Map 4 of our Park and Open Space Plan that just shows the general location of where all of our parks are.

I guess as far as action items we're really not looking to resolve or to finish everything this evening, just kind of presenting the information to the Commission. And staff understands it's probably a long process to identify locations where the Commission will be identifying to have some community gardens, and then establishing rules and identifying. So really just what you have in your packet just to start a conversation for future meetings. And it's understood that it probably will take some time before we come to some sort of a resolution.

Michealene Day:

While we were on our tour there was some conversation in the van that it seemed that the people who enjoyed this community garden were the more senior citizens and young people. So it would be kind of a nice idea if there was locations where around maybe daycare centers where they could take the kids and help garden. Maybe they would have a program to help young kids or young children garden, or around senior citizen homes or by apartment buildings or condos where people don't have the property or the area to work in. I think that's why we had thought maybe at the RecPlex that the interest has kind of died down.

Cindy Schwab:

Yes, I would agree. I think if they were probably a little bit closer to the building.

Brock Williamson:

To the regular parking where a lot of people are doing activities they might stay around more. And probably a lot of people don't even know they're back there because they're

off on the back side as opposed to around the community center where they get more activity.

Michealene Day:

And having the mobility issues with some either very young people or older people sometimes where it's located right now is not as easy to get to. And we suggested possibly raising some of the beds so there's not as much bending, so to cater more to the people who would be interested in the community gardens. But it worked really well. I think when we had it I thought it educated a lot of people on the correct way to garden and organic gardening. And I think that it's too bad that it kind of died down in its passion. But like you said it doesn't have to be decided on tonight and give it some thought.

Mike Pollocoff:

If you think back it wasn't a problem but the citizen that was organizing it one of the things to get in and participate in is that you had to donate the food that came out of the garden. And some people I know that when RecPlex was working on their walk and grow --

John Steinbrink, Jr.:

Walk, Grow and Sow.

Mike Pollocoff:

Yeah, I mean some people looked at it as a fitness program, walk over there, learn how to grow whatever, and then they had a festival at the end where they ate the food that they didn't give away. But that was one of the driving things was you couldn't really keep it for yourself. Whatever they were going to keep was just like for a party at the end. I know I got a lot of feedback. It's like, well, if I'm going to do this I want to be able to at least have something and reap the benefits of it rather than give it. There's no question there's all sorts of places that need the food, but I think some people were looking at if for a garden because they don't have a space for a garden or they don't want to use their yard up for a garden. But I think comments about locating a garden area where you have the facilities to make the garden successful but people have easy access to it is a key thing.

Jim Bandura:

Wouldn't a little bit of marketing help that issue?

Mike Pollocoff:

Sure. For some communities like in Madison people are on waiting lists to get in the gardens. There are established rules where they have to participate like twice a season in

cleanup or do things to get it ready. So I think once it gets going -- we can market the beginning of it, but once it starts it kind of takes on a life of its own.

Cindy Schwab:

And I think that was the other problem is that that garden is set up is that everybody can use every garden. And a lot of community gardens are like this is mine, this raised bed is mine. I'm going to care for it, I'm going to maintain it. If it's successful it's mine to eat. If it fails it's mine. So there's a little ownership where those aren't set up like that. So there was a watering schedule put in place, and that becomes hard for people. And then obviously not being able to take your own food. So I think that maybe going to a little bit different program where this family rents out this space might be a little bit more successful because of that taking ownership.

Although then there are the enforcement of weeding and things like that because someone can take a garden space and then allow noxious weeds to come in. so there's a little bit more oversight in making sure people are following the rules where these ones where they're done as a group everyone is kind of pitching in and maintaining them all. So there's a little bit of a balance of doing it both ways. So I think maybe it probably needs to be rethought through like kind of what you were saying. That we need to come up with a way that makes everybody happy and people are willing to take ownership and do them.

