

**St. Albans City Parks Commission
Minutes of Meeting
Wednesday, August 10, 2016
Barlow Street Community Center
39 Barlow Street**

A meeting of the St. Albans City Parks Commission was held on Wednesday, August 10, 2016, in the Barlow Community Center at 8:00 am.

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

Commission Members Absent: Peter Chevalier & Stina Booth.

Staff Present: Kelly Viens, Director of Recreation & Chip Sawyer, Director of Planning & Development.

1. Call to Order, Peter Chevalier, Chair.

Tom Koldys called the meeting to order at 8:00 am.

2. Review a request from Jes Stumpf of the St. Albans Arts Council to install a mural board in Taylor Park.

Ms. Viens stated that a copy of the written request and a few examples of mural boards in Swanton are provided in the packet. Ms. Stumpf explained that the art walls are continually changing art work that community members and/or artists can paint on until the next person comes along and paints over it. She stated that this is something that is happening in many Cities and the Swanton Arts Council installed their walls last October. Swanton now has 4 – 5 walls and have expanded the initial size of their walls. Ms. Stumpf suggested starting with just one art wall to see how the concept takes off. She noted that Swanton has not experienced any vandalism or inappropriate behavior with their walls.

Mr. Koldys asked if it's correct that there is no application or approval process and anyone can participate. Ms. Stumpf responded affirmatively and explained that the Arts Council will need to be responsible for monitoring the board for any inappropriate use. Ms. Stumpf stated that she proposes using a 4' x 8' horizontal wall to be placed in Taylor Park but is open to any location in the park. She added that the goal would be for the wall to be visible.

Ms. McGinn asked what will happen to the art wall in the winter. Ms. Stumpf responded that in Swanton, the art wall remained present in the winter but there wasn't a lot of activity. She stated that the St. Albans Arts Council can make sure that something pleasing is painted on the art wall so there is a nice scene present during the winter months. She added that another idea is to use the wall as a banner location for winter activities that are taking place in the City such as Festival of Trees.

Mr. Koldys asked if the 4' x 8' wall could be vertical vs. horizontal. Ms. Stumpf responded affirmatively. Mr. Koldys stated that certain locations in Taylor Park might benefit from a vertical display. Ms. Weinstein noted that a vertical wall would be easier for people to paint on as well. Ms. Stumpf stated that Swanton recently had a sidewalk chalk day for kids and allowed children to paint on the art walls with chalk by painting the boards with sidewalk chalk paint. Mr. Koldys asked if the boards reach a point where there is too much paint on them. Ms. Stumpf responded that actually the more paint on them, the better because it makes for a smoother surface.

Ms. McGinn asked Ms. Stumpf what other locations she is interested in other than Taylor Park. Ms. Stumpf responded that the Arts Council has discussed placing an 8' x 8' board in Houghton Park allowing one side to be painted and the other side to serve as a screen for movies in the park. Ms. Weinstein stated that in talking about the concept with local people, she received a very positive response and in particular, at least

half a dozen unrelated children expressed having a wall along the fence in Houghton Park. Ms. McGinn stated that in contrast to the people she has spoken with, many are in support of the art wall but not in Taylor Park. Ms. Stumpf agreed that if something is put in Taylor Park, it needs to be aesthetically pleasing which is why she would suggest adjusting the standard form and placing the wall in a very specific location. She agreed that the wall should not be placed front and center and should be visible but discreet.

Ms. Sturm asked if the port-o-lets were going to be in Taylor Park for a while and thought it may be an opportunity to enclose them with these art boards. Mr. Koldys agreed that would be a good idea. Ms. Sturm stated that the molding could potentially be added to the art boards to match the existing Taylor Park sign in the park.

