

**St. Albans City Parks Commission**  
**Minutes of Meeting**  
**Tuesday, February 2, 2016**  
**Barlow Street Community Center**

A meeting of the St. Albans City Parks Commission was held on Tuesday, February 2, 2016, in the Barlow Community Center at 6:00 pm.

**Commission Members Present:** Peter Chevalier, Chair; Tom Koldys, Angie Sturm, Stina Booth, Jeff Young & Joan McGinn.

**Commission Members Absent:** Barbara Weinstein.

**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/Continue Arts in the Park Discussion.

Ms. Sturm asked if the Arts in the Park Policy was ever adopted by the City Council. Ms. Viens responded negatively and explained that it was never presented to Council but could be added to an upcoming agenda. Mr. Chevalier explained that the topic was put to the wayside after some of the members of the commission left and the focus has been to reestablish a full board. Mr. Koldys asked the group to elaborate on the ideas that were previously brainstormed in terms of displaying art in the park. Ms. Viens stated that she will send him the form that was created. Ms. Sturm explained that the initial idea was to form a policy for anyone to follow that wanted to display art in a public location such as the park. The commission created an application form to be used and Ms. Sturm explained that the commission would make recommendations to Council based on applications received. Mr. Young asked if the commission can ask the Council to allow for administrative approval rather than having to wait for Council to convene during their monthly meeting. Ms. Viens stated that Council will have the final say in the process but that could certainly be asked. Mr. Chevalier added that safety, the length of time a piece of art can be displayed, location of the art and the context of the art were all factors considered when developing the proposal.

3. Arts Council.

a. Discuss Reorganization of Arts Council.

Mr. Chevalier explained that he recently read an article in the Messenger about the formation of an Arts Council and mentioned that Jeff Young has played a role. He asked Mr. Young if he could provide further detail. Mr. Young explained that the St. Albans Society for the Performing Arts (SASPA) folded and asked the Downtown Board if they would take temporary custody of their corporation and funds. The Downtown Board complied and tried to find another entity to take over SASPA with no success. Mr. Young explained that a newly appointment member of the Downtown Board, Jess Stumpf, showed interest in getting the arts program off the ground again and asked to be appointed as Chair of the Arts Committee which was granted. The Arts Committee would like to form a core group of 5 – 7 members to promote the arts in the Downtown and provided the upcoming Art Walk as an example which is scheduled for Saturday, February 13<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Young noted that the Organization Committee of the Downtown Board will be meeting tomorrow to have a further discussion with Arts Committee. Mr. Young mentioned the Festival of Trees run by Pauline Cray which is officially part of the Downtown Board and thought the Parks Commission could get involved in some way. Mr. Young added that the committee and the formation of an Arts Council is in its very early stages. Mr. Chevalier thanked Mr. Young for the update and stated that it might be beneficial to meet with the Arts Committee further down the road to discuss how the Parks Commission can collaborate. Mr. Young

stated that the Festival of Trees Committee will likely contact the Parks Commission and the City toward the end of the summer to discuss incorporating some creative pieces in the park for the holiday season such as light boxes. Mr. Young noted that the Artist in Residence that was located in Enosburg will be moving to 10 South Main Street in St. Albans.

b. Decide if a Joint Meeting Would be Prudent (D&V).

No action was taken.

