

Parks & Recreation Advisory Board Minutes
August 19, 2020
****DRAFT****

Members Attending

RJ Hogan – Chair
Shirin Jenkins – Co-Chair
Ingrid Corbi
Andy McGlinn
Marissa Bryant
Hunter Holland
Zach Gilbert
Erika Robertson

Members Absent:

Emily Morgan
Will Bordeaux

Others Present:

Davina Bell
Margaret Isbell – Admin
Matt Emmerich
Marian Doherty
Tony Franklin
Kelly Franklin

CALLED TO ORDER

RJ called the meeting to order.

APPROVAL OF JUNE 2020 MINUTES

Andy made a motion to approve the June 2020 minutes, Ingrid seconded the motion, all approved.

WILMINGTON TREE INITIATIVE – MARIAN DOHERTY

The Wilmington Tree Initiative started earlier this year. This was something that Mayor Saffo really wanted to do. We have done a few tree giveaways, one was held last December and the other one was held February with the Alliance for Cape Fear Trees and the Wilmington Tree Commission. Mayor Saffo wanted to work on a more cohesive plan for trees, tree planting and education.

We have put together key partners that are passionate about trees and make an impact on the Urban Forestry. To name a few key partners, Alliance for Cape Fear Trees, Cape Fear Garden Club, City of Wilmington, Keep New Hanover County Beautiful, and several other key partners. We have made outreach to New Hanover County, Cape Fear Community College and UNCW. They are large and could have an impact on the tree initiative here in Wilmington.

The goal for this initiative is to plant 1,738 trees by next fall. Initially the plan was to plant the trees on public property, however with conversations with their partners it's equally important to also plant on private property. Another aspect is the education aspect, if they are planning the tree, public or private you should know what type of tree to be planted, where to be planted and how to maintain the tree. On the education front we are working with the Tree Commission again as well as the NC Cooperative Extension, to develop workshops on how to pick a tree, pruning and how to keep the tree looking great.

We will be soliciting donations to purchase new trees, encourage tree planning on private property. Trees from donated funds would be used for street trees and right of ways. The size and species of tree will be determined by location.

What we would like from the P&R Advisory Board is to identify groups to speak to, speak to group about the initiative, identify businesses that may want to contribute and share the information.

There will be a kick-off meeting coming up sometime in September or October. There are two tree giveaways coming up in October and this will not diminish the number of trees. Contractors would also plant trees and be responsible for 18 months to make sure they thrive.

PRESENTATION BY MATT EMMERICH – PROPOSAL TO NAME BASEBALL FIELD AT ROBERT STRANGE PARK FOR SAM BOWENS***

Special guest Matt Emmerich gave a presentation/proposal to name baseball field 1 at 8th and Church, Robert Strange Park for Sam Bowens. Sam Bowens was a young man that started his baseball career at the age of 14. He joined a local all black (Negro League) semi-pro team, the Wilmington Clippers, they would play teams from Raleigh and Greensboro. The team played at the field located at 8th and Church. Four years later Sam led Williston High School to State Championships in Baseball, Basketball, Track & Field, and Football. Sam averaged 20 points a game in basketball as a center.

After college Sam was signed by the Baltimore Orioles. All during college Sam played 4 sports with a focus on baseball. In the fall of 1956 Sam would attend Nashville Giants (negro league) practices after TSU football practices. These Saturday and Sunday evening games allowed the black people of Wilmington to freely assemble, eat a picnic lunch or dinner and have fun. This is also a history worth preserving. Matt made a comment that the New Hanover High School sign a Legion Stadium shows the names of the New Hanover High School Championship but nothing about the Williston High School Championships.

Matt said Sam didn't reach his pinnacle, followed by Andy making a comment about the number of players. It was suggested that Sam's brother Frank Bowens be in attendance during the dedication if this passes the naming committee. Sam is member of the Wilmington Hall of Fame, his picture is hanging in the Wilmington Airport.

Andy made a motion to approve and recommend this go to the naming committee, Ingrid made a second motion, all was in favor of renaming the ball field and 8th and Church to the Sam Bowens Field. Matt asked how changing the name officially works. Davina explained that it will go to the naming committee, they will take a vote and if passes city staff will be in charge of putting up the new sign. Matt has some ideas for the signage, Davina explained that we have to keep with the standard format for parks signs but will keep Matt in the loop There is no time frame of when this all will happen. There are several council members on the naming committee. ****See note below.**

OPTIMIST PARK***

There is a resolution going to council to convert the park to surplus property. Staff has not been able to properly maintain due to constant flooding whenever there is a heavy rain and since hurricane Florence. This property is also in the right of way for the DOT widening project. This has impacted the area for use of this property because of the widening project. At some point the city won't have a say in this because of the DOT project. Ingrid ask why it's designated as "surplus"? Right now, this is not being used as a park because of the ongoing flooding when we have heavy rain or storms.

