

**St. Albans City Parks Commission  
Minutes of Meeting  
Tuesday, May 3, 2016  
Barlow Street Community Center**

A meeting of the St. Albans City Parks Commission was held on Tuesday, May 3, 2016 in the Recreation Department, 39 Barlow Street at 6:00 pm.

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

**Parks Commission Members Absent:** Chair, Peter Chevalier.

**Staff Present:** Kelly Viens, Director of Recreation.

1. Call to Order, Peter Chevalier, Chair.

**In the absence of Chair, Peter Chevalier, agenda item # 4 was discussed first.**

Vice Chair, Tom Koldys, called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

2. Presentation by Leon Thompson regarding request to build a raised bed planter in Taylor Park as part of Soil Fest activities (D&V).

Mr. Leon Thompson of Vermont Organic Reclamation (VOR) introduced himself. He noted that Soil Fest is scheduled for Saturday, June 18<sup>th</sup> in Taylor Park from 10 am – 2 pm and will include a variety of sponsors, speakers and exhibitors. Soil Fest promotes the health of soil and returning carbon to soil for the sake of climate change and the health of soil. VOR would like to donate a 4' x 8' raised bed to Taylor Park which would be used as a planting/growing demonstration for Soil Fest and would commemorate St. Albans City Mayors past, present and future with a marker. The estimated value of the donation is \$200 - \$300. A brief ceremony would take place at Soil Fest, dedicating the raised bed. Mr. Thompson explained that if a raised bed was not approved, VOR would work to meet any criteria established by the Parks Commission. Perennials would also be planted in the bed during the year.

Mr. Koldys asked Ms. Viens if it's correct that the Parks Commission's charge would be to make a recommendation to Council as to whether or not the Commission supports the request. Ms. Sturm suggested referring to the Taylor Park Plan and the updated visuals of the park which haven't been completed. Ms. Viens stated that Mike Willard of SE Group is currently working on the plan. Mr. Thompson suggested incorporating the raised bed as part of a City project since the Taylor Park Plan is not complete. Ms. McGinn asked if one possibility would be to use the existing reflection pool that is now a flower garden. Ms. Booth noted a previous conversation about changing the vegetation around the bandstand and wondered if the raised bed could be incorporation in that location. Mr. Young didn't think perennials would get enough sunshine if planted around the bandstand. Mr. Thompson reiterated that they are not wedded to a raise bed and could just do plantings with a dedication. Discussion ensued about replanting something around the bandstand, however, the general consensus was that the location wasn't localized enough for a dedication piece. Mr. Young noted the original plan for the center area south of the round garden which was supposed to be the contemplative area of the park and thought it might be possible to carry that theme on the bandstand side of the park. Ms. Weinstein noted that she would like to have input from the consultants and master gardeners so not to piece meal different projects together in the park. Mr. Koldys proposed a temporary bed that could be used for Soil Fest with the potential to be moved and/or altered at a later date to fit with the master plan once it's completed. Mr. Thompson responded that he could potentially create a temporary bed, however, the purpose is to have a dedicated site. Ms. Weinstein wondered how long it