4. Houghton Playground Update.

Ms. Viens stated that approval was given to the company they will be purchasing the playground from to place the order because funds are secure and in hand. Two adjustments were made to the design; to raise the 6' platform to 8' and add steering wheel(s) if possible. She is also waiting to hear back from the company to see what color options are available for the fish component. Ms. Viens added that installation of the playground will be weather dependent. Fairpoint has also been contacted to discuss removal of the guidewire. Mr. Young noted that the Public Works Director told him there is enough money to remove the remaining cottonwood trees and is hopeful replacements will be planted. Ms. Sturm asked if the Parks Commission would be involved in the discussion about the species that will be replanted. Mr. Chevalier responded that he would assume the City has a planting program. He would like the Commission to be kept in the loop as far as the placement of trees that will be replanted to make sure they don't interfere with other ideas the group has for the park. Ms. McGinn mentioned the INS subcontractors who park along Houghton Park on a daily basis and proposed enforcing 2 ½ hour parking once the playground is installed to resolve the parking issues. Mr. Chevalier commented that the parking issue in the wintertime creates problems because the City can't plow around the parked vehicles and causes the street to become very narrow. He added that the long-term parkers also block the fire hydrants in the summertime. Mr. Chevalier added that there are also some homes that do not have their own driveway which causes residents to use the parking along the park. Ms. Sturm proposed adding the parking issues with suggested solutions to the Commission's priority list. She explained that this should be about creating a culture shift for Houghton Park. Ms. Viens asked Mr. Chevalier if he would like to address the parking issue at the upcoming City Council meeting when he presents the Arts in the Park application. Mr. Chevalier responded affirmatively.

5. Review Priority List & Select Ideas to Focus On.

Mr. Chevalier suggested reviewing the priority list and focusing on three or four at a time. Ms. Sturm noted that Houghton Park was the highest priority park. Mr. Chevalier suggested focusing on Houghton Park this meeting and focusing on Taylor Park priorities at the next meeting.

Jeff Young proposed adding parking on Hunt Street for playground users. Discussion ensued about enforcing 2 ½ hour parking or enforcing half of the spaces as 2 ½ hour parking. Mr. Chevalier suggested that the Commission should have a solution in mind when approaching the City Council. Ms. Viens noted that part of the solution can be enforcement. Mr. Koldys suggested enforcing the parking for park users only before adding more parking. Mr. Young added that 2 ½ hour parking would require an ordinance change by City Council.

Ms. Sturm asked Ms. Viens to remind her of the fence plan for the park. Ms. Viens responded that the existing chain link fence would be removed and replaced with one small stretch of fence between the playground and the street. Discussion ensued about placement of the fence which would ultimately be determined by the footprint of the playground.

Ms. Sturm asked if the bathroom at Houghton Park is open during the winter. Ms. Viens responded that it is winterized and closed during the winter months. Mr. Chevalier noted that the bathroom was cleaned on a daily basis over the summer. Mr. Young asked if the security cameras cover the bathroom. Ms. Viens responded negatively. Ms. Sturm commented that it would be beneficial if the person who cleans the bathroom on a daily basis keeps a log of any damage found. Ms. Viens explained that the person who cleans

the bathroom also cleans City Hall, Barlow, the Police Department and the Parking Garage and would be hesitant to ask her to do any more but will ask her to send a text message if there are any issues. The general consensus was that the bathroom at Houghton Park was no longer a “weakness.” Mr. Chevalier added that the unlocked dumpster is now locked.

Mr. Young noted the lack of shade at Houghton Park and commented on the beautiful pavilion/picnic area that was built at the City pool and asked what it cost. Ms. Viens responded that it cost \$14,000 and had a preexisting cement pad. Mr. Young asked to add a pavilion/covered picnic area on the wish list for Houghton Park. Ms. McGinn proposed adding seating/pavilion to the priority list for Houghton Park even if it can't be completed this year. Discussion ensued about creating a brochure to let people know that they can make monetary donations to be used toward Council approved projects at the City parks. Ms. Viens explained that there may also be grants available for the construction of a pavilion at Houghton Park. She added that she needs to obtain permission from the City Council before applying for grants and suggested addressing the pavilion and the parking issue as high-priority items at the next council meeting and also ask for permission to apply for any available grants and to create a brochure or flyer to promote awareness. Ms. Sturm recalled former Commission member, Brianna Haenke's discussion about the health benefits of water fountains and commented that if a pavilion is built, a water fountain should be incorporated.

Discussion ensued about the recreational activities that used to take place in Houghton Park decades ago. Stina Booth stated that a focus on recreational activities at Houghton Park should be a priority to help drive traffic back to the park.

