

Parks Commission

Regular Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 13, 2015
6:00 p.m., Council Chambers



1. Call to Order by Reinert at 6:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Present: Cobb, Fitzgibbon, Moore, Toneman, White, Reinert
Absent: McAlear

Also present: Brian Dissette, City Manager; Roger Huff, DPW Director

3. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Fitzgibbon, second by Cobbs to approve the January 13, 2015 regular meeting agenda as presented.

All in favor. Motion carried.

4. Approval of Minutes for the Record – December 9, 2014

Motion by Toneman, second by Moore to approve the December 9, 2014 regular meeting minutes as written.

All in favor. Motion carried.

5. Public Comments and Inquiries Concerning Items not on the Agenda

None at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

6. Commission will be requested to provide comments related to improvements of the South Beach restroom and concession area.

Halberstadt noted that staff from GMB Architects are here tonight to take the board through a presentation for redevelopment of the South Beach restroom and concession area. Objectives of their presentation are based on the city's need for a new enclosed building space for the South Beach concessionaire. At the same time the city would like to improve the restroom facilities by adding extra toilet space for busy times of the year and have a

discussion with the Historical Association of South Haven (HASH) about doing some kind of interpretative plaza area for south pier lighthouse fundraising.

Jeff Hoag, Architect, GMB Architects, introduced Tim Garretson and Nate Bosch who are landscape architects with GMB. Hoag noted that he wants to outline some preliminary concepts for discussion to get ideas and dialogue from the group. Hopes they can isolate one or more concepts for a little further development and come back to the board with a follow-up presentation.

Hoag described the pros and cons of development at the current site:

Pros:

- Temporary concession has positive revenues at current location
- Temporary concession has utilities in place. This will keep the cost of redevelopment reasonable.
- The site is ideally suited to provide a connection between and services to both South Beach and the Harborwalk.

Cons:

- Insufficient number of fixtures in bathrooms for peak season needs.
- Facilities are difficult to maintain due to style of construction and materials utilized.
- Harsh environment due to location on beach.

The proposal includes upgrade of exterior finishes; improved pedestrian circulation; improved underground utilities; and provides an element of lighthouse improvement revenue awareness.

Using a slide presentation with photos, it was pointed out that the roofs of the existing restroom and pavilion are beyond their life cycle. Halberstadt noted that the site is surrounded by a concrete wall originally constructed to surround the Coast Guard station. Vandalism of the wall in the form of graffiti is a recurring issue. Hoag noted the sand encroaching toward the covered pavilion.

Discussion ensued regarding the temporary concession facility which Halberstadt noted is simply a shed with a wooden floor that the concessionaire leaves onsite year round. In response to questions, Halberstadt confirmed that the shed is owned by the concessionaire who brings in a couple of additional trailers during the season.

There is another existing wall on the other side of the walkway which, when removed, will help develop that area for circulation through the site.

Interior existing conditions of the pavilion observed; it was noted that painting and other maintenance is necessary due to wood structure. Noted that the interior roof structure of the restroom building allows an open pathway for sound and light between men's and women's restrooms. GMB feels it is important to make a permanent barrier between men's and women's areas. The upgrades will also meet all ADA (American Disabilities Act) guidelines and accessibility requirements for the structures in this area.

In response to a question by Moore about how many existing fixtures are in current restrooms, it was determined to be four (4) each.

Hoag: Due to changing needs with young families the incorporation of family restrooms/changing rooms is being considered.

Nate Bosch: Noted that pieces of the various concepts can be picked from the three (3) available options.

Option 1: Turn existing restroom building into all-women's facility and turn existing pavilion into combination men's/family facility. Add eating plaza between restrooms and concession area. Pick up pedestrian connection points. Pointed out that future splash pad area has been blocked in on the drawing. Make way finding easier.

Option 2: Move concession a little closer to the restroom facilities than in Option 1. Build out underneath existing pavilion for new women's restroom facility and turn existing restrooms into a combination men's and family restroom. Provide a larger open eating space covered with a temporary/seasonal shade structure.

Option 3: Develop men's and women's restrooms within the existing structures. Build out the pavilion with concessions in one half and men's restroom in the other. The existing restroom facility to become a women's restroom with removal of dividing wall. This option is the most cost effective but does not include a family restroom.

In response to questions Hoag noted that all restrooms in all three concepts will be ADA compliant.

Reinert asked whether any of this could become year round. "As we develop as a year round destination it would be nice to have a restroom that could be used year round in the pier area. Could the concession building have multiple functions for fall events or other events?"

Hoag said the simple answer is it can be done; adding heat to the buildings and maintenance would likely increase the project cost.

Moore noted that there is no provision on any of these site plans for a pavilion. Bosch said we could talk about a shade structure. Hoag noted there could be permanent columns or posts and an added shade structure that could be taken down after the main season is over. Hoag stated they do want to maintain seating and shade but maybe in a less permanent way.

Toneman asked about shade close to the splash pad even if it is just for the summer. Halberstadt pulled up a picture of a shade structure with temporary panels from the internet to demonstrate the concept.

