

**ST. ALBANS CITY PARKS COMMISSION**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**JANUARY 3, 2017 6:00 PM**

**RECREATION DEPARTMENT, 2<sup>ND</sup> FLOOR**

In Attendance: Tom Koldys, Angie Sturm, Jeff Young, Joan McGinn, Stina Booth, New Member – Alec Kaeding arrived at 7:20 pm

Absent: Barbara Weinstein

Staff Members Present: Chip Sawyer; Director of Planning & Development, Therese Carlisle; Minute Taker, Kelly Viens; Director of Recreation

Special Guests: Mike Byers and Josh Lareau

Topic	Discussion	Action
1. Call to Order.	Mr. Lareau arrives just as the meeting is beginning. Ms. Viens sets up the projector. Mr. Lareau puts down his things, including a white board. Mr. Lareau questioned the dramatic down scaling of the size of the garden, confirming that this was due to the football practice fields. Mr. Koldys explains that in August the commission walked around Houghton Park and found out that there was an additional team using the original space that the commission thought would be open for the garden. He also mentions that the commission felt like this might be a	Tom Koldys calls to order at 6:00 pm; meeting of the Parks Commission on Tuesday, January 3, 2017.
2. Revisit proposal from Josh Lareau for installation of an edible garden which utilizes permaculture concepts		Get together in the early spring (the last week in March), meet at Houghton St. Park and put a final decision on the space that Josh will be using.

**Mr. Josh Lareau exits the meeting at 6:25 pm.**

more comfortable starting point, and to see how the project progresses and grows from this. Ms. Sturm adds that over the next couple of years there will be other placement and movement in the park and it is hoped that this would carve out additional spaces for more gardens to grow. Mr. Lareau agrees with the vision and hopes that this would be just the beginning of a more “revolutionary” project.

Mr. Lareau begins by explaining what permaculture is-creating an area where the plants are self-sustaining as much as possible; avoiding any rototilling, which will disturb the microbial layer that already exists underground that will eventually help these plants become prolific. In order to create a good quality soil that will sustain this garden he will build up from the ground using sheet mulching. Starting by laying down cardboard to eliminate grass and weeds; covering that with manure, compost and straw. This technique will suppress weed growth. Mr. Lareau will do any weeding that is necessary and hopes that volunteers will help to pick the harvest and donate it to local nonprofits. The ultimate goal, however, is that any families and children that are using the park will take advantage of the crop, consuming it all and eliminating the need for volunteers to harvest. Mr. Lareau plans to use word of mouth, Front Porch forum and local schools to ensure the crop does not go to waste. The projector displays a picture of a permaculture guild, with photos of different plants that would fit into the guild. The Guild would usually start with a large tree (oak) and work out from that but in this situation he will start with an apple tree. Mr. Lareau utilizes the white board to further his explanation and using detailed descriptions of each plant, why he would want to plant it, and the purpose it would serve. Fruit shrubs, ground cover, herbs and some pollinators to bring in the bees and birds. Due to the smaller size some adjustments will need to be made.

Instead of having a couple of apple trees for cross pollination Mr. Lareau will need to select a self-pollinating variety. Mr. Koldys confirms that an exact plot location has not been decided on yet. Continuing with Mr. Lareau's plan; currents and gooseberries; Mr. Lareau states that he is open to others but these do well in this area and he likes that it would be exposing people to a new fruit that they might not normally eat, but is concerned that this may also result in less of a desire to consume the fruit. The edge will be filled in with mint and borage, these are both edible and will help to bring in the bees. The mint will also help to repel pests. Finally filling in the last space with nasturtium, these produce an edible flower; they will spread throughout the garden and do a great job of cutting out the weeds. Also incorporating some garlic to help repel pests. Alpine Strawberries would also work well for ground cover, along with the nasturtium; dispelling weeds and creating another food source. The nasturtium flowers are edible, good in salads. A pesto can also be made with them. Mr. Lareau will work with John Young to create signage for the garden; what the plants are and what they can be used for. Mr. Young points out that the nasturtium is an annual plant. Mr. Lareau has a large amount of seeds saved for this and it is possible that the amount of seeds dropped from the plant would regrow. Mr. Sawyer questions how Mr. Lareau will control the mint? Mr. Lareau responds that the area surrounding the garden will be mowed. Mr. Sawyer inquires, about control inside the garden. Mr. Lareau plans to use mulching and possibly some underground wooden barrier. Mr. Lareau explains that the space will need a nitrogen fixer, beans will have this job. They will pull the nitrogen out of the air, put it into the seeds, when they drop the nitrogen will go right back into the soil. Lastly will be comfrey; this is a drain plant, it will pull some of the nutrients up from the soil, it can be chopped down 3 times per year, it grows gigantic