Shirin asked about planting trees that do well in more wetter areas. This isn't really an option since we don't know when the DOT project will start. Erika asked if someone were to purchase this land would Parks & Recreation receive the funds from the purchase? Davina believes the answer would be yes, the sale of the property, if sold would go back to the division.

Davina asked if the board was in support of reclassifying Optimist Park from an active park to surplus property. Shirin made a motion to approve, Andy seconded the motion. All board members were in favor of reclassifying Optimist Park from an active park to surplus property. ****See note below**

LIVE NATION AGREEMENT***

After much back and forth, the management contract between Live Nation and the City, to manage the Hugh Morten Amphitheater, a resolution will be going to council in September. Live Nation was one of two firms that responded to the RFP to manage the Amphitheater. Management will include booking events, scheduling services, venue consulting, facility management and food and beverage concessions.

The agreement has two sets of terms, the first term due to COVID-19 states, for calendar year 2020, Live Nation is only subject to a fee of \$700.00 per event and \$2.00 per ticket sold. Beginning in 2021, the city will receive \$40,000 per year fixed rent up to 30 events, and additional \$1,500.00 in rent for each event between 31 and 40. There are roughly about 30-35 events per season. Lastly, \$250,000 in kind value of maintenance expenses over the subscribed term of the contract of 10 years and can be renewed for an additional 10 years. Which is all laid out in the copy of the resolution that was provided to the board.

In addition, the city will receive \$2.00 for every ticket sold. Live Nation will provide an initial capital investment of \$500,000.00 for equipment, furnishings, and fixtures. With half of the improvements being completed within the first 18 months of the 2021 events and the remainder of the improvement being completed by event season 2026. Live Nation will also be managing North Water Front Park.

Some of the board members are interested in attending the council meeting when this resolution was on the agenda. This resolution is set for the September 1 meeting.

Davina asked if the board was in support of the management contract with Live Nation and the City of Wilmington. Erika made a motion to approve, Andy seconded the motion. All but one board members, who abstained, were in favor of this management contract.

POOLS UPDATE

Legion Pool is currently closed because of an excessive water leak. There has been several thousand gallons that has leaked under the course of a few weeks. Both YMCA staff and city staff are working together to get the testing done to determine where the leak is coming from. Phase 1 of the testing was completed last week, however, the service company that is doing the testing had to order a new piece of equipment. This has delayed the second part of the testing. The next testing will be the week of August 29. City staff are working to contain the leak to prevent another high water bill.

Northside Pool, they are working on getting the pool painted and when they got down to the deeper end they encountered moisture from ground water because of cracks in the concrete. YMCA and City staff are working to get the pool drained and plug the leaks and finish painting. However, because of the rain we've had it has taken a longer amount of time. Once they drain the pool they will need to wait until it's dry to fix the cracks then finish painting. City staff has been given the green light to assist the YMCA to make sure these repairs are completed in a timely manner.

Lastly, Robert Strange Pool had an electrical issue due to hurricane Isis, that has been repaired and the pool has reopened. This is the only pool that is up and running.

BOARD ENGAGEMENT

Davina asked board members how they can become more engaged in projects. Last meeting Erika suggested Adopt-A-Park so that if there is an event at a specific park and engage or participate in that event. Davina also inquired if the advisory members would be interested in wearing a polo with the city logo on it plus adding "Advisory Board". Members were very receptive to this idea. Davina ask board

members to think of other ideas to be more engaged. Ingrid made a suggestion to have a cooking class for some of the kids in the community centers.

OLD BUSINESS

No old business to discuss.

NEW BUSINESS

New board member introduction, David Eason. Davina has recently sent a request to Amy to get an updated comprehensive plan.

ADJOURNMENT

RJ made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Andy made the first motion, Ingrid made the second motion to adjourn, all approved.

****Items requiring a vote*

NOTE: some statements provided at the meeting (Optimist Park & Baseball Field Renaming) were partially correct and that correct information has been noted below into the draft minutes. Please note the process for naming a facility was not quite correct. the P&R Advisory Board takes action forwards to City Clerk Office to submit to Council Facilities Naming Committee. If CFNC recommends approval, the naming request goes to the full council for consideration and action. If full council approves, then naming goes forward.

For agenda item related to naming requests: council placed a moratorium on renaming existing facilities and streets until a new policy has been adopted.

For agenda item related to Optimist Park: city's long standing practice/policy is the sale of park land/facilities with regard to the proceeds, these proceeds will go to the general fund, fund balance is not dedicated for other park needs.