

**St. Albans City Parks Commission
Minutes of Meeting
Monday, February 9, 2015
Barlow Street Community Center**

A meeting of the St. Albans City Parks Commission was held on Monday, February 9, 2015, in the Barlow Community Center at 6:00 pm.

Commission Members Present: Peter Chevalier, Chair; Brianna Haenke, Wendy Stous, Angie Sturm & Joan McGinn.

Commission Members Absent: Jeff Young & Barbara Weinstein.

Visitors Present: See attendance sheet.

Staff Present: Kelly Viens, Director of Recreation.

1. Call to Order, Peter Chevalier, Chair.

Peter Chevalier called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

2. Review of Houghton Street Playground Application.

Ms. Viens explained that an engineer had to be hired which was an unforeseen expense. Staff assumed there would be a map of Houghton Park to work from but there unfortunately wasn't an up to date map. The area that is being reserved for the Federal grant must be reserved for recreational perpetuity. Ms. Viens noted that she had discussions with the engineer regarding the shade trees and the placement of a fence. Mr. Chevalier commented that he thought originally the fence was going to be removed and replaced with a sitting area and asked when the fence conversation came in to play. Ms. Viens responded that the old fence was always going to be removed and would possibly be replaced with a fence to prohibit children from running into the street. Mr. Chevalier agreed with that concept as long as the new fence can uphold the plows pushing snow in the winter. Ms. Viens explained that the old fence that encompasses the current playground will be completely removed since the location of the new playground will be different from the current location and the fence in front of the parking area can be evaluated in the spring to determine whether it should be kept or replaced. Ms. Haenke asked Ms. Viens to speak on the condition of the shade trees at the park. Ms. Viens responded that there doesn't appear to be any immediate concern over the trees. Mr. Chevalier stated that he believes one of the trees is a Maple and the trees that are bad are owned by an adjacent property owner.

Ms. Viens noted that when looking at the area of the park on Google maps, she noticed that there is an opening near Hunt Street that connects to the park that vehicles park on. Mr. Chevalier stated that the area is used for overflow parking during the Steeler football season. Ms. Viens commented that it may be a safety issue and wanted the group to be aware. Mr. Chevalier explained that during football games, vehicles park where the building starts from the north all the way down to the south end and in the street because there is just no other place available. Ms. Haenke wondered if the Steeler football program which is very organized could use cones and tape to make a designated parking area. Ms. Haenke added that the compaction from vehicles parking on the grass could also be detrimental to the growth of the grass and any other landscaping that might take place. Mr. Chevalier asked when the grant application is due. Ms. Viens responded that it is due next Monday. He asked if she had a timeline as to when a decision would be made. Ms. Viens responded that she believes a decision would be made sometime in April and the money would not be released until July. She commented that she doesn't believe any work can begin until July but the playground can be installed in two days with the help of

Pettinelli, volunteers and Public Works. Ms. Viens noted that the group can then decide where they would like to place the extra salvageable features of the current playground after the new playground is installed. Discussion ensued about the use of the older features and the consensus was to keep the older features in the park. Ms. Stous asked Ms. Viens what features she thought would be salvageable. Ms. Viens responded that the slide jungle gym section is in good condition. Ms. Stous commented that it is more a question of what is not usable because it seems that so much of it is. Ms. Stous asked if the softball field being so close to the location for the new playground was discussed. Ms. Viens responded affirmatively and acknowledged that it's possible for a foul ball to reach the playground area but in general, the kids that play on the field closest to the playground mostly play t-ball and are much younger.

Discussion ensued about the fast pace that the playgrounds can be installed. Ms. Viens added that the new playground has a lifetime guarantee. As far as maintenance goes, wood chips will need to be added in 5 years which is a cost of \$3,000 but replacement costs for any broken parts of the playground equipment will be free of charge. Ms. Stous asked if vandalism would be covered under the lifetime guarantee. Ms. Viens responded negatively and if necessary, insurance would come in to play. She stated that most of the vandalism that occurs is due to people writing on the equipment and explained that the playgrounds come with a vandalism kit to cover up and/or clean the writing. Ms. McGinn asked if cameras would be installed to deter vandalism. Ms. Viens responded that there are cameras at the Houghton Park currently and are monitored by the City Police. Mr. Chevalier stated that he would double check to make sure the cameras are working and able to monitor the playground. In terms of safety, Mr. Chevalier also noted the effectiveness of rumble strips on Houghton Street.