Ms. Weinstein commented that the northeast corner of Taylor Park seems somewhat underutilized and people don't sit there during concerts. Ms. Stumpf stated that that is the location she was visualizing for the art boards. Ms. Viens reminded the commission that the musical instruments are coming as well and thinking about placing them in the southeast section of the park. Discussion ensued about whether or not it would make sense to install and unveil the art board and musical instruments at the same time. Ms. McGinn reminded the commission that their charge is to make recommendations to council who would ultimately make a final decision. Ms. McGinn asked Ms. Stumpf how many members the Arts Council has. Ms. Stumpf responded that there are at least 20 members and the number is growing. Mr. Young noted that the Arts Council is an official extension of the Downtown Board. Mr. Young commented that he is in favor of trying the art wall out and seeing how it takes off. He noted a whole series of art walls designated by age groups in Montreal. He stated that the bases of the walls were set in buckets of cement and were not permanent. Discussion ensued about how to create a temporary base for the art walls to be supported. Mr. Koldys commented that he would be opposed to the art walls being in the north end of the park if they obstructed the views of the fountain as you drive down Bank Street. Ms. Stumpf stated that if the art board wasn't placed immediately in the corner but slightly down Church Street it would work. Mr. Young noted that the City wants to plant some shrubbery in that location to hide the balancing tank for the fountain which is still visible. Mr. Young also noted that the architects who were working on the park wanted to create what they called the "vistas" which the ability to see the fountain in all its glory while looking from Main Street. He stated that the placement of the art wall in that location may not conform to the vista idea for the fountain. Ms. Stumpf stated that she would be happy to take a walk around the park with the commission to get some ideas and see the different angles. Mr. Young suggested steering away from the Civil War Memorial.

Mr. Koldys asked Ms. Viens if she'd like the commission to weigh in on the idea of having the art wall in the park or to also have a specific location in mind in Taylor Park. Ms. Viens responded that she would like to know whether the commission is interested in the art wall being in Taylor Park and whether the commission has a suggested location. Ms. Sturm asked Ms. Stumpf if she would like installation to take place this year. Ms. Stumpf responded affirmatively. Ms. McGinn asked Ms. Stumpf who would be overseeing the choice of scene to be painted on the art wall during the winter months. Ms. Sturm noted the application process for art in the park and suggested that a semi-permanent scene follow that process and then the commission would make a recommendation to the City Council. Ms. McGinn asked if it's correct that the art would be subjective and at random but if a scene was to go up for the duration of the winter, then it would follow the process of applying for art in the park. Ms. Sturm responded that that is what she was envisioning.

3. Consider approval of request from Jes Stumpf of the St. Albans Arts Council (D&V).

A motion was made by Barbara Weinstein; seconded by Jeff Young to approve the concept of art in the park in Taylor Park in the form of an art wall and to discuss the location of the art wall at a later time.

Discussion ensued about time constraints and when the location for the art wall could be discussed further. Ms. Sturm commented that there needs to be significant further discussion before the recommendation is ready to be presented to the City Council. Mr. Young stated that having sat on the Council, this topic will

likely be discussed further and rehashed at the Council level unless there is a well thought out plan ready to be presented. **Motion carried, 3 – 2 with Tom Koldys and Joan McGinn opposed.**

The Commission charged Barbara Weinstein and Angie Sturm to meet with Jes Stumpf in Taylor Park tomorrow morning at 9:15 am to discuss a location for the art wall and the proposed size. The next Parks Commission meeting will also take place on Tuesday, September 6th in Taylor Park.

4. Review a request from Josh Lareau who is working on a project throughout the City about converting green belt space and other small plots into food. The goal is to create areas of food in close proximity to parks and schools.

Mr. Lareau introduced himself. He explained that he has been reading about other cities in the U.S. and other countries that have used the greenbelt space to grow food instead of grass. He met with Mr. Sawyer and some representatives of NMC to discuss the project and explained that NMC has agreed to split the project. He noted the green space at Houghton Park in front of the basketball hoops and explained that he met with Chad Spooner at Houghton Park to further discuss that location. Mr. Spooner didn't think it would be an ideal spot and thought it would be a more ideal location directly behind the park. He proposed creating a 50' x 30' plot using permaculture gardening concepts which would be a low disturbance of the soil. Mr. Lareau stated that the goal would be to allow young and underprivileged people the ability to pick high nutritious food at various locations in the City.

Mr. Lareau explained that there are 7 levels of permaculture which start from canvas-sized trees down to fruit trees and berry bushes and ground-level plants. He noted that the proposed plot location at Houghton Park would not interfere with football or baseball and is in a completely unused area of the park. Mr. Koldys asked if it's in the vicinity of the horseshoe pits. Mr. Lareau responded that it's before that area where the mulch ends at the new playground. Mr. Koldys stated that that area is for a proposed playground expansion. Mr. Lareau stated that he is open to any location in the park and could move closer to the horseshoe pits that are underused.