would take to get the planner involved. Ms. Sturm asked Mr. Thompson what the material would be made out of and what the shape of it would be. Mr. Thompson responded that it would be a standard raised bed. Mr. Young noted that the other issue is the maintenance and explained that the Master Gardeners have struggled with the upkeep of the existing gardens. Ms. Sturm asked if a tree dedication would be a better fit. Ms. Weinstein brought up the idea of a blueberry bush. Mr. Young explained that a typical park layout would include a focal point such as a bench or a rock with a defined area and the focus this year is to work on the defined area by planting some evergreens which would lead to another area that would be a good fit for a dedication space. Mr. Thompson asked if the consensus is that it's ok to plant something by the band shell which would be incorporated into the working plan. Ms. Viens stated that the Taylor Park Plan that SE Group is working on is a long-term vision and if something is implemented now, it may not fit with the end results of the plan. Mr. Thompson asked if the plan is a 5-year plan or a 10-year plan. Ms. Sturm stated that she believes it was a 5-year plan that is expiring now. Mr. Koldys explained that the Commission does not have the ultimate say in the final results of the plan. Mr. Thompson proposed putting a semi-permanent raised bed near the band shell that can be easily moved. Ms. Weinstein noted the educational value of a bed that highlights the importance of soil. Ms. McGinn commented that she does not personally like raised beds and doesn't think it's a good fit for what she envisions for Taylor Park. Ms. Sturm proposed the idea of installing a raised bed or garden in Houghton Park that is dedicated to the Mayors. Mr. Thompson expressed interest in that idea and stated that a mayoral dedication could take place at Houghton Park at a different time than during the Soil Fest. Mr. Thompson asked the Commission to table this item and stated that he would present the idea of installing a bed at Houghton Park to the VOR and then get back in touch. Ms. Sturm recalled discussions for the vision of Houghton Park which included the use of gardens to create a break between the new playground and the road. The Commission expressed their support for a garden to be planted at Houghton Park. Ms. McGinn asked Ms. Sturm if her proposal to plant a garden at Houghton Park included the notion of having a mayoral dedication. Ms. Sturm responded affirmatively. Mr. Koldys commented that it would be a good first step toward changing the culture of Houghton Park.

3. Houghton Park Playground Installation Update.

Ms. Viens stated that she has received great feedback about the new playground. One person complained about the fence being removed because daycares use the park. Discussion ensued about future plans for seating and barriers.

a. Discussion of outdoor exercise equipment placement at Houghton Park.

Ms. Viens explained that she had a conversation with Rise VT about helping to fund for outdoor bicycles and elliptical machines that could be placed at Houghton Park. The bikes cost between \$1500 and \$1700 and the elliptical machines cost just under \$4000. Ms. Weinstein asked how subject they are to vandalism. Ms. Viens responded that they are made for outdoor use only.

b. Trees – Choice of type and placement at playground area.

Ms. Viens stated that she spoke with Mr. Comfort about the trees that had been removed and asked him for suggestions in terms of what to replant. He suggested planting ginkgo biloba trees and majestic white oaks which both cast shades. Mr. Young stated that he spoke with Mr. Comfort and believes the best placement of new trees would be to plant four trees along the south face. Mr. Young added that the ginkgo biloba is a very slow growing tree. Ms. Booth asked if the Commission needed to raise money for the new trees. Ms. Viens responded negatively. Ms. Sturm asked Ms. Viens if Public Works is looking for the Commission's input as to what species is planted. Ms. Viens responded affirmatively. Ms. Weinstein commented that she is in favor of the oak tree because they are not as slow growing as the ginkgo. Mr. Young wondered if two rows of trees could be planted so there is some immediate shade and recommended one row of Freemanii Maples. He noted that they are also inexpensive. Discussion ensued about planting ginkgo trees as an accent with the white oak while adding maple trees for shade. Ms. McGinn asked if the Commission should develop a sketched concept for the park so the trees are

planted strategically and fit with the rest of the plan for the park. Ms. Viens suggested holding the next meeting at Houghton Park. Ms. Weinstein asked if some aerial maps of the park could be provided for that meeting. Ms. Viens responded affirmatively and stated that she would also bring photos of pavilion options and sizes.

c. Possible pavilion at Houghton Park.

Ms. Viens noted that the cost of the pavilion that was built at the City pool was \$14,000 and had an existing concrete pad. Bob Petinelli quoted a pavilion for \$20,000 but could probably do it for \$15,000. There are a couple sources of grant money that she has inquired about and is waiting to hear back. Ms. Weinstein asked if the \$15,000 would include a concrete pad. Ms. Viens responded negatively but said she was sure the concrete could be donated. Ms. Sturm asked if there was an alternative to the concrete pad. Ms. Viens responded that the pad could be grass, stone or some type of patio base. Mr. Young noted that the pad could be made of permeable pavers. Mr. Koldys thought having an educational feature in the park would be a useful tool for the community to use. Ms. McGinn wondered what everyone had in mind for benches as far as materials and sizes. Ms. Sturm suggested contacting a local artisan to develop and create benches for the park. Discussion ensued about different ideas for bench ideas. Mr. Koldys suggested having a bench design contest. Ms. Weinstein noted that there is a need for both benches and picnic tables at Houghton Park.

d. Drinking fountain/bottle filling station at Houghton Park.

