

**St. Albans City Parks Commission
Minutes of Meeting
Monday, April 6, 2015
Barlow Street Community Center**

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

Commission Members Present: Jeff Young, Barbara Weinstein, Angie Sturm & Joan McGinn.

Commission Members Absent: Peter Chevalier, Chair, Wendy Stous, Brianna Haenke.

Visitors Present: See attendance sheet.

Staff Present: Kelly Viens, Director of Recreation.

1. Call to Order.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm.

2. Presentation of Proposed Change in Fountain Renovation Project; Chip Sawyer, Planning & Development.

Mr. Sawyer explained that the discussion will focus on the issue of adding a structure related to the filters for the fountain, at-grade. Mr. Sawyer presented the group with two site plans for the fountain; one option includes a below ground mound option and the second option includes an above-grade filter option. Ms. Weinstein asked if the mound could be used as informal seating. Mr. Sawyer responded that it is possible. Mr. Sawyer continued to present and discuss the technical aspects of the above-grade filter option including a schematic diagram. He stated that the City, Rotary Club and Design Team met to discuss these options and concluded for recommendation that the mound defeats the purpose of the promise of a below-grade vault. Aboveground filters would allow the entire contraption to be moved farther north in the park which is a less used area of the park. He also explained that an above ground structure would allow for easier access to change the filters and to drain the fountain annually. Ms. Weinstein asked if the structure would be easily camouflaged with bushes. Mr. Sawyer responded that the Rotary's scope of the project includes a utilitarian structure but believes Rotary is willing to accept the option to make the structure prettier as a bid alternate. He further added that the City would be inheriting the opportunity to beautify that structure by either painting it or landscaping around it. Ms. McGinn asked Mr. Sawyer to clarify the exact location of this structure. Mr. Young asked if the proposal for the above ground filter structure is recommended due to cost savings. Mr. Sawyer responded that the recommendation is based more on what is possible in terms of topography. Mr. Young asked if the base pump would be submersible. Mr. Sawyer responded affirmatively. Ms. McGinn asked where the structure would be located in proximity to the other structure they spoke with Denise Smith about. Mr. Sawyer showed the commission the location of the interpretive sign on the map.

A motion was made by Jeff Young; seconded by Barbara Weinstein to support proposed change in fountain renovation project as presented by Mr. Sawyer and to have proposal presented before City Council. Vote was unanimous, 4-0. Angie Sturm left the meeting preceding the vote.

Mr. Young asked if a box would be required to house the electricity for the fountain. Mr. Sawyer responded that the electrical controls will either be located in the above-grade structure or on a pole located on Church Street behind the gazebo. The electrical panel would control the timing for the fountain water and color of the lights. Mr. Young asked if there has been any further discussion about the use of paper filters. Mr. Sawyer responded that Mr. Robtoy prefers a paper filter option and if it

does not work, a sand filter can be used instead. Mr. Doyle noted the potential electrical control on Church Street and asked if the panel on Bank Street that was recently installed would be considered. Mr. Sawyer responded that those controls were for the new streetscape lights on Main Street. Mr. Doyle asked if there would be any possibility to use an alternate meter location to avoid the use of a structure. Mr. Sawyer responded that there would not be an electrical structure required if it were decided to use the existing meter on Church Street. Mr. Young noted that there is already an existing meter located behind the gazebo. Mr. Young added that Mr. Robtoy has spent a considerable sum of money redoing the power in Taylor Park and has added four new ground boxes in the green, replaced all of the pedestals and rewired everything. Ms. McGinn asked if all of the expenses related to the fountain were being incurred by the Rotary Club. Mr. Sawyer responded that the City is paying for the design efforts which total \$38,000. Mr. Young asked if any decisions have been made in terms of digging a new pool or refinishing the existing pool. Mr. Sawyer responded that it will be a field decision with a bid unit price for demo and reconstruction. Mr. Young noted the base of the fountain which includes rusted out steel plates and asked if anyone had evaluated them. Mr. Sawyer responded that the base is sound but would need to check with the engineers on the plates. He added that new bolts would need to be installed when the fountain is put back in place. Mr. Sawyer and Mr. Young further discussed the process of bolting the fountain to the base. Mr. Young asked if the granite would be re-grouted. Mr. Sawyer responded affirmatively and explained that the plan is to closely monitor the granite ring. Mr. Young asked when this would be presented to council. Mr. Sawyer responded that it would be presented on Monday, a week from today. Mr. Young thanked Mr. Sawyer for his presentation and update. Mr. Young noted that there will be a televised segment on Channel 15 in regards to the fountain progress and would like to do a follow up segment with rotary in the future to make the public aware of the fundraising efforts. He added that Rotary received a \$20,000 preservation grant for the fountain.