Ms. McGinn asked Mr. Lareau who would be responsible for planting and maintaining the garden. Mr. Lareau responded that a lot of the weeding would get taken care of by the plant themselves. He stated that he and other volunteers would be charged with planting and is hoping that the majority of the harvesting will come from people spending time in the park. Anything that is not harvested would be donated to local daycare's and/or food shelves. Mr. Koldys asked if any permanent signage would be installed to explain what is planted and when it will be ready for harvesting and to educate residents on permaculture. Mr. Lareau responded affirmatively and explained that he spoke with local artist, Jon Young to create pictures of what is planted in the garden and will explain the do's and don'ts of harvesting. Mr. Young asked Mr. Lareau if he would be in essence, the project manager and point person on the project. Mr. Lareau responded affirmatively. Mr. Lareau added that he is hoping to install rain barrels to use for irrigation.

5. Consider approval of request from Josh Lareau (D&V).

A motion was made by Jeff Young; seconded by Barbara Weinstein to approve the concept Josh Lareau's project. Ms. McGinn asked if in making a motion, the Commission would also be supporting the location. Mr. Young stated that he believes there is plenty of room at Houghton Park and would ask that Mr. Lareau stay in contact with the Commission about future plans for the park. Ms. McGinn asked Mr. Lareau what his timeline is. Mr. Lareau responded that he would prep the area in the fall for spring planting. Ms. McGinn asked Mr. Lareau if he would be able to create a diagram of the 7 levels of permaculture so it would be more visual for the Commission. Ms. Sturm added that there are going to be tree plantings that will have an effect on the garden. Mr. Koldys stated that it will be important to look back as a Commission and revisit the proposed plan for the park. He stated that they've discussed adding educational and informative features that would bring the community to the park and believes this proposal would fit that theme. Mr. Lareau asked if the Commission could provide a sketch of the proposed expansion for the playground. Mr.

Koldys responded affirmatively and stated that the area of the horseshoe pits would be a negotiable area for a garden. **Vote was unanimous, 5-0.**

To recap, Ms. Viens stated that Mr. Lareau will send a visual diagram of the 7 levels of permaculture and the Commission will decide with Mr. Lareau on an appropriate location for the garden. Mr. Young commented that the soil is very poor in that area and will definitely need some attention.

6. Other Business.

Mr. Sawyer stated that he had an update on the fountain bank. The estimate received for the concept with the walls and plantings and the steps up the center is unfortunately outside the bounds of the budget. Another concept for putting just steps all the way around the fountain has been run by Harrison concrete and came back at \$40,000. Ms. McGinn asked Mr. Sawyer what the budget is. Mr. Sawyer responded that it is \$20,000 or under. Ms. McGinn asked what the estimate for the steps and tiered concept came in at. Mr. Sawyer responded that it came in at \$21,300. Mr. Sawyer stated that the cobblestone concept came in around \$16,000. Staff has looked at another idea which would be to mix some low creeping plants that could be mostly green and could be some other colors as well. The plants would stay low and not need much weeding or trimming and could be mixed in with some cobblestone areas. The three main interests staff is trying to balance is that it looks nice, is easy to maintain and must allow for people who are going to walk on the fountain ring from up the hill down the bank toward Main Street. He added that the stair concept would have to be up to code and include a railing and would be a greater liability. The cobblestone could be used as a design feature and break up the planting and double as a place to walk on. Staff has asked SE Group to provide a concept for that idea and will get an estimate. Mr. Koldys stated that he assumes the creeping plants would need to be trimmed so not to cover the cobblestone. Mr. Sawyer responded affirmatively and stated that they'd have to be watered as well. He explained that the low cost option might be something that is semi-temporary and could try to move toward the stair concept in the future. Staff is hoping to get something installed before the winter.