leaves and will also put nitrogen back into the soil. All plants are edible, the comfrey is more of a medicinal, Mr. Lareau states that he would not advise a 7 year old to go make a tincture but it will be there for anybody that wants it.

Mr. Lareau asks what the commissions long term vision is for this, try it out for how long? A year, 3 years, 5 years...see how harvest goes? Mr. Koldys tries to recall if any discussion had been held about that, turning to the other commission members for input. Ms. Sturm adds that seeing how it all works out is the kind of thing that is discussed when any new project is being created. Mr. Lareau hopes to have a hand pump system to pull water out of the brook. If he is able to get permitting and permission he would install rain gutters on the building with a rain barrel, this would only further the benefits of this project; preventing some of the rain runoff. Mr. Koldys states that there will be a water source, but it would be a bit contradictive of the system Mr. Lareau is trying to create. Mr. Young mentions that he is aware of a grant that will help to fund this project. Mr. Young then suggests that the soil will be difficult to work with; maybe explore plants such as Sambuca, Aronia or dogwoods that would do well in the existing soil. Mr. Lareau states that he is open to looking into these plants and he thought about putting in Sea Buckthorn plant but felt it was not the best choice due to the fact that it is not a native plant. Mr. Lareau had also considered the Aronia but it is a very bitter fruit and felt that it would not be appealing to his target audience; 12 and under. Mr. Young asked what he thought about hardy blueberries. Mr. Lareau would like to get started and make adjustments as needed, find what works and what does not. Mr. Young is in support of the project, he thinks it is great and nicely follows what the commission has been trying to accomplish. Mr. Lareau is concerned about placement of the garden, in an earlier

conversation Mr. Chad Spooner stated the shade trees were scheduled to be planted in the park in the spring time. Mr. Lareau feels strongly that the garden will have greatest success being near the play structures. Mr. Koldys confirms that the commission is considering spaces near the playground. Looking at 3-7 years for a completion of this project. Mr. Koldys talked about 3-7 years being a long trial period, so this would more likely be a rolling project. After a year of experience the commission could revisit this topic, talk about the success or failure and whether or not they are ready to implement more of these in the community. Mr. Young suggests starting as soon as the frost is gone; he also brings up the fact that compost is often laden with weeds which can cause struggles. Ms. Sturm voices her surprise that Mr. Lareau would want to plant Comfrey and Mint, her concern is that they will take over. Mr. Lareau says he has experience with these in his own yard, he understands and explains that many of these plants will become intermingled; and that is the plan for weed control. Mr. Lareau wants to assure the commission that it will still look appealing. Mr. Young suggests that Dead Nettle is good ground cover and would do well in the park, but he is not sure that it is edible; Mr. Lareau is not familiar with this plant and will learn more about it. Mr. Koldys brings up the fact that there will be large trees planted around the playground in the spring. Some white Oak and other varieties, Mr. Lareau feels that these could be great to work around. More conversation ensues about location and direction of the garden. Some conversation about funding; Mr. Lareau has talked with Rise VT, NMC, a local dentist; Mr. Young suggests NOTCH and Ms. McGinn recommends contacting Tim Camisa for high quality compost.

3. Consider cement work (benches, tables, etc.) by Mike Byers and possible

Mr. Byers; owner of Black Tern Studio, thanks the Commission for inviting him to this evenings meeting. He proceeds by passing around small samples of his work.

Planning and brainstorming at next month's meeting.

recommendation for purchase and installation at Houghton Park (D&V).