3. Input on Projects & Maintenance at Houghton Park; Brian Burns, Public Works.

Ms. Viens explained that Brian Burns would not be in attendance.

4. Update on Playground Grant Presentation.

Mr. Young asked Ms. Viens if she had an update on the Houghton Park grant. Ms. Viens responded that she should hear something within two weeks.

5. Review of Previous Discussions – Next Action to be Taken.

Mr. Young noted a 5 year plan for Taylor Park and explained that the last time it was done was in 2011. He distributed the areas needing attention to the group. Ms. Viens asked if these priorities were the list that the commission already brainstormed. Mr. Young responded negatively and stated that they were a list of his own issues and are as follows:

- Round garden.
- Wild garden (longer garden) needs a few more perennials.

Mr. Young noted that Gardening Night Out is May 19th.

- Day Lily garden (located in southeast corner facing Armory) is getting tired and needs reinvigoration.
- Removal of lilac bush to be replaced with low-growing perennial.
- Children's garden; would like to start planning in the Fall.
- Monuments
- Lighting
- The green
- Garbage
- Walkways

- Security
- Volunteers
- Water & power

Ms. Weinstein commented that she heard from volunteer gardeners last year that they were feeling overwhelmed by all of the work and weeding that needed to be done. Mr. Young agreed there is a lot on their plate and noted the Church Street garden was very timely. He is hoping the weeding this year will be significantly less. Ms. McGinn voiced her concern as well for the amount of work that the gardens in the park need and personally felt that continually adding garden features would increase the workload and worried that if Mr. Young stopped caring for the garden, there may not be someone who could pick up where he left off and handle that level of workload. She noted that there are other areas of focus that she believes are important for the park such as pruning. Ms. Weinstein added that Mr. Chevalier had voiced the same concern about the volunteer workload in Taylor Park.

Mr. Young stated that there were more volunteers last year and the gardens are quieting down. Mr. Young explained that the first year, 1100 hours were put into the gardens compared to 700 last year. Ideally, he would like to see that number become a more manageable 300 – 400 hours. Ms. Viens reiterated that the commission spent time prioritizing what the group's concerns in the parks were and noted that Mr. Young has some great suggestions. She stated that the commission should discuss how these suggestions fit in with the priorities previously outlined. Mr. Young stated that if he was to do the 5-year plan again, he would have included these items.

Ms. Weinstein noted the sugar maple tree with the cable that had a crack in it and asked if the tree needed to be replaced or the cable. Mr. Young responded that the cable needed to be replaced. Ms. Weinstein also noted the tree in front of TD Bank with issues. Mr. Young explained that that particular tree could be saved if it was cabled. Ms. Weinstein asked how many additional years the tree would have if cabled. Mr. Young explained that it could prolong the life of the tree for 20+ years. Mr. Doyle asked if there was any way to sterilize the Norway Maples around the gazebo in Taylor Park so they do not reproduce. Mr. Young responded negatively. Mr. Doyle asked if there was a plan for phasing out the Norway Maples. Mr. Young stated that the options have not been discussed in depth. Ms. Viens stated that it is her understanding that the City would be contracting with an independent tree professional. She encouraged the Parks Commission to forward their suggestions for the expert to consider. Mr. Doyle commented that he would like to see a discussion take place so that when a Norway Maple is taken down, there is a plan in place for what it will be replaced with. Ms. Weinstein noted that the tree section of the City Ordinances specify certain species of trees that are not to be planted. She suggested including other evasive species such as the Norway Maple to that list. Mr. Young stated that they are already banned under State law and cannot be sold. Mr. Young stated that in his opinion, the trees have been neglected and would like to see a line item included in the budget for trees. Mr. Young noted the tree by the flagpole in the park which has been a controversial topic. Some people want to see the tree cut down because the flag gets tangled in it. Ms. Viens stated that commission discussed the issue with that tree and the flag and the recommendation was to purchase a canvas flag although Kristen Smith was told by several flag companies that no such flag exists. Ms. Viens welcomed any other solutions. Mr. Young recommended putting a clip on the end. Ms. McGinn noted that the problem only occurred when the flag was at half mast.