Ms. Weinstein suggested a grass species that can be walked on and doesn't easily die. Mr. Young disagreed and stated that the best thing to do is install sod by a Kentucky Blue Grass sod. He noted that it is an easy option that will only require watering and mowing. He added that the cost would only be about \$400. Ms. McGinn asked Mr. Young if he was suggesting that as a temporary solution or a permanent one. Mr. Young responded that it would serve as a good temporary solution. Mr. Koldys agreed that it would be a good solution in the short term. Ms. Sturm asked Mr. Young if he is not seeing benefits with areas of cobblestone. Mr. Young responded that he doesn't see how they would be anchored and remain stable. Mr. Sawyer stated that for \$5000, staff would have granite curbs installed around the cobblestone. He added that the material would need to match the ring and not just be a flat surface. Mr. Young noted that cobble has been used as a theme in the park and all of the gardens are edged with it. Ms. Sturm asked Mr. Young what his opinion is on including a curb with the sod or whether he believes leaving it curb-less is the way to go. Mr. Young recommended leaving it as sod only for now. **The overall consensus of the Parks Commission was to support using sod around the bank of the foundation as a temporary solution.**

Angie Sturm left the meeting at 8:55 am.

Mr. Sawyer explained that Municipal Planning Grants are due in October and is hoping funds could be used toward more planning in Taylor Park. Mr. Young asked if the money could be used as a park grant in general and not just on one park. Mr. Sawyer responded that he believes the focus should be on just one park and the grant would be in the amount of around \$20,000. Ms. Weinstein noted that the Commission has been discussing options in Houghton Park along the stream corridor. Mr. Sawyer responded that there are other environmentally-themed grants that might be a better source for that and staff is also looking at Houghton Park for potential CSO solutions. Ms. Weinstein recalled that the Commission received a proposal about doing something with the stream that would involve a science project for BFA. Discussion ensued about how

that project could involve BFA students over a course of several school years. Ms. McGinn stated that as it stands right now, the Steeler football organization is overseeing the restructuring of the field. Mr. Sawyer explained that if the City was to add underground storage for the CSO under Houghton Park, everything on top would have to be rebuilt and would be an opportunity for the City to create a real football field. Ms. McGinn noted that the Commission approved the Steelers football organization's request to re-crown the field at a prior meeting and wondered if they would want to follow through with that knowing the concept of a new field is being discussed. Mr. Sawyer responded that it wouldn't be anything that would happen anytime soon. Mr. Koldys added that the football organization is now deciding that they are only going to level and reseed the field because the cost to re-crown it was too great. Ms. McGinn asked if the Cottonwood trees would be coming down shortly. Ms. Viens responded that over half of them are out at this point. Mr. Koldys stated that he thinks it's a great idea to use the grant money to develop a Taylor Park plan so the Commission knows that that vision looks like and can make concrete plans in the future. He added that it might also be beneficial to get different entities in the City together to have a discussion about what they envision for Houghton Park so the Parks Commission can work toward a common goal.

Ms. Weinstein stated that it would be nice to have the picnic tables closer to the new playground at Houghton Park and witnessed a mother moving the picnic table. Mr. Koldys explained that they belong to Immigration. Ms. Viens stated that discussion to purchase picnic tables for Houghton Park can be discussed.

Discussion ensued about the tree species suggested at a previous meeting to be planted at Houghton Park. Ms. Viens explained that the former tree warden suggested planting great oak and gingko. Mr. Young stated that the great oak and gingko's are a slow growing species and would take 20 years before they provided any shade. Mr. Young stated that he and the former tree warden had discussed planting maples up front to allow for more shade and planting the oak and/or gingko's in the back. Mr. Sawyer stated that Mr. Comfort has been siding with the recommendations of the State and UVM that the City go easy on the maples for the time being and recommended another fast-growing species. Mr. Sawyer stated that staff is trying to put out an RFP every winter so planting can take place in the spring.

7. Consider approval of minutes: 7/5/16 (D&V).

A motion was made by Tom Koldys; seconded by Joan McGinn to approve minutes from 7/5/16. Vote was unanimous with Barbara Weinstein and Jeff Young abstaining.

8. Adjourn.

A motion was made by Jeff Young, seconded by Tom Koldys to adjourn the meeting at 9:07 am. Vote was unanimous, 4-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristen Smith
Community Relations Coordinator