Fitzgibbon asked about the number of units that are being considered for toilets. Hoag said we talked about doubling fixture counts but could maybe do some studies by looking at parking space counts and determine how many people might be in the area. Noted that this area is different than an indoor space regarding an occupant load count.

Fitzgibbon asked whether it is known how many toilets the existing sewer will support. Hoag responded that the engineering has not been done yet.

Fitzgibbon asked whether the parking would stay the same. Jeff stated that the city has indicated that the plan is to keep the parking there. Concerns were expressed regarding splash pad users having to cross the parking lot to reach the restrooms and changing areas as well as the distance between the splash pad and other facilities.

Fitzgibbon noted that the pavilion does provide shelter when there have been storms; she hates to lose that. When the splash pad is added there will be a need for a changing area. Still hates to lose that permanent roof structure; regarding the temporary canvas shade element, Fitzgibbons pointed out the condition of flags in that area.

Dissette, City Manager: Noted that GMB is very aware of success as it relates to the splash pad. The St. Joseph splash pad is a wonderful facility but there are no on-site restrooms. We are seeing more and more people going to the South Beach. The project is a success but we are getting lines for the restrooms. One of the biggest issues is that the restroom doors are incredibly heavy; there are no automatic door openers and they are not accessible. As a parent, Dissette affirmed that these are less than ideal facilities to try to manage your kids while trying to change diapers and swimsuits using the restrooms. As we develop the splash pad it will only grow the need. Dissette also remarked on the need for outdoor showers.

Moore noted that the footprints on the old structures are being used; "can you not move anything?" Hoag responded that it would be a savings to reuse as much as we possibly can, especially plumbing and access to sanitary sewer.

Moore asked what the ideal picture would be. Fitzgibbons does not want to get rid of the pavilion; it is a safe place in a storm. Fitzgibbons suggested a roof between the two existing structures to provide shade and shelter. Hoag said a more permanent structure for shade and shelter could be provided.

Toneman observed that when we do the splash pad we will really need to have the restrooms and changing areas.

Moore asked how this is being funded. Dissette explained that when the city initially applied for the grant for the South Beach we included upgrades to concession and restrooms. The State made it clear that they were not going to add money for those facilities, the concession being more of a business endeavor. Dissette said we hope to set aside a quarter of a million in our capital projects fund; it would be a general fund contribution. It was noted that people are using the pavilion to change diapers and change clothes. An onsite outdoor shower which backs up to Water Street is being utilized extensively. Dissette noted, "For two decades we've had these facilities that are not ADA facilities. We need to look to the future, but looking back, the setup of restrooms at Packard Park is the best we have with multiple stalls and small changing rooms inside the building. That was a restroom set up with a lot of forward thought; they're Spartan but very usable."

Dissette noted that the concession stand is driving this project but the restrooms, outside shower and changing rooms are also needed. Hoag said, "We have studied this from a planning perspective. The existing buildings are not a detriment due to location; we have pedestrian connectivity; Water Street is raised so the structures being tucked in there is not a bad thing. If you open them, make them larger, they will block views. We want to reinforce the idea of the plaza and circulation through there. Nice to start from scratch but there is a lot of possibility with what is there."

Moore asked about pavilion cost. Reinert interjected that we will just give it back to these folks and let them determine how to add covered space and still provide open space. Reinert noted that everybody sees the need and supports that; we have been asked to give input.

Fitzgibbon asked about concession stand size. Bosch asked for input based on “your experiences down there; what do you like or not like?”

Fitzgibbon is concerned with pedestrian connection going through the parking. Halberstadt handed the GMB representatives a sketch illustrating removal of that parking area to be used for public connectivity; slide the splash pad closer; add more angle parking where the entrance to that parking area is. Hoag agreed that would be a significant improvement to the area. Discussion ensued about adding some handicap spaces near the restrooms.

Fitzgibbon noted that it sounds like we all agree that we need a permanent space for shelter. Dissette wondered about a structure that would combine pavilion and concession. Fitzgibbon reiterated that the space between the existing buildings could be covered to provide shelter.

Hoag noted that one of the next steps is to do some high-level budget evaluation, conceptual budgeting, for example, “What is the cost of a covered pavilion?” We will start identifying place-holder budget figures. The concepts tonight were presented to bring ideas and start dialogue.”

Dissette: “I had asked GMB to plan for space that the Historic Association can use; a patio space where they could sell bricks.” Bosch noted that in Option 1.) The main water front area includes a donor plaza with a view of the lighthouse; these pavers are surrounding you as you walk through. Option 2.) Put the pavers on the actual path so you are walking over them. Option 3.) Utilizes that existing wall; you could have names on the wall as you look beyond it to the lighthouse. Dissette explained he is advocating for this space because the Historical Association has agreed to and does own the South Pier light; HASH worked with the city and federal government to prevent the removal of the lighthouse.

Dissette noted that Ed Appleyard and Jim Ollgaard from the Historical Association have spent an unbelievable amount of time acquiring the light; when you see fresh red paint, that’s them. Now they are trying to raise money to bring the lighthouse back to its original condition; trying to raise approximately one million (\$1) dollars to maintain and restore that light.