The following priorities were identified to be presented to the City Council:

- Priority #1: Lack of parking/enforcement for Houghton Park patrons and snow build up due to vehicles occupying parking spaces long-term.
- Priority # 2: Construction of a pavilion.
- Priority # 3: Addition of a water fountain.

Mr. Chevalier stated that he will also bring up the plan for replacing the Cottonwood trees at the City Council meeting. Mr. Young added that he would also like to discuss the plans for the area along the brook as a natural area. Mr. Chevalier noted his concern about children playing near the brook which can become dangerous after a heavy rainfall. Ms. McGinn suggested focusing on the three priorities mentioned and to take a field trip to discuss the brook at a later date. Mr. Young stated that the design work can be completed by the State.

6. Consider Approval of Meeting Minutes: 12/29/15 (D&V).

**A motion was made by Jeff Young, seconded by Joan McGinn to approve 12/29/15 meeting minutes. Vote was unanimous, 6-0.**

7. Other Business.

Mr. Young explained that the Design Committee of the Downtown Board met a few weeks ago. He recalled that in 2011, SE Group completed the downtown design work for the park which was the fourth iteration of the update. Mr. Young stated that he recently met with Mike Willard, the designer for SE Group, along with Laz Scangas and Mr. Sawyer to discuss the retention pits along the western side of the park. A discussion took place about what to do to make them more attractive. Mr. Young explained the functionality of the pits and explained that they weren't working effectively because the City didn't understand how to maintain them properly. The original plan called for adding eleven sets of shrubs and some perennials to hide the concrete pits. Mr. Young explained that the Design Committee will meet several more times to discuss vegetation options and the cost will be roughly \$6,000. The Committee will also discuss replacing the gardens which were installed improperly. Ms. McGinn asked Mr. Young who would be in charge of

maintenance of the shrubbery. Mr. Young responded that it would be the responsibility of the Public Works Department. Mr. Young stated that he would like to have Mike Willard to create a design for all of the City parks at some point. He added that Mr. Sawyer suggested that the Parks Commission ask the City formally to allow Mike Willard to attend a meeting to work on park design and have a professional landscape architect weigh in. Ms. Sturm wondered timing-wise, when an opportune time would be to make this request to the City. Mr. Young responded that the City is on the edge of making a lot of decisions for Taylor Park and the Commission should provide input for what those decisions should be. He is concerned that changes will be made without seeking any professional opinion. Ms. McGinn asked if it would make sense to suggest to the City Council that when it comes time to make changes to the area surrounding the fountain and the walkways leading up to it, that a professional opinion be taken into consideration as well as input from the Parks Commission and St. Albans Rotary. Mr. Young responded affirmatively. Ms. Sturm agreed but explained that she wouldn't want to see the budgeting for the design to get in the way of the priorities that the Commission would like to see completed.

Ms. Sturm also added that there is erosion taking place currently at the Barlow playground beside the swings and would like to discuss further when priorities are address for Barlow.

Mr. Koldys noted that part of the Commission's duties are to gather public opinion and asked if the Commission has any means for gathering public opinion other than just talking to people face-to-face. Ms. Viens responded affirmatively and explained that the Recreation Department and the City both have websites, email addresses for public inquiries and also use social media. Mr. Koldys asked if the Parks Commission could create their own Facebook page and/or Twitter account. Ms. Viens stated that she believes the City would prefer Parks Commission information be sent to Chip Sawyer or Kristen Smith and be shared through the City outlets. Ms. Sturm wondered if a logo or avatar could be created specific to the Parks Commission that could be connected to the City website to allow people to provide feedback or ask questions specific to the Parks.

Ms. Viens stated that the Winter Carnival is February 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>. Saturday's activities will take place in Taylor Park and will include family activities in the afternoon. They will have art work using bird seed and will freeze pants and make snowmen if the weather cooperates. Ms. Viens welcomed the help of any volunteers.

8. Adjourn.

**A motion was made by Jeff Young, seconded by Angie Sturm to adjourn the meeting at 7:52 pm. Vote was unanimous, 6-0.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristen Smith  
Community Relations Coordinator