

**St. Albans City Parks Commission  
Minutes of Meeting  
Tuesday, June 7, 2016  
Barlow Community Center**

A meeting of the St. Albans City Parks Commission was held on Tuesday, June 7, 2016 at the Barlow Community Center at 6:00 pm.

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

**Parks Commission Members Absent:** Jeff Young.

**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.

**Agenda item # 3 was discussed first followed by item # 2 and item # 5.**

2. Discuss and decide on "vision" and future installations/plantings (D&V).

Mr. Chevalier recalled that there was consensus to have at least one new tree planted around the playground. When the remaining cottonwood trees are removed, the Commission will also need to decide what to do along the brook. Ms. Sturm stated that she thought the Commission was waiting to hear from Mr. Comfort, the tree warden. Ms. Weinstein stated that Mr. Comfort suggested oak, maple and ginkgo trees for that location. Ms. Sturm stated that she believes those species were suggested as shade trees around the playground but not for the location along the brook. Mr. Chevalier stated that he envisions the playground expanding and should incorporate that expansion and a future pavilion in the plan.

Discussion ensued about the placement of the existing, older playground equipment. Ms. Sturm stated she would suggest putting up strategic fencing to act as a barrier between the equipment near the road and the roadway. Mr. Chevalier suggested placing a couple sections of rail fencing to act as a barrier and stated that the rail fencing is more neighborly looking compared to steel. Mr. Koldys expressed his opposition to using a continuous fencing system and also supported the idea of installing sections of fencing with pathways between them. Mr. Chevalier agreed that the presence of a boundary is important. Ms. Sturm noted the idea of using a concrete boundary which would be more durable and could double as seating and planters. Ms. Weinstein suggested a mix of raised beds and split rails to act as a fence. Ms. Booth suggested using something fun and sculpture-like that could be interactive. Ms. McGinn expressed her support of installing a split rail fence alternating with bushes. Mr. Chevalier expressed his opposition to wooden benches because he didn't think they'd be durable.

Ms. Weinstein suggested placing benches or picnic tables under a tree which would allow parents to be closer to the playground area. Discussion ensued about future placement of a pavilion and the outdoor exercise equipment. Ms. Viens stated that RiseVT recommended placing the outdoor exercise equipment facing the playground so parents can use them while watching their children. Discussion ensued about whether or not to place the exercise equipment in a shaded area and where to place the pavilion. Ms. Viens noted that there are three options for placement of the pavilion and referred to a map of the park. Mr. Koldys asked whether or not the Commission felt that there might be more than one pavilion in the park which would affect the placement of trees and equipment. Ms. McGinn responded that she doesn't foresee a second pavilion based on the cost. Ms. Weinstein stated that she would like the pavilion to be close to the playground. Ms. Sturm agreed. Ms. McGinn pointed to a location on the map immediately in front of the

new playground and stated that it would be her first choice for placement of the pavilion. The Commission agreed that it would be the best location for the pavilion. Mr. Chevalier suggested incorporating playground equipment geared toward younger children when the playground expands. Ms. Sturm asked if the suggestions made are ADA compliant. Ms. Viens responded affirmatively. The Commission proceeded to plot out the proposed placement of trees, the pavilion and reserved space for future projects on a map.

Ms. Weinstein stated that she would love to see a chess/checker board etched into tables. Ms. McGinn asked where the pieces would be kept. Ms. Weinstein explained that the library has offered to store and check out the pieces for use at Taylor Park but hasn't thought about Houghton Park. Ms. Sturm suggested having anyone who wants to use the boards to bring their own pieces. Ms. Sturm stated that she would like to propose repurposing the old trash cans at Taylor Park when they come out and relocating them to Houghton Park.