No discussion took place.

e. Interest by Steeler's Football to resurface/re-crown football field.

Ms. Viens explained that Steeler's Football has requested permission to resurface and re-crown the football field. Mr. Young asked if they plan to install drainage. Ms. Viens responded that she isn't sure. Ms. Sturm asked when it would take place and asked if they have to dig up the sod. Ms. Viens noted that it would take place very soon. Discussion ensued about the process to resurface and re-crown. The general concern was drainage and whether or not water would run off the field making the rest of the park wetter. Ms. Viens stated that she will voice that concern to Mr. Sawyer and let him know that the Commission approves the request.

4. Status of Co-Chair position – Elect new if necessary (D&V).

**A motion was made by Joan McGinn; seconded by Barbara Weinstein to nominate Tom Koldys as Vice Chair. Vote was unanimous, 6-0.**

5. Other Business.

Ms. Weinstein noted that she spent half of her winter in Fountain Hills, Arizona which has a very strong arts program. She spent time with Sandy Thompson who is the head of the Arts Council in Fountain Hills and learned about 5 key points that make for a strong arts program. When she returned to St. Albans, she learned that two of the five key points had been executed; the formation of an Arts Council and the opening of a co-op art gallery. In conjunction with Fountain Hills' farmer's market, they hold an art show and sales venue for local artists, encouraging demonstrations. In addition to the weekly art show/sales venue for artists, Fountain Hills holds a couple of major, revenue producing art events and shows annually with all proceeds going to charity. The final key point includes 150 pieces of public art that has been donated to the City. Ms. Weinstein explained that the process is all governed by the Fountain Hills Arts Council with adequate checks and balances in place. Ms. Booth noted that the St. Albans Artist Guild held an event one summer in conjunction with the St. Albans Farmer's Market. Mr. Koldys noted that he was interested in the demonstration aspect. Ms. Weinstein commented that she would be happy to share her findings with the St. Albans Arts Council. Ms. Sturm commented that she imagines expanding the idea of arts beyond the City's existing parks. Mr. Koldys agreed and stated that he envisions the use of art as a connection between the City parks and other City sites. Ms. Weinstein noted that Fountain Hills has auto-guided art tours with the

use of handheld technology. Ms. McGinn stated that she supports the idea of tying the arts into the Farmer's Market and making it an interactive experience. Ms. McGinn explained that Jes Stumpf is head of the St. Albans Arts Council which is an extension of the Downtown Board. Discussion ensued about the newly opened cooperative gallery, Artist in Residence located in the City. Mr. Young credited Marty Manahan for actively recruiting and working with the artists which were formerly located in Enosburg. Ms. Weinstein stated that she would bring her ideas to Jes Stumpf.

Mr. Young noted that he visited Tyler Arboretum in Pennsylvania which caters to children's environmental education and highly recommends it.

Discussion continued about incorporating some unique pieces at Houghton Park that could serve as art and bench seating. Ms. Viens suggested having the group come back to the next meeting with photos of ideas. Mr. Koldys commented that he would also like to brainstorm contest ideas. Ms. Sturm recalled the success of the Chair Affair last year.

Ms. McGinn noted that the Summer Concert Series in Taylor Park will be taking place this summer on Wednesday's. Ms. McGinn asked Ms. Viens if she knew the timing of when the bandstand/gazebo would be painted. Ms. Viens responded that she will check with Public Works. Ms. McGinn asked the group what their thoughts were on painting the bandstand/gazebo white in color. Ms. Weinstein thought white would get dirty. Ms. Viens stated that they use epoxy kits at the pool.

6. Consider Approval of Minutes: 7/13/15, 2/2/16 & 4/5/16 (D&V).  
**A motion was made by Jeff Young; seconded by Joan McGinn to approve above slate of minutes. Motion carried unanimously.**
7. Adjourn.  
**A motion was made by Joan McGinn; seconded by Jeff Young to adjourn the meeting at 7:44 pm. Vote was unanimous, 6-0.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristen Smith  
Community Relations Coordinator