Mr. Young noted the charge of the Master Gardener's Club which is to maintain the three gardens in Taylor Park. He stated that what they would like to accomplish this year is pruning out the crab apples. Mr. Young noted that the City completes the task of power washing the monuments in the park. He has been working with Allen Robtoy for a couple of years attempting to repair the floor of the Civil War monument. He added that lights on the flags behind the memorial also need to be installed. Mr. Young

stated that he would also like to see the trash receptacles replaced. Mr. Young commented that another issue is getting water to the end of the park when there is a drought. In summary, Mr. Young stated that he would like to see the following items move forward; extending the water source, trash receptacles, the floor in the Civil War Memorial and approval to allow the Master Gardener's and Garden Club continue their work in the gardens. Ms. Weinstein asked if the Parks Commission needed to give a formal approval to allow the Garden Club to continue their work. Mr. Young responded that in the past, the City Council had. Mr. Doyle asked Mr. Young if he is looking to the Parks Commission to discuss a prioritization. Ms. Viens responded that the Parks Commission is new this year but already had a discussion and set priorities for all three parks in the City. Ms. McGinn commented that rather than expand anything, she would like to see the Parks Commission work with what it already has and perfect it. Long-term, she commented that she would rather see the asphalt removed from the park, replaced with a different type of walkway. She would like to start making recommendations to council so they can be considered for the next budget process. Ms. McGinn stated that enhancing the overall appearance of the park by looking at the color scheme would be one way to work with what they already have. She added that looking into different bushes or shrubs would be another way to enhance the gardens without the need for continual maintenance.

Mr. Young stated that in terms of lighting, it might be a good idea to ask the City Council if they could replace the lighting in the park to match the downtown lighting whether it is a short-term or long-term plan. Ms. McGinn agreed. Ms. Weinstein also agreed and added that new, uniform trash receptacles should also be a priority. Mr. Doyle asked if the commission has discussed plans for this year and whether they have a two-year or five-year plan, for example. Ms. McGinn responded that the Parks Commission is just an advisory group and still sorting through that. Ms. Viens stated that the charge of the committee is to assess the parks, prioritize what is important and make recommendations to council to be considered during the budget process. Mr. Weinstein asked the group if they had any issues with recommending the gardening plan to the existing gardens in addition to lighting and trash receptacles.

Mr. Young stated that if the City is going to hire a consultant, they can deal with the issue of evasive trees and how to handle them. Ms. Viens reiterated that it is her understanding that the City would hire an unbiased professional to consult with because people do become emotionally attached to the trees in the City. Mr. Young stated that whenever there has been a plan to add trees in any number or to take trees down, the State forester always came from Burlington to provide consultation. Mr. Young explained that people have such an attachment that they have been upset by trees removed in the City regardless of the independent professional assessment provided. Ms. McGinn agreed with the point that Mr. Doyle brought up and asked if it would make sense to incorporate a plan for the planting of new trees prior to the demise of an old one when any entity goes through the park to evaluate the trees. She wondered if that would make the most sense versus removing a tree and then deciding on the process to replant. Mr. Young responded that in some instances it wouldn't make sense to replant until all of the evasive or dying trees are removed due to lack of light but should be treated on a case by case scenario. Ms. Weinstein asked if it would be feasible to make a tree plan and have the State forester help develop it so when a tree needs to come down and people's emotions get involved, the commission can say that the decision was blessed by the State Forester. Mr. Young stated that that has been done every time a tree came down and regardless of the expert, outside opinion, people got upset. Mr. Young stated that there were even articles in the newspaper with photos of the State Forester standing next to the condemned trees prior to the trees being taken down. Mr. Young asked if the commission should say they endorse the idea of hiring an outside arborist consultant with planning. Ms. Weinstein stated that before the commission endorses the idea, it should find out how much a consultant's services would cost. Mr. Young asked who the commission is supposed to seek an expert opinion from if there is a tree decision that needs to be made in the parks. Ms. Viens responded that she

doesn't believe it is the Parks Commission's charge to obtain an expert and make an evaluation but rather is the commission's charge to make a recommendation to the council that an expert opinion is needed. Ms. Weinstein recommended putting this item on the next meeting agenda for a vote. Mr. Young stated that he can send some language to the missing members and asked if the commission can vote over the phone or via e-mail if need be. Ms. Viens responded that she will check the Open Meeting Law and let him know.

Mr. Young asked if any changes were made to the City website to include the Recreation and Parks Commission. Ms. Viens responded that Recreation has their own website and is linked to the City site and there have been some recent updates to the City website with regards to the Parks Commission at Mr. Young's request. Mr. Young added that he would like to propose asking council to consider planning for the floor of the repair of the Civil War memorial. Ms. Weinstein asked what the three or four most important items that needs to be recommended to the City Council and asked if they are the same or whether there is overlap between the three or four small, cost effective items that were developed on the priority list at a prior meeting. Ms. Weinstein explained that she would like to create a concrete list of items to recommend to City Council, some of which are short-term and some of which are long range.

6. Consider Approval of 2/19/15 Meeting Minutes (D&V).
Item was tabled for a future meeting due to lack of a quorum.
7. Other Business.
No other business was discussed.
8. Adjourn.
The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristen Smith
Administrative Coordinator