Ms. Viens stated that she needs to know where the Commission would like the exercise equipment to be located and where the water bottle filling station and drinking fountain should be located. Ms. Weinstein asked if it wouldn't make the most sense to place the drinking fountain near the bathrooms. Ms. Viens responded that Public Works has indicated that it can be located anywhere. Ms. Sturm agreed that a location near the bathroom would seem ideal. Mr. Chevalier commented that he is a little skeptical about placing the fountain near the bathrooms because he believes it will be hidden and more susceptible to vandalism. Ms. McGinn stated that she envisioned it being located in close proximity to the pavilion. Ms. Sturm commented that she envisioned the water fountain serving the entire park and not just the playground area. Mr. Koldys suggested installing two water fountains, one at either end of the park. Ms. Weinstein wondered if the Steelers planned to install their own fountain. Ms. Viens stated that she asked the Steelers today if they had any plans to install a fountain and their responses was that their focus is on infrastructure. They indicated that their players all come to games and practices with their own water jugs. Ms. Viens agreed that the Steeler's response does not benefit users of the tennis and basketball courts. Mr. Chevalier noted that two fountains would allow all users of the park to have close access to water. Ms. Weinstein asked how the fountain is being funded. Ms. Viens responded that one fountain will be funded through Park money and the pavilion would be a good grant option. Mr. Koldys noted the strong focus by the Commission on the new playground and suggested placing the fountain close by. He suggested looking into options for a second fountain to be located closer to the courts sometime down the road. Ms. Sturm suggested potentially placing grills near the proposed pavilion site and if that occurred, would want the water fountain to be nearby. The general consensus was to place the water fountain near the site of the future pavilion. Ms. Sturm stated that she would suggest also making sure fountain is installed along the ADA approved, accessible walkway. **The final consensus was to put the fountain near the future pavilion, along the ADA approved walkway.**

Discussion continued about the placement of the exercise equipment. Ms. Sturm noted that it wouldn't make sense to have the equipment facing away from the swing set. Ms. Weinstein agreed that the equipment should be facing the playground to allow caregivers the ability to use the equipment while watching children. Ms. Sturm proposed placing the equipment in the open space near the trees or under the trees. **The final consensus was to place the equipment side by side in the open area near the trees facing the playground.**

Ms. Sturm suggested trying to locate old farm tractors that could be modified and used as playground equipment. Ms. Weinstein noted an old boat that she saw in an orchard that could also double as a fun piece of playground equipment.

3. Presentation from Steelers representative to describe field work.

Doug Corey, representative of St. Albans Football Association, introduced himself. He explained that the Association is made up of 7 members; Chad Spooner, President; Mike Manahan, Vice President; Chris Sabourin, Treasurer; Tim Smith, Kevin Smith and Jesse Remillard, Secretary. The Association proposes to recondition and resurface the field, adding topsoil, grass seed and fertilizer. They would like to start seeding the field in the last week of October and will have help from volunteers who have pledged their time and material. The Association has budgeted \$5,000 for this project. Mr. Corey stated that they would like to limit people walking on the newly seeded field between October and August. He added that the removal of the dogwood species has helped accelerate the project with the increased amount of sunlight that the field receives. The Association would like to be considered with any changes being proposed to parking and acknowledged the importance of ambulance access to the field. Mike Manahan stressed the importance of safety and medical access to the program.

Mr. Chevalier noted the importance of using a phosphorous-free fertilizer and suggested that the Association go through the proper channels to ensure they are using an appropriate fertilizer. He added that he believes it will be almost impossible to keep people off of the field unless a snow fence is installed around the perimeter. Discussion ensued about the type of grass to use. Mr. Chevalier recommended that the Association speak with David Kimel of the Collins Perley Sports & Fitness Center for input. Ms. McGinn agreed. Mr. Corey added that the Association applied for a grant to receive four recycle bins.

Mr. Spooner noted that there hasn't been any improvements made to the field since the 1980's and assured the Parks Commission that they have a dedicated board who will see that the project is done right. Ms. Booth recalled that the topic of improving the field was discussed at the last Parks Commission meeting and the only concern that was raised was whether or not the project would affect drainage. Mr. Corey stated that the intent is not to change anything by way of water distribution but is to ensure that the field is a safe, flat surface. He added that he would like to hold a community wide meeting with the support of the Parks Commission to address the issues of INS employees walking through the field to get to their vehicles. Mr. Chevalier noted that the second reading for proposed 2.5 hour parking along South Elm Street will take place next week at the City Council meeting. He doesn't believe the proposal will completely stop INS subcontractors from parking there but believes it will free up some spaces. Mr. Corey stated that if the Association has to fence off the area, he's confident that he could get a snow fence donated. Ms. Remillard added that they can also have signage made. Ms. Viens noted that the INS contractors do have alternate parking available at the old Handy lot. Mike Manahan noted that water pools near the shack and asked the Parks Commission how they would like the Association to address the drainage problem in that location. Ms. Viens asked Mr. Manahan if it's correct that Allen Robtoy is part of the Association. Mr. Manahan responded that Mr. Robtoy is on the Field Committee. Ms. Viens suggested keeping Mr. Robtoy in the loop to address drainage issues. Mr. Corey stated that the Association will continue to keep in communication with the Parks Commission and work together toward making the field a safer better place for the community.