While passing them around he describes the materials that he uses and the types of work that he does (he does not do sidewalks). Incorporating many other materials such as glass, stone and metal these are decorative concrete works, he also adds materials to change the formulation of the concrete. Providing a reinforced material that is stronger and of different colors. Mr. Byers formulation works for keeping the water out of the projects; this prolongs the life of the product. Mr. Byers covers the topic of vandalism, stating that the surface is very strong and not easily damaged. If surface damage does occur he is able to sand it off. The options are endless, Mr. Byers overflows with ideas. He would encourage the inclusion of art and of engravings from local schools that would allow this project to become customized. Mr. Byers then mentions that he is able to add extra supports on the base, if the commission wanted the project to be more mobile. Mr. Koldys responds that they would need to follow any safety standards that are in place regarding the installation of the benches or tables. Mr. Byers weighed a previous table at 1,000 lbs.

Ms. Sturm comments that with all the magazines and places to order supplies, tables, trash cans, etc.; it is also important to consider a local business and the quality of the item that they would bring to the purchase. She feels it is important to always have a local business considered when making a purchase. Ms. Booth compliments Mr. Byers on the beautiful work that he does, it is much nicer than what she had envisioned and is very glad that he was able to come tonight. Many members of the commission feel the same way and are really happy to hear about the idea of including local works of art.

Cost- Much of the price comes from the labor. It is very labor intensive work. Some cost comes from specialty materials, not a lot of cost comes from the concrete. It is really difficult to put a price out without a better idea of

**Mr. Byers exits the meeting at 6:45 pm.**

what the project will be. Ms. Sturm asks about the possibility of working in place to create the project, eliminating the time and labor of transporting the finished product. Mr. Byers confirms that in this situation, putting something into a park, that would be a helpful solution to lowering the time and labor of the project.

Mr. Byers did some looking around on-line at other tables, made with other materials to compare pricing. He passed around a photo of an example that he found, with attached benches. With much consideration Mr. Byers gave a very rough figure of \$1500, stating that this would be a very tight budget to create a basic picnic table at 6ft. long. Ms. Sturm brings up the idea of placing some checkerboard tables in Taylor Park, with the Library holding the game pieces for the tables. Ms. Sturm thought that Mr. Byers would be a great person to install these. Mr. Young brings up the fact that these types of table were present in the park years ago. They presented a seating area and gathering spot for local teenagers and were one of the first items that he removed from the park.

The Commission thanks Mr. Byers for coming tonight and giving them some ideas to process at the next meeting.

While Mr. Byers is collecting his samples the topic of temperature is mentioned. The material gets hot and stays hot for some time; it will also draw out body heat when sitting on it in the winter time. Placement of these will be of great consideration for peoples comfort. Mr. Byers states that the layers and colors of the material will also have a large effect on the temperature the stone maintains.

4. Discuss next steps in regard to Taylor Park planning and associated steering committee with Chip Sawyer.

The grant was approved! Congratulations! Mr. Sawyer has begun reaching out to stakeholder groups to grow a steering committee. He has had response from Planning Commission, Master Gardeners, Farmer's Market, Downtown Board, Veterans, and Chamber of Commerce. Reach out has been made to St. Albans Historical

Mr. Sawyer is working to draft an RFP for the consultants that will build up what is in the application for work.

Museum/Historical Society and Rise VT. Rise VT would be a welcomed presence but is currently undergoing a shift in leadership and it is unclear if the timeline will work out for them to be at the function. The Maple Festival has not yet responded, also waiting to hear from Rotary and Rec. Department. The first two or three months will be RFP and consultant selection. Mr. Sawyer proposes that a possibility for the first steering committee meeting would be introductions, go over work plan, draft RFP, and appoint selection committee. There is a preference for folks to meet during the day, which makes things easier. Not much else to report, just lots of work to do bringing things together. Mr. Sawyer continues explaining his vision of what he believes will help things move forward smoothly (having a couple visioning meetings, gathering info from each person about all the things that the park is used for), looking for conflicts, creating a large list of all the things we would like to see the park used for and use a process of elimination for what will work or not work. Mr. Koldys inquires if the grant money is primarily purposed for the planning, if that is the only limit of the grant? Mr. Sawyer responds that there are many small things that local funding could chip away at, but in this project those things would all be bundled together. It will also eliminate some of the "willy nilly" trouble of decision making - when funds become available it will go towards the next step on the plan. This grant will really help to coordinate and collaborate for the future of Taylor Park. Ms. McGinn inquires the amount of the grant. -\$20,000. Mr. Young asks if the City will augment that amount. Mr. Sawyer responds that they will be, with \$10,000, most grants require some match of funding. Turning this into a \$29 or \$30,000 project. Ms. McGinn then inquires about the cost associated with working with a consultant. Mr. Sawyer responds that \$150/hr. is an average. He continues by stating that many