Because as a group now how it's being done there almost needs to be a leader, and nobody on the paid staff is really going to do that. They don't have the time. And maybe they don't even have the knowledge and feel comfortable. So we might be better off just changing the way -- putting in a new one some other place, let the master gardeners kind of maintain those and put new ones in like you're proposing some other place with a totally different set of rules.

Jim Bandura:

Wouldn't you want the rules to apply universally to all of them?

Cindy Schwab:

But that's what I mean. Those are being used as teaching gardens. So there's really a different thought process between teaching gardens and individual community gardens. Teaching gardens are usually someone explaining to you how you garden. So I think the theory probably originally was thought of as those would be the teaching gardens. You can come there, you can learn. And then eventually we would put these other gardens in that individuals then could be knowledgeable and maintain themselves. So then we brought the master gardeners in because it was becoming a lot for Kate Field who was doing it. It became a lot. So then the master gardeners took over some gardens, and they do teaching there. And their goal is then to eventually get people to get out and garden on

their own. But then the program probably could be fizzling out because these people don't have the gardens, another location that we could kind of shift them to.

Jim Bandura:

Maybe even closer to their house.

Cindy Schwab:

Yeah, or just some other place. Like, okay, now you've learned how to garden, so do I want to keep doing this where I'm sharing my food, or do I want to finally take ownership and try it on my own? Or having different gardens that individuals run might be the next step. It might actually help those gardens there because it will get people interested in the learning aspect of gardening. But then it will give them the next step of being able to run their own garden, community garden at their little four by eight or whatever.'

Jim Bandura:

Good point.

Cindy Schwab:

So that's just my experience with being involved in that community garden and being involved in gardening and that kind of community gardening for a while. That's my thought on it. I don't know if anybody feels differently about it.

Michealene Day:

Any other comments or ideas about the community garden at all? You were I think very instrumental in this first one and getting it going and helping out a lot. Would either one of these parks do you think fit the criteria of what we were discussing? Or in this Map Number 4 there are other community parks that we have or open space. Because if we're looking at the same issues about location and accessibility, you're really again fighting a losing battle. So is this a good location, or are you thinking that perhaps one of these other parks that we visited or some of the other parks we have here would be something?

Cindy Schwab:

Personally I feel like it would be more successful in a neighborhood park where people can actually walk to it. I don't think Ingram. It's the same thing when you put a garden in your backyard. The closer that garden is to your back door or to your front door the more likely you are to maintain it. The further you put it away, statistically it's proven you have to walk to it the less likely you're going to maintain it. And that's in your own backyard. So it's the same thing with community gardens.

Typically most of the time when they're put in a neighborhood and families can walk to the garden, and then there's playground equipment that their kids can kind of pop in and help garden but then go play on the playground equipment they're typically more successful. So I don't necessarily know if Ingram Park in that location in my personal opinion would be the most successful place. I think it's too far for people to drive. And it's out of sight out of mind. So I think you'd be better off with some of the more neighborhood parks and designating a smaller area.

Jim Bandura:

So kind of like distribute any plots throughout the Village to different --

Cindy Schwab:

I would think yes. I mean the problem is -- I know that Madison is a totally different culture than here so it's a hard -- we can't base it on what people in Madison are doing because they're really in a sense different than our community. Most of our community leaves and doesn't work right here in Pleasant Prairie. So I think that you would potentially be better off with smaller plots. Fewer families have to make that commitment. People see it and then maybe the program will grow. And then we could do a plot, a large plot like up in Racine where there's a big plot and everybody kind of goes and helps. But I think if you want to get it off the ground you'd be better off to do -- get some commitment in people in neighborhoods, find out and kind of have it grow organically in the sense of like a couple of families take it on and take it from there.

Michealene Day:

You would think the beds would be maintained better. Oh, shoot, I've got to go drive someplace and pull weeds. I think I won't go tonight. Where if you can just walk over there or you take the dog for a walk or the kids can play on the swings.