**A motion was made by Joan McGinn; seconded by Angie Sturm to accept the proposal by the St. Albans Football Program as presented. Vote was unanimous, 6-0.**

4. Presentation by Tom Koldys to allow BFA to develop a natural lab along the brook at Houghton Park (D&V).

a. Develop natural lab by changing course of brook and addition of appropriate species.

Mr. Koldys explained that he was having a conversation with Molly Magnan, a science teacher at BFA about a community in Ohio who had a waterway moving through their school campus which looks similar to the brook along Houghton Park. The community regraded the banks and planted local species of plants, creating an outdoor lab for field studies. Ms. Magnan has reached out to Denise Smith to see what kind of support might exist in the community.

Ms. Sturm noted that she has a neighbor who is a river engineer that looked at the stretch of Stevens Brook along Houghton Park. Considering how it's channelized, the river engineer's opinion was that the waterway couldn't be naturalized because there isn't enough range for it to meander in a natural way without it damaging the football field. Mr. Koldys noted that the community in Ohio created berms along the river bank to slow the flow of water down. He recommended adding species that would help clean the waterway and stabilize the banks. Ms. Weinstein commented that Jeff Young had stated there was substantial grant money available for such a project. She added that there is an old industrial settling pond across the street. Mr. Chevalier stated that he has seen living species in the pond and would love to see something done to the brook and allow students to be involved. Mr. Chevalier stated that he would love to hear more about what could be done to improve the channel. He asked if anyone knew who owns the walking bridge. Ms. Viens responded that she wasn't sure but believes INS does and will ask Mr. Robtoy.

5. Discuss options for a fence along S. Elm Street (D&V).

Ms. Weinstein stated that she heard a rumor that Mylan is trying to purchase Houghton Park from the City. Ms. Viens responded that they did express interest at one time but Houghton Park is protected by a grant.

Discussion circled back to fencing options for the park. Ms. Viens noted that a nearby preschool noted their support for an enclosed fence. Mr. Chevalier suggested installing a couple sections to see what it would look like. Ms. Weinstein asked if they could be connected at a later date. Ms. Viens stated that at Barlow, she had requested something that gave children a visual queue that they were nearing the road, something that looked neighborly and something that had breaks in it so people wouldn't be tempted to crawl over the top. Ms. Viens explained that the Parks Commission can request plantings near the fences and can request that they be as close or as far apart as they'd like. Mr. Koldys commented that he believes a completely fenced in area encourages adults to let their children run loose without being supervised. The rest of the Commission agreed with Mr. Koldys' sentiments. Ms. Booth stated that she'd like to hear input from planners who plan playgrounds. Ms. Viens responded that the planners who plan playgrounds do not recommend using fences anymore and consider fences to be a great liability.

Mr. Koldys suggested moving the existing playground equipment closest to the road further back to deter children from being near the road. Ms. Viens stated that Public Works believes they can move one of the pieces but might not be able to move the second piece without breaking it. Ms. McGinn stated that she would hate to lose any of the equipment. Ms. Sturm commented that she believes it does create a safety issue to leave them so close to the road.

**The consensus of the group was to install a couple of split rail fences between the edge of the park and the ADA walkway to see what they look like before relocating the existing pieces of playground equipment.**

Ms. Sturm reminded the group of the offer made by Soil Fest to create a dedicated Mayoral garden and wondered if they would donate plantings.

**A motion was made by Tom Koldys; seconded by Stina Booth to install 3 split rail fences like the ones located at the Barlow Community Center, two to the north of the ADA accessible walkway and one to the south at Houghton Park. Vote was unanimous, 6-0.**

Ms. Weinstein suggested installing signage at the park to indicate the age group that the park is designed and recommended for. Ms. Viens responded that signage would need both council and legal approval.

6. Other Business.

No other business was discussed.

7. Consider Approval of Minutes: 5/3/16 (D&V).

**A motion was made by Joan McGinn; seconded by Tom Koldys to approve 5/3/16 minutes. Motion carried unanimously.**

8. Adjourn.

**A motion was made by Peter Chevalier; seconded by Tom Koldys to adjourn the meeting. Vote was unanimous, 6-0.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristen Smith  
Community Relations Coordinator

Approved