Discussion ensued regarding why fundraising cannot occur on the pier. Dissette noted, “The city does not own the pier, so we cannot do anything on the pier to raise money for the light. The city wants to help them because having an excellent light in excellent condition helps everybody.”

As an example, Dissette explained how Ellen Avery Park was developed with donations. A group sold pavers with people’s names engraved and the city got great landscaping and a decorative clock was installed. “That went well. Now I hope the Parks Commission will get on board with what Ed and Jim have been doing.”

Fitzgibbon asked whether the Historical Association sells all the bricks first or if the city is

going to add on as they are sold.

Jim Ollgaard; HASH: "We are obligated to the federal government and the Parks Service to bring the lighthouse back to the condition it was in 1950 and provide interactive education to the public at some point in time. The State wanted us to start the fundraising within a couple of years so we really need to get going. When you ask people to donate money they would like to receive some recognition. I had a fantasy of putting pavers on that little kidney shaped space (near the handicapped parking area on South Beach) and Brian suggested the areas you see on the drawings. 2015 is the capital campaign. We want to put the pavers all in at once so we need to be able to tell the prospective donors there will be a place for them and when."

Discussion ensued regarding the logistics of installing the engraved pavers. Reinert said the passage of the number of people along that walkway will really help get you a lot more people interested in donating. Ollgaard said, regarding Dissette's suggestion, "We were thrilled; we never knew we could do this." Reinert stated that the board wants them to continue working forward.

Dissette said he would like to see a non-binding statement of support from the Commission. "This is a perfect window to incorporate our local citizens; the primary focus is concessions, the second is restrooms and third, helping our local volunteers and making it all look nice."

Fitzgibbons suggested even if the city cannot move forward, due to financial constraints, that the pathway for the Historic Society still be allowed. Hoag said the paver concept allows the most flexibility versus a plaque that is a one-time deal. How we do it is not as much of a concern as including the concept during planning.

Toneman suggested a lighthouse patio on the pier. Dissette reminded that it is not our property; it is federal property.

Halberstadt noted as they work on that there will need to be educational displays, perhaps closed circuit television so people can see inside the lighthouse.

Consensus: Have city staff continue with planning.

7. Commission will be requested to review a request for addition of a non-motorized watercraft lane at North Beach.

Dissette explained the State's methodology in awarding points to determine grant awards and that while the city has had a long run, there is less money available and the at some point the awards may stop. However, staff has learned that the governor has an initiative to provide locations in lakefront communities where people can put in and launch their non-motorized watercraft. Dissette noted that in the last grant application for North Beach improvements the city fell short of receiving funding by forty (40) points and that fifty (50) points could be gained by providing a non-motorized watercraft lane at North Beach. Dissette made it clear that he does not want the grant to be a reason to approve the idea of such a lane, but rather to have open discussion of the pros and cons regarding the impact of the lane itself and input from the Parks Commission.

While kite boarders will still use the area closer to the pier, Dissette does not advise

placing the watercraft lane there, due to the danger from wave action, but instead would like to place it near the north end of the North Beach, down from the concession stand. It was noted that buoys and signage would be components of adding such a lane. Discussion took place regarding the possibility of a space or two near the concession stand being for drop off for those using the lane. However, Dissette also pointed out that the parking is an Enterprise Fund and that there are no parking requirements for the non-motorized watercraft lane initiative.

While the South Beach lane has been well accepted the North Beach is a residential area, which is one of the points Dissette wants discussion to address.

During discussion regarding the fifty (50) foot width, Dissette noted that the lane near the blue stairs, which is used for both non-motorized and small motorized watercraft, is that size but there is nothing in the governor's specs requiring a specific size. Toneman stated his discomfort with allowing motorized watercraft to be on the North Beach and Dissette clarified that is not his intent. After discussion, Moore would like to see some sort of visual, and that the width could be less than fifty (50) feet. It was noted that while the city can provide this lane, that does not prohibit anyone from using Dyckman Beach access, the blue stairs area on the South Beach or anywhere else to launch or put in non-motorized watercraft.

Commissioners expressed their general support of the idea but requested additional details be provided. Dissette indicated that staff will work on developing the concept and continue the discussion at a future meeting.

8. Commissioner Comments

Moore: Asked for an update on the review of Kids' Corner. Halberstadt reported that he received a draft report and after he reviewed it, he sent it back for corrections. Once Halberstadt gets that information he will bring it back to you.

Moore: Asked for an update on Black River Park. Halberstadt reported that a \$150,000 grant award was received, which means the city has to provide a \$75,000 match. The project will renovate the parking lot and upgrade the riprap, among other things.

Toneman: Asked that the board members get the info on Kids Corner in a timely manner so it can be reviewed ahead of time. Halberstadt agreed to send it to the board as soon as he gets it back.

9. Adjourn

Motion by Fitzgibbon, second by Moore to adjourn at 7:12 p.m.

All in favor. Motion carried.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Marsha Ransom
Recording Secretary