Jim Bandura:

That's not a bad idea is to look at maybe just one, two, three, four plots in a neighborhood park that has in the housing there are smaller lots so they would just come to that park and do their thing. And I think that would be one way of considering it. Like you say you go to Ingram Park and you're going to have to drive to it essentially. So do people really want to do it? Not sure.

Cindy Schwab:

I think that, too, focusing on lot size isn't necessarily -- sometimes your lot size isn't a limiting factor in a sense. Sometimes people have big parcels, like a big lot, they live in a nice neighborhood, and they look at a garden as an eyesore. So they don't want to put that.

I don't think you want to necessarily just limit it by a garden that has small lots. Sometimes the expectation in those bigger lots, bigger homes is that it's messy. And even though I want a garden I don't want to --

Michealene Day:

You want a designer yard.

Cindy Schwab:

Yeah, because gardens aren't pretty a lot of times. It takes a lot of work to make them pretty. So I don't think that necessarily we should like limit our thought process to just small lots. I think that a lot of times typically if you can get, like I said, usually it's a couple families, somebody that spearheads it, and it creates a sense of community where they kind of garden together. It gets people outside. So it doesn't necessarily have to be small lots like you were saying. I think we could have success -- I think the biggest thing is finding at least one or two families in our area that are willing to commit to a garden for one year and kind of get it off the ground. Although that's hard to do I'm sure to find out how we're going to find those people.

Michealene Day:

Could we put something in the newsletter and ask if any of our residents would like to see a small garden in one of their neighborhood parks? Just a quick survey. And if you get a half a dozen in one area then that would be spectacular, then you wouldn't have to do a search to see which neighborhood park would get it.

Cindy Schwab:

And my suggestion would be then also is like trying to incorporate those people into the planning to make them really feel like they have ownership over it. Because I think that's really important when you're doing these community gardens because you really want a long-term commitment. Otherwise they're just going to lay there and be vacant and be weedy.

Mike Pollocoff:

Then they wait for us to do something.

Cindy Schwab:

Exactly. And I think that's kind of what happened to those gardens there. We don't really want to replicate that.

Michealene Day:

And then if it starts to get successful taking pictures and putting it on the website or putting in the newsletter and say look what these neighborhood people are doing in their parks. Then they actually do feel some ownership to it and pride in what they're doing.

John Steinbrink, Jr.:

As a takeaway I can work with our communications director to do first a press release and follow it up with an article in the newsletter just inviting them to our December meeting. And we'll see who shows up, and we can take it from there.

Michealene Day:

Great, thank you. Anybody else have any comments on it? Alright. Is that pretty much, John, what you were looking for, some kind of direction from us?

John Steinbrink, Jr.:

Yes, it is. I mean just some general direction. There really is a lot. And I think the Commission really did a good job evaluating it. I think Cindy Schwab brought up a good point of let's see where the interest lies with your idea of putting it in the newsletter. And we'll see who comes out, who really wants to. It's really tough. We can say it should be in this neighborhood or that neighborhood, but really until the residents get some input it's hard to make that decision. So I think that's a great topic or a great idea that we can follow up with for December's meeting. It would be great to have a citizen for our citizens' comments one of these meetings.

7. PARK COMMISSION COMMENTS

Michealene Day:

I have one. I just wanted to thank John and Tom and Village staff. It was a very good idea and well presented. I mean it was only an hour long, but the tour of the parks I think gave the Commissioners an idea of where our parks are located. And as we talk about where we're going to be putting the funds that we have available it does give you -- while you can look at a map when you actually can sit down and visualize, oh, this is where the tennis courts are going to go. It's nice that you can actually see it and discuss it and look at it and then come back and actually have an intelligent conversation about it. So I do appreciate it. Everybody has a busy schedule, and I do appreciate those who came early to be able to make the tour because that's hard to do, too, because people work a lot of hours. That is my only comment is to thank everybody for that. Does anyone have any other comments?

8. ADJOURNMENT

Troy Holm moved to adjourn the meeting: Seconded by Kris Keckler. Motion carried 7-0.