Looking at late January or early February as a time line for creating a steering committee for this project.

Mr. Sawyer will run a poll with the two dates (January 30 and February 2) to find which one will work for as many of the stakeholders as possible.

-St. Albans Free Library to be added to the list of possible interested stakeholders.

of the meetings will take place without the consultant present due to not wanting to compensate. He also points out he has realized this means that we will have to organize and facilitate many of these as well, volunteering that he is willing to do this. Mr. Koldys points out that it will be important to keep large groups of stakeholders focused when the consultant is present.

Mr. Young states that he is on board with Mr. Sawyer's idea about collecting all the ideas and whittling it down to the most practical that are able to achieve the most.

Mr. Young wonders if the initial meeting will be open for any community members to attend. Mr. Sawyer plans to advertise using the Messenger, Facebook, and Front Page Forum.

The location is still to be determined, but is likely to be the City Council Chamber will be sufficient. If the group is too large, a larger space may be needed.

Ms. Booth wants to verify that all interested stakeholder groups were added to the list.

The group viewed their individual calendars and came up with a couple of dates that work; Monday, January 30 or Thursday, February 2. Purpose of the meeting will be to organize, give a rundown of the project and what is hoped to accomplish, draft RFP and appoint individuals that will be selected the consultants. Mr. Koldys reminds the members that it would be great for as many to make it to these as possible, even if they are not able to attend them all, that's ok but it would be great to attend some. The Steering committee is scheduled to present to the Parks Commission and as the Parks Commission Chair, Mr. Koldys has agreed to take on a role in this process.

Mr. Young brings up that it would be beneficial for the stakeholders to receive a brief history of Taylor Park. Providing a greater understanding of the 2011 planning process and what changes have been made to the Park while keeping it very brief. Mr. Koldys suggests someone

5. Other Business

with great knowledge to put together the information and then and individual that does not have a great knowledge of Taylor Parks history to present it, this would eliminate getting off topic and dragging on.

Mr. Young presents 2 large printed versions of a google maps picture of Taylor Park. It would be helpful to have these present during discussions of the Park and giving a greater understanding of where things are located.

Mr. Koldys brings up some information from previous meetings asking about what the school has. Signage-utilizing local schools and exploring what equipment might be available. Ms. Sturm suggested contact Heather Smith; who heads the school garden, or the school tech person. Ms. Sturm also adds that the signs that were put out into the garden seem to be peeling and deteriorating by the end of the season. Mr. Koldys plans to check in at BFA to see what is available as well.

Mr. Young shared that Mr. Laz Scangas will be representing the Downtown Board at the steering committee.

6. Introduce/meet new commission member Alec Kaeding

Introduction, he runs the all of the beaches for The City of Burlington. All people present introduce themselves.

Mr. Koldys gives Mr. Kaeding a brief overview of parks that this Commission works with and what the members are currently working on.

**Alec Kaeding arrived at 7:20 pm.**

7. Consider approval of meeting minutes: 12/6/2016 (D&V)

Mr. Koldys calls to attention several typos and grammar mistakes.

A motion to approve the edited version of these minutes is put up by Mr. Young, 2<sup>nd</sup> buy Ms. Booth and all members vote in favor.

**An edited version of December minutes is approved.**

8. Adjourn

Mr. Young moves to adjourn and is 2<sup>nd</sup> by Ms. Booth.

**January meeting of the Parks Commission adjourns at 7:30 pm.**

The next Parks Commission Meeting is scheduled to be held on Tuesday, February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

Submitted respectfully by Therese Carlisle