Ms. Viens noted that Ms. Weinstein who was not present was very concerned with the height of the equipment, preferring it to be as tall as possible. Ms. Viens explained that the floor in the equipment will be jacked up from 4' to 6'. She added that Chip Sawyer will be going before council tonight for their approval of the matching grant. She stated that there is \$20,000 in the bank and a \$1,000 donation and getting a lot of in kind work from Public Works. All in all, she believes this will be around a \$50,000 project. Ms. Viens thanked Ms. Haenke and Mr. Spooner for writing a letter of support. It was also noted that the North side of bathroom needs new siding, there are no paper towel dispensers in the bathroom and the courts are in need of repair at Houghton Park. Ms. Viens noted the misuse in the bathroom which is unfortunate. Mr. Chevalier proposed putting a sign up that indicates the bathroom is monitored. Ms. Haenke asked Ms. Viens to elaborate on the misuse. Ms. Viens responded that they'll find entire rolls of toilet paper in the toilet. Ms. Haenke shared that the Center for Disease Control made a kit for improving health through parks. Ms. Viens stated that as far as the courts go, a repair was made 4 years ago. She said as long as bicycles are riding on the courts, there will always be issues. Ms. McGinn asked if the Parks Patrol could be present in Houghton Park. Ms. Viens responded that they typically spend their time patrolling Taylor Park and are part of the Police Department. Ms. McGinn asked if it would be possible to ask Chief Taylor to bring them to Houghton Park. Ms. Viens responded that they are funded through a grant. Discussion ensued about increasing surveillance in some form, whether it is an adult presence or increased cameras. Ms. Haenke mentioned the idea of renting out recreational equipment at Houghton Park with staff on hand and thought they could also serve as a presence to enforce the park rules. Ms. Viens agreed that that was a good idea but added that she puts that item in her Recreation budget every year and it usually gets removed. Ms. Viens reiterated that it is the commission's charge to decide what they want to see in the City's parks and to make recommendations. Ms. Haenke agreed and stated that safety, protecting the equipment and addressing the concerns of the residents seem to be of the utmost importance.

3. Concerns of Traffic at Houghton Park due to Houghton Street Closure.

Ms. Viens stated that the group can bring their concern about increased traffic and higher speed on North Elm Street due to the closure of Houghton Street to the Public Safety and Quality of Life Commission. She added that they can recommend the use of rumble strips. Mr. Chevalier commented that the rumble strips that were used in the past fell apart. He noted that the permanent ones used in parts of Burlington are long and gradual and the plows can easily plow over them. Ms. Haenke noted a petition to get speed bumps on Upper Welden Street and believes getting a good design that is consistent throughout the City would be best.

Ms. Viens noted that there has been some discussion about including a crosswalk on the center and end of Houghton Street. Mr. Chevalier added that the children don't even use the sidewalk on Houghton Street.

4. Tree & Shrub Issues in Parks to Address in the Spring.

Mr. Chevalier noted that he would like the commission to start thinking about the condition of the trees, especially the cottonwood variety, and shrubs in the City's parks as we spring approaches. Ms. Stous asked Mr. Chevalier to remind her of the issues are with the cottonwoods. Mr. Chevalier responded that they are very tall and brittle and not the best species of tree to be in a park. Mr. Chevalier explained that he believes the City put aside \$17,000 for tree removal. Ms. Stous noted that the cost to remove one tree is roughly \$2,500. Ms. Viens stated that she believes the commission would need to seek professional opinion on the subject of tree removal. Ms. Haenke asked how many trees would need to be removed. Ms. Viens responded that according to the drawing, there are more than a dozen. Ms. McGinn noted that in the email from Jeff Young, 20 new trees were planted in Houghton Park and asked where those trees were located. Ms. Stous thought they were near the water line. Ms. Haenke noted that there is one red maple along the stream. Mr. Chevalier stated that some of the new trees were planted around the tennis courts but some had to be removed adjacent to Welden Street for the new sidewalk to be installed. Ms. McGinn asked where Jeff Young got the funding to plant the 20 trees. Ms. Viens responded that funding came from a grant. Ms. McGinn noted that at the cost of \$2,500 to remove one tree, \$17,000 is not going to go far and might be a good idea to go to council to find out what options the commission has and what is realistic. Ms. Haenke added that it might be helpful to create a list categorizing the trees by condition. Mr. Chevalier commented that he thinks Mr. Young has a handle on that. Ms. Stous wondered if a tree being a real endangerment to the public would sway the amount council was willing to set aside for tree removal. Ms. Haenke recalled that Mr. Young had an idea for the funding of tree removal from watershed money.

Ms. Viens recapped and said she will reach out to the Public Safety and Quality of Life Committee and let them know the Parks Commission has a concern over speed, safety and general awareness of Houghton Park. She will check with Chief Taylor to see if there is a Parks Patrol staff member available this summer and if there is, will discuss creating a priority and enforcement of rules for Houghton Park. If there is not a Parks Patrol staff member available she will address staffing needs for Houghton Park and determine what is realistic in terms of money. Ms. Viens stated that the purpose of the Parks Commission was for ideas to be submitted to council and allow council to respond.

5. Other Business.

Ms. McGinn asked Ms. Viens for the status on a heavy, canvas flag for the park. Ms. Viens responded that she will look into it. Ms. McGinn wondered if the St. Albans Rotary was pursuing marble blocks for donors and said she was told by a Rotarian that they weren't going that route. Ms. Viens stated that she thought there were two options being discussed; one being a brick or marble block and the other option would include sandblasting into the ring around the fountain. Ms. Stous commented that she was under the impression it was all part of the same concept.

6. Adjourn.

A motion was made by Peter Chevalier, seconded by Brianna Haenke to adjourn. Vote was unanimous, 5-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristen Smith
Administrative Coordinator

Approved