

Parks Commission

Regular Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, February 10, 2015
6:00 p.m., Council Chambers



City of South Haven

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

2. Roll Call

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

3. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Fitzgibbon, second by White to approve the February 10, 2015 Regular Meeting Agenda as presented.

All in favor. Motion carried.

4. Approval of Minutes for the Record – January 13, 2015

Motion by White, second by Toneman to approve the January 13, 2015 regular Meeting minutes as written.

All in favor. Motion carried.

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

There were none.

OLD BUSINESS

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

Halberstadt stated that while this project will not happen overnight, it is hoped that a motion of support could be obtained so work could proceed on planning to include this preliminary concept in a grant application. The preliminary concept would place buoys in the lake for a non-motorized watercraft lane which would help the city get points to help with grant approval, as discussed at the previous meeting.

Discussion ensued regarding the width of the proposed lane, suggestions at the last meeting and the compromise to a lane that would be about 25' wide.

Reinert asked if the loading and unloading zone for the non-motorized watercraft would be only for the kayak and canoe users. Toneman expressed concern over indicating that parking would be limited to only non-motorized watercraft loading and unloading. After discussion, Fitzgibbon noted that this project will come back to the Parks Commission for nuts and bolts planning, if approved and granted by the state.

Motion by Fitzgibbon, second by McAlear to recommend that City Council consider approval of the addition of a non-motorized watercraft lane to the plan for North Beach.

All in favor. Motion carried.

7. Commission will be requested to review the Kid's Corner Assessment Report prepared by Leathers Associates.

Reinert felt that this was a disappointing assessment. Halberstadt noted that there have been a few injuries on the Kid's Corner play structure and as a result the city decided to bring in Leathers, the original design firm, to do an assessment.

Halberstadt explained that the assessment found a structure with a lot of the wooden components fairly deteriorated due to the age, which Leathers noted is six (6) years beyond the expected lifespan of the structure.

McAlear asked about the budgetary part and whether it has been addressed. Halberstadt noted, "The reality is that the General Fund probably doesn't have the cash on hand and doesn't have the ability to do a full replacement in a single fiscal year. Thus, any project would need to be phased for cash flow reasons."

Fitzgibbons noted the original play structure was a huge community event. Discussion ensued regarding the emotional buy-in to the current structure and conjecture regarding people's reactions to renovation or replacement options.

Halberstadt stated that he did not anticipate the negative reaction to a composite wood type of element and, "While the old structure is treated wood the Leathers firm has moved away from that. Their newer structures are still custom designed and unique if you do a design-build, but Leathers recommends plastic structural elements for longevity." Reinert added, "And safety. As much as it hurts, (the current structure) is of an age that we have to be concerned about safety. The thing that struck me, even though I'm having trouble with it, is the difference in the cost of renovation for ten (10) years longevity or replacement for thirty (30) years longevity. Can we keep its integrity? Keep it as a memorial to the original park? This company loves to do community builds so perhaps the community could still come together."

After a question, Halberstadt said he does not know how much Leathers invests in drumming up interest. Fitzgibbon noted the project and fundraising was community driven.

McAlear said he respects the emotional aspect (of the original park) . . . but the kids don't really care.

Discussion ensued regarding the type of injuries sustained and whether there have been any lawsuits.

Reinert thinks it would be wonderful to build a new playground, paying tribute to what once was. Fitzgibbon suggested keeping it looking like wood, rather than the red roof, etc.

Fitzgibbon stated that in order to raise money you have to get buy-in. Reinert suggested that maybe the city would get a third party donor.

Toneman said he was not around when this was built. But his sixteen (16) year old granddaughter still talks about playing at Kids Corner. Toneman said he would find it hard to believe that people who took their grandkids there in the last couple of years would think it was six (6) years beyond expected life. Toneman, as someone who has designed playgrounds for schools and been involved in design-build in other places, feels that Leathers should be able to do something to fix it and blend the old with the new. Toneman felt there was a certain amount of car dealership salesmanship; "You don't want to fix that old car, you want a new car." Toneman likes how this (Kids Corner) playground allows kids of various ages to play together on the same equipment.

McAlear noted there could be a certain amount of conflict of interest in doing the analysis and bidding. Fitzgibbon wondered whether we should have some other input from another firm.

Fitzgibbon questioned, "We have an assessment; now we know what's wrong with it, how can we address it?" Halberstadt talked about addressing safety issues initially, like the play surface, replacing slides, replacing swings. Toneman suggested maybe something could be done step-by-step.

Fitzgibbon said she likes the idea of melding in the new materials as you do the repairs and replacements. Reinert noted, "That would be good as long as we don't overcompensate with repair costs just for emotional reasons."

Reinert observed that no one seems ready to make a recommendation. Halberstadt commented that he certainly wouldn't push anyone to make a decision; he doesn't know what the right approach is long-term, but would like to see a budget recommendation to address the safety issues. Reinert agreed that "We don't want to have more incidents happen, we don't need that kind of thing and the board needs to know if there are incidents." Reinert cautioned that if repairs and safety upgrades would be another thirty, forty, fifty thousand dollars (\$30 - 40 - 50,000) perhaps we need to look at another estimate. "Maybe we are putting a Band-Aid on something that will only last a couple of years."

Fitzgibbon thinks money will have to be community raised; the city doesn't have it. "How do you get the buy-in? How do you raise the money? Have to figure out which way to go; feasibility; will people accept this; will they support it?"

Toneman said maybe we could do the safety things; he thinks repairing Kids Corner is more like a large tourniquet, not a Band-Aid. Regarding discussion about one of the injury incidents being a splinter from the wooden framework of a metal slide, Toneman stated that putting a plastic slide on there will not ruin anything, but is something that could be replaced in good conscience.

Reinert suggested that Halberstadt get an estimate from another source; prioritize the needs and come back with ideas so the board could make a recommendation to council.

McAlear noted that another consideration is to have a consultant come in and stage this in a seven (7) year plan, making the budget easier to handle. "Tell the consultant you want the same aesthetic and see what the meat and potatoes are."

Halberstadt assured the board that he would keep working on Kids Corner.

8. Commissioner Comments

McAlear: Spoke about what he perceives as the lack of dog friendliness in the city.

Discussion ensued regarding a dog-friendly beach; dogs at the farmer's market; amenities needed at a dog park; potential need for a new dog park location.

White: Said it would be nice to have someplace for people to take their dogs where they are required to clean up.

Toneman: Spoke about the South Haven Memorial Library computers.

Discussion ensued regarding the use and users of the library computers; that the library is not a city entity, whether the slowness is the computers or the internet connection.

9. Adjourn

Motion by Toneman, second by McAlear to adjourn at 6:44 p.m.

All in favor. Motion carried.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Marsha Ransom
Recording Secretary