

Parks Commission

Regular Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, April 9, 2013
6:00 p.m., Council Chambers



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

2. Roll Call

Present: Cobbs, Comeau, Fenske, Reinert-Montgomery, Toneman, Lewis
Absent: Fitzgibbon (excused)

3. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Fenske, second by Cobbs to approve the agenda as present. All in favor. Motion carried.

4. Approval of Minutes – February 12, 2013

Motion by Reinert-Montgomery, second by Toneman to approve the February 12, 2013 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. Hartman Park

Gildea gave an overview of this agenda item.

Jan Meltzer, 316 Prospect Street. Would like to see the park remain the way it is, describing it as an island of peace and tranquility. Children play there; make up their own games; neighbors walk their dogs. Requested that the City leave the trees. Suggested a small swing set at one end of the park. .

Patty Bales, 319 Prospect Street. Lives next to the park; grew up there; kids use the park as a place for natural play; band uses it to practice in on Friday nights; people come and play with their dogs. People, both local and visitors, come in and have a picnic or use it for quiet

time. Where is the parking? Who would maintain it? Are you talking about a full-scale playground? Is it just going to appear all of a sudden like the new trees?

Lois Howard 813 Superior Street. Would like a swing set, not more than that. "We have a terrible time crossing the street at Broadway; if the light were put back on Broadway, we could go to the existing playgrounds." Expressed concern that someone will get hit crossing Broadway or Phoenix.

Mark McClendon 712 Phoenix. Vague recollection of covenants on the park. Suggested that staff check to see if there is something that we are forgetting about.

Chris Baner, 768 Huron Street. Lived there for twenty years; our son has played in the park; we have watched the band play there; t-batters are playing there tonight: out-of-towners quietly picnic in that park. Hartman Park is a beautiful green space used tremendously as a natural place to play tag, kick-the-can, and other games. There are many other alternatives for play for children in our community. Parking is an issue; street condition is an issue.

Andrew Baner 768 Huron Street. "What are we talking about? Just a swing set sounds reasonable. Do not take any trees out.

Chris Baner, 768 Huron Street. Named two neighbors who could not be here who do not want to see the park changed.

Gildea: No type of equipment has been looked at or determined because she wants this to give the public input, if playground equipment is a desired, working with the public will continue as the process proceeds. "This is the first step."

Chris Morrison, 313 Hubbard Street. Have two (2) small boys; are foster parents; looking into adoption. The kids are stoked about the idea of a playground at the park; Chris is worried about safety. "It (street by the park) is a short cut from the south side of Superior and people scoot through there pretty quickly"; requested a crosswalk or speed bump whether or not new equipment is added. Thinks there could be something subtle added that would not be a detriment to the park.

Erica Morrison, 313 Hubbard Street. Lives directly across from the park. There was play equipment at the Hartman School until it was removed. That was nice when we had small kids. Having playground equipment brought back to behind the Hartman School/Historical Society would be wonderful; no trees gone, safety measures added. Has requested a crosswalk twice and city officials came out twice but nothing has been done.

Peggy McClendon, 712 Phoenix Street. Lived in the neighborhood for twenty-six years; own a rental house facing the park. I have two kids that grew up there; would consider something small that would not crowd the whole park; save the trees. Likes the park the way it is, but times change. "I would like to see more opinions from people in the neighborhood."

Diane Landry, 808 Superior Street. Lives a block from Hartman Park; brought the original request (for playground equipment) because she likes to walk with her grandchildren to parks, not drive. It is hard to cross Phoenix or Broadway. When they bought their home they thought there was still playground equipment behind Hartman School but was disappointed

to find that there is not. Not asking for Tot Lot or Kids Corner, just a small playground for