

**St. Albans City Parks Commission  
Minutes of Meeting  
Tuesday, April 5, 2016  
Barlow Street Community Center**

A joint meeting of the St. Albans City Parks Commission and the St. Albans City Recreation Commission was held on Tuesday, April 5, 2016 in Houghton Park at 6:00 pm.

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

**Parks Commission Members Absent:** Barbara Weinstein.

**Recreation Commission Members Present:** Megan Manahan Bliss, Chair; Bryan DesLauriers, Justin Wright & Mike Zemaniek.

**Recreation Commission Members Absent:** Peggy Manahan, Morrell Bunbury & Liz Studley.

**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. Houghton Park Walk-Through of Playground Renovation & Replacement.

Ms. Viens explained that she met with Bob Petinelli & Associates last week to go through the existing playground equipment. Mr. Petinelli felt that the existing swings could last at least another 5 years if not more. Public Works is going to move the existing black and yellow feature to a better location, still in Houghton Park. Ms. Viens explained that the staked off area for the new playground will be leveled and graded and chips will be added to ground surface. Two dead trees have been removed and both commissions will be able to provide input as to what species of trees should replace them and where they should be located. Ms. Manahan Bliss asked for clarification on the layout of the new playground. Ms. Viens explained the layout to the group and stated that Fairpoint she be coming to relocate one of the poles. Mr. Chevalier noted that he believes the purpose of one pole is to hold up a second pole and asked why Fairpoint couldn't just place one new pole where the existing pole is located instead of having two poles. Ms. Viens stated that Chip Sawyer has been the one contacting Fairpoint and wasn't sure why one pole couldn't replace the two existing poles. Ms. Viens explained that the existing features could also be repainted to match the scheme of the new playground. Ms. Manahan Bliss asked what colors the new playground will be. Ms. Viens responded that the color is called high energy which is lime green and blue. She recalled that there had been discussion about installing a chain link fence across the front of the playground which staff and the playground company identified as a liability. Mr. Chevalier stated that the purpose of the fence would be to deter young children from running into the parking area. Discussion ensued about creating a rock barrier or planter that could double as seating in place of a fence. Mr. Chevalier noted that all of the cottonwood trees will be removed this summer. Mr. Young added that the process to remove the trees and replant a new species will be very expensive and may occur in phases.

Ms. Viens noted that the inoperable vehicles that were previously parked along the park are now gone. Mr. Chevalier explained that the INS contractors have been using much of the parking along Houghton Park in addition to residents that don't have enough space in their driveway or lacking curb cuts. Currently, there are 58 parking spaces at Houghton Park, only one of which is designated for handicapped parking. The Parks Commission presented the idea to the City Council to possibly change the parking to 2 hour parking only to

discourage the INS contractors from parking there. Mr. Chevalier explained that INS does not allow their contractors to park on site. They are permitted to park in the Handy lot, however, contractors still choose to park along Houghton Park because it's a closer walk. A site visit to Houghton Park was completed by City staff with the discussion of changing the allowed length of parking time to 2 hour parking. Mr. Chevalier noted that INS contractors could, however, potentially get around the 2 hour rule by moving their vehicles 6" on their morning and lunch breaks. The idea of selling passes to the parking spaces was also discussed but didn't seem to make the best sense. Mr. Chevalier commented that he would like to propose presenting 1 ½ hour parking during business hours, Monday through Friday, to City Council. Ms. Viens stated that she spoke with Mr. Cloud this afternoon and he believes Council will be receptive to a change in the length of parking time allowed but stressed it may prove difficult if the request is different from what exists currently for parking in other parts of the City. He suggested implementing 2 ½ hour parking while focusing on enforcement. Ms. Sturm asked if it could be as simple as adding signage that states parking is for Houghton Park users only. The general consensus was that adding signage for park users only wouldn't be enough to deter the INS subcontractors from parking there. Ms. Viens stated that she has been visiting the park on a daily basis and there have been between 39 and 46 vehicles parked there at all times. Ms. Viens explained that if the 2 ½ hour parking with enforcement is not effective, the commission can propose a new solution to Council. Ms. Sturm agreed that 2 ½ hour parking seems reasonable. She added that if the 2 ½ hour parking proposal fixes the problem, the Commission won't need to go back before Council or make any changes to the City ordinances. Mr. Zemaniek asked whether or not INS has been receptive to any conversation about the parking issue. Mr. Chevalier responded that INS's stance is that the subcontractors cannot park in their lot. He added that there is INS parking available on the backside of the old CVPS building and every day, there are at least 30 parking spaces not in use. Ms. Manahan Bliss stated that she believes the existing City ordinance for 2 ½ hour parking would still need to be amended to include the parking area along Houghton Park.

**A motion was made by Joan McGinn; seconded by Tom Koldys to approve 2 ½ hour parking proposal for Houghton Park to be presented to the City Council.** Ms. Manahan Bliss asked if there were any athletic practices that take place at Houghton Park after school. Mr. Chevalier responded negatively. Mr. Wright stated that it makes no sense not to enforce the parking with all the money and effort going into improving the park. Ms. Sturm stated that she sees the vision for the park as a culture change which will include an influx of recreational activities and people feeling great about the space. She added that it may turn out that the parking issue comes later to all of the awareness for what's happening in the park. Mr. DesLauriers commented that he is hopeful that a representative of INS would be supportive of the efforts being made. Mr. Young asked Mr. Chevalier if anyone is worried that students will begin parking in the neighborhoods, similar to what has taken place on Lincoln Avenue. Mr. Chevalier responded that he believes everyone will have to wait and see and noted that the Council recently passed an ordinance change that states you cannot park within 20' of an intersection. Parking will also be prohibited on both sides of Lake Street which will be a bike route. Ms. Viens reiterated that this proposal is not a final step. **Vote was unanimous, 10-0.**

Ms. Viens explained that the playground was delivered to the Public Works Department today and Petinelli & Associates along with Public Works will be building the skeleton of the equipment on April 15<sup>th</sup>. Twenty volunteers will be needed to complete the installation on Saturday the 16<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Young asked if chips would be replaced as a base. Ms. Viens responded affirmatively. Mr. Young recalled a conversation about the grade being higher than it is now and asked if that was still the plan. Ms. Viens responded affirmatively and stated that they will dig down 6" and then add 18" of chips. Ms. Sturm asked Ms. Viens if she is publicizing the need for volunteers. Ms. Viens responded that she sent out an email blast and put a notice on Facebook and people can sign up on the Recreation website. Ms. Booth asked if there will be a celebration for the opening of the playground. Ms. Viens responded affirmatively and said there will be a barbeque with music. Mr. Young mentioned that he would like to do a fundraiser run this summer to help build a pavilion. Discussion

ensued about the cost of a pavilion. Mr. Young stated that he would recommend asking Mr. Comfort, the City Tree Warden, to make recommendations on the tree species and placement of those trees.

Ms. Viens stated that going forward, she will speak to Mr. Cloud about enforcement of the parking along Houghton Park in the same manner as the Downtown and will ask Mr. Comfort to make recommendations about the species and location of trees to be replanted.

3. Other Business.

No other business was discussed.

4. Adjourn.

**A motion was made by Megan Manahan Bliss, seconded by Joan McGinn to adjourn the meeting at 6:35 pm. Vote was unanimous, 10-0.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristen Smith  
Community Relations Coordinator

Approved