

Parks Commission

Workshop Minutes

Tuesday, August 9, 2016
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: Chuck Moore, Wendi Onuki, Warren Toneman (6:14 p.m.) Patti Reinert
Absent: Bob McAlear, Marilyn White

Also present: Bill Hunter, DPW Director; Kathy Burczak, Abonmarche

3. Introduction of new member, Wendy Onuki

Reinert welcomed Onuki and asked her to introduce herself.

4. Introduction of new DPW Director, Bill Hunter

Halberstadt introduced Hunter and board members welcomed him.

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

None at this time.

REPORTS

6. Project Updates

Halberstadt listed the items that have reached completion:

Beach Flag/Warning System,
Black River Park Accessible Kayak Launch
Kid's Corner Restroom Roof Replacement
Monroe Boulevard Property Acquisition

Reinert spoke about taking a group on the river to see the new barrier-free kayak launch.

Discussion followed about the beach flag warning system, the environmental remediation at the site of the new fishing pier and progress on the BMX Pump Track. The group also

discussed the Dyckman Beach, Packard Park and Oak Street signs being included in the recent bids for the North Shore Drive Project. Halberstadt noted staff has a contractor lined up to install those signs. It was noted that the Dyckman Beach sign was originally considered as part of the Dyckman Street Reconstruction and now it has just been rolled into the North Shore Drive project.

Reinert updated the group regarding Harbor Walk Improvements at the end of North Shore Drive. The owners of two lots in that area have approved the black fence to extend all along both properties, the walkway will be paved and it is a huge improvement for that corner.

Halberstadt noted that staff is waiting to see if the city receives any Recreation Passport money for the Kid's Corner Play Structure renovation. Discussion ensued about whether the commission had made a decision to renovate rather than replace. Halberstadt noted that while staff has not made a final decision on that, the feedback is that full demolition of that play structure would not be a popular decision. Discussion ensued regarding safety issues, playground safety standards, removing any parts of the structure that are potentially hazardous. Halberstadt explained that replacement slides were included in the grant application and in response to a question by Reinert stated there are probably some safety issues that could be addressed now, such as replacing chain with cable on swings. Reinert asked when grant awards are announced to which Halberstadt responded that he believes the state announces these in December. Reinert wondered if changes could take place before the 2017 season but Halberstadt explained sometimes there is a holding pattern of four to six months, before the governor signs off, and he is not sure if this grant is like that.

During discussion about injuries at the Kid's Corner play structure, Halberstadt noted that resilient surfaces such as engineered wood chips or rubber chips are a couple of options to replace the current pea stone. Besides being a harder surface, the pea stone also has a tendency to migrate onto the wooden walkways and get ground into the surface. Reinert noted, "We just want to keep on top of this; there was a lot of pride in building it because it was a community build. We don't want to just put this out of our minds; it is well used being a large green space overlooking the lake."

North Beach Improvements. Per Halberstadt, staff has been working with Abonmarche on design details and that by the next meeting the commission might be able to review what would be close to a final edit.

Optimist Tot Lot. Halberstadt explained that Brandy (previous Parks Director) had started working on the Tot Lot and the city has a quote for needed improvements but has not been able to find funding for needed improvements. Reinert noted that there is a ball diamond at the tot lot with bleachers but Onuki, who lives in that area, stated she has never seen anyone playing ball there.

Discussion ensued regarding whether the city tracks in any way how much the different parks are used; whether records are kept regarding servicing of the restrooms and trash pickup. In response to a question about how much the Tot Lot is used, Onuki informed that it is used quite a bit for families with smaller children, under age five. "It just feels safer to go to the Tot Lot because Kids corner is like a maze and you can lose track of your child." Discussion then turned to accessibility.

South Beach Restroom Improvements & Splash Pad. Reinert asked about the plans for expanding the restrooms, whether putting a roof on now is prudent if the structure might later be changed but Halberstadt noted that the roof is so bad it has to be replaced now.

Water Street Streetscape Improvements. Halberstadt noted progress has been made in planning these improvements and City Manager Brian Dissette is interested in proceeding with the stairway from the corner of Indiana and Eagle Street down to Water Street. In response to a question from Moore about some neighborhood concerns, Halberstadt said some neighbors wanted just a stairway, with no observation deck. After further discussion, Halberstadt said Pat Cornelisse from Abonmarche did some drawings; the concept was presented to a number of boards & commissions, but final plans have not been developed.

Onuki remembers at one meeting Lotte (from Foundry Hall) came in and talked about a permanent stage down there (Riverfront Park). Halberstadt explained that he met with Lotte Resick and Rosemary Plechaty from Blueberry Fest because the Blueberry Fest Committee is very interested. Halberstadt reminded that Lotte had originally wanted to have the stage at the west end, but when we went down and looked at it, in the end she was okay with moving it toward the South Marina building. Reinert added, "The concept of the stage area was okay with everyone but the location of it to the west made a lot of people uncomfortable, because we do have that wide open view of the river and lake from the top of the hill, that we are kind of noted for." Reinert reminded that another place recommended for a stage was at the end of St. Joseph Street and discussion ensued regarding staff concerns; commission concerns; about not being in favor of a permanent elevated stage; and planning going on without input from the commission. Halberstadt noted that he agreed to work with Lotte to refine her options. Reinert asked if the city is spending any money developing this concept, to which Halberstadt responded that Abonmarche has volunteered their services at this time. Discussion continued regarding keeping any stage low profile; concern that the commission not send the message that we don't support entertainment, Foundry Hall and festivals. Reinert suggested getting together with the various organizations, and then have Abonmarche develop some drawings and bring that to the Parks Commission. Halberstadt responded that the three major users; Harbor Fest, Blueberry Festival and Foundry Hall (Riverfront Park Concert Series) were involved.

OLD BUSINESS

7. Commission will be requested to review progress and provide input on the Cemetery Improvement project.

Halberstadt noted that this stone wall at the entrance is a historic stacked stone wall and we've been consulting with contractors to find out how to restore that. Moore asked about cost. Halberstadt said this would be part of the grounds improvements which falls under a line item of \$104,600.00.

Moore asked about restrooms, which was discussed at a previous meeting. Halberstadt put the draft architectural drawing on the large screen, noting that the office building existing footprint is on the bottom left. "There is a small bathroom off to the right side, and off to the left side is some additional plumbing fixtures and mechanical space, that area is not used for the public much unless there are a lot of people there. We're talking about converting the existing restroom into a storage closet and then renovate the other corner into a handicap accessible restroom, with access only from the exterior, which allows staff to leave the

restroom portion unlocked while locking the office. This way there is the possibility that we could install a built-in timer to lock that facility at a pre-determined time.” Halberstadt pointed out that the cemetery sexton leaves the office at 3:30 p.m. each day.

Discussion started regarding the necessity for a restroom in a cemetery. Halberstadt noted that people are used to having one there and Reinert added that anyone working there needs a restroom.

Reinert asked whether any upgrades are planned for the entrance from Wells, noting that she sees a lot of people use that entrance and that the small building near that entrance is quite dilapidated. Halberstadt explained the small building there is for maintenance, storage and is used mostly by staff. Reinert asked if there was a restroom there; Halberstadt isn't sure as he has never been inside the building; it serves a purpose but he is not sure that building could be renovated or if it would need to be torn down and start over.

Reinert brought up the development in this area; across the street is the skate board park and next to it will be a BMX track; somewhere in that vicinity we need to have a restroom. In response to a question regarding where the nearest restroom is, Halberstadt stated there is an outhouse by the bike trailhead and the nearest restroom is at the police department. Discussion ensued regarding a central public restroom in that area.

Kathy Burczak noted, “Looking forward, the BMX and skate park would need a restroom. From a budget standpoint this (cemetery) building needs renovation; the person working there needs a restroom and people coming there to meet with the sexton need to have a restroom available but from a budget standpoint a larger central restroom might be cost prohibitive at this point.” Reinert agreed with the need for a restroom in the cemetery, but added, “It's not enough for future needs.” Halberstadt noted that the Parks Master Plan is due to be updated soon and that might be more of a master plan type of issue if you want a restroom in that area.” Reinert added there is a picnic area near the trailhead, the skate park and the BMX track, noting, “The city is encouraging more activity in that area so we need to think about that.”

Halberstadt pointed commissioners to an image of the yard hydrants staff are looking into for the cemetery, noting they are halfway decent looking and easy to operate. Halberstadt remembered there was discussion about section markers; the existing section markers are just concrete with a number tag. Halberstadt displayed an image as an idea for replacing existing markers.

Reinert asked about the erosion issues we talked about at a prior meeting. Halberstadt spoke about Abonmarche's initial report indicating some drainage issues; that sometimes the catch basins get clogged up with debris and leaves and do not drain very well. Based on where the bids come in for this first phase of work, Halberstadt believes the cemetery fund has sufficient funds to begin working on the drainage issue next year. Moore asked if there is standing water to which Halberstadt responded that most of the problems are catch basins near the road that are very low and/or in a dilapidated condition. In response to a query Halberstadt stated, “As a whole we don't know what condition the storm system is in. We plan to abandon the existing drainage system and develop new storage drainage systems underneath the roadways so we don't have the issue of drains under graves.”

Toneman asked Halberstadt to list priorities for this project. Halberstadt listed the yard hydrant repairs/replacement; the building improvements are next; the grounds improvements, some of which are erosion related, such as retaining walls. Reinert wondered if the commission would be able to vote on this by the next meeting. Halberstadt noted that if the commission wants him to bring the contract documents to them, he can do that. Reinert asked if this is coming out of city funds to which Halberstadt responded that it is.

Toneman likes the new pumps and the section markers, mostly concerned about the retaining walls. Halberstadt noted that the grounds improvement, wall, stair and pavement repair take care of some of that. Kathy explained that the stairs will be replaced, and the slope is rather steep. Burczak talked about how a stacked system wall works and that Abonmarche had someone come out and make sure grave sites are not infringed on by any of the planned work. "In the mausoleum area, we'd go a little higher with a wall system than the shorter wall which would replace the concrete block walls that are currently in a state of disrepair."

Discussion turned to city funds being used for this project and Halberstadt explained that the funds people pay for burial plots go into a fund for perpetual care and that is what we propose using for these improvements. Halberstadt thinks there will be about \$200,000 left to do more improvements next year.

Continued discussion centered on the entrance off Wells Street and the old pole building used to store maintenance equipment for the cemetery. Halberstadt would like to see that old building go away but it serves a purpose, so if you take it down you have to have some kind of plan for replacing it.

Moore asked about the number of plots available. Halberstadt responded that he does not know but he can get that number for the board.

Kathy Burczak informed commissioners about a new trend in cemeteries, the columbarium and family columbarium. In response to questions she explained that they are an above ground monument with storage locations for ashes. Riverview Park in St. Joseph has recently installed them; there are two styles; one which is a wall-system with niches and the other is a family one that looks like an actual gravestone but is made to insert up to four family members' ashes.

South Haven has at least one columbarium in our cemetery, located near Wells Street.

NEW BUSINESS

8. Commission will be requested to review a request to place portable toilets at Dyckman Avenue and Oak Street beaches for the 2017 beach season.

Halberstadt informed the commission that the city received a request to consider something for restrooms for Dyckman Avenue and Oak Street beaches; the nearest facility is at Packard Park. It was noted that "if we want to get serious about it, we want to think about putting in a concrete pad and putting fencing around the portable toilet so it's not just out there in the open." In response to questions, it was explained that an enclosure similar to those placed around commercial dumpsters would be placed around the portable toilets.

Reinert noted she frequents those beaches and has seen a tremendous amount of growth and use of those beaches. The parking lots at Dyckman and Oak are very small; a lot of the people using those beaches are renters who walk there. Halberstadt said there isn't a lot of room at the Oak Street Beach to place something like that. Discussion revolved around the need, usage, space needed to install portable toilet facilities; on-going expense of maintaining the facilities and the need for accessible portable toilets.

Halberstadt suggested that if the commission thinks we should look into this, in the fall staff could come back with some costs and determinations about where to place them and what kind. Reinert suggested looking into all the beaches that don't have restrooms. Halberstadt agreed to look at Woodman as well.

9. Commission will be requested to review and approve the proposed beach sign for Newcome Beach.

Halberstadt showed a rendering of one that had been approved noting that there isn't space at Newcome Beach to put the same sign as at Dyckman, noting this rendering is for a smaller sign. Reinert expressed disappointment that the long-term plan and branding isn't being done; the commission wanted to have all the beach signs be the same. Discussion ensued about the walkway; the house behind the sign; whether we can go back and try to determine if there's some way to fit the curved one in there. Burczak explained that when she spoke to the sign makers, the overall curve was very tight for the easement that exists. Halberstadt said maybe we can go to the property owner and ask for an easement. Reinert said maybe we do need to determine something that will fit on all the beaches so they are readily identified as a city beach. Kathy explained that there is an upcharge for custom work, so finding one design that will work at all the beaches is a cost savings. Halberstadt agreed to talk to the property owner.

Moore asked how many beach signs we are looking at. Halberstadt said we never put new signs at South Beach, so two signs there and North Beach, two more there. Reinert reiterated that she really thinks it is important that we have the uniformity so it's not just about North Beach and South Beach. Burczak stated that if that's the tightest spot, we'll make it work.

10. City Engineer Comments

None.

11. Commissioner Comments

Toneman: Spoke about the area where the skate park the BMX track is going to be and looking at putting a central restroom in that area. Halberstadt agreed it is probably time to update the Parks Master Plan.

Moore: Questioned the agreement the city made with the person who rents paddle boards. Moore didn't think we agreed that he could place a storage unit for paddle boards down on the beach taking up a lot of beach room. He thought the boards were to be removed every night and brought back the next day. Halberstadt will look at the license agreement. Reinert agreed that we cannot allow businesses to start taking over the public beach. Halberstadt

said he thinks it's a good thing to discuss before anyone moves forward with any more businesses; we need to figure out how it's going to work.

Moore: Asked about the status of the lighthouse. Halberstadt said they finished the interior work which is Phase 1. Reinert commended HASH for the work they have done; they raised more money than they even thought they could. Halberstadt said the bricks will be going in this fall.

Reinert: Spoke about Ed Appleyard keeping the lighthouse painted, covering up the graffiti on at least a weekly basis. Noted she recently learned that graffiti has been a historic problem since way back.

Moore: Said we should have a meeting in September.

Moore: Spoke about having discussion at the last Parks meeting about the size of the plaques on the park benches. Reinert mentioned again about consistency and not having the benches be memorials where people leave flowers and so forth. Halberstadt said the policy you approved was based in part on Grand Haven's policy, noting that the new DPW Director, present tonight, was instrumental in developing their policy.

12. Adjourn

The workshop ended at 7:38 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Marsha Ransom
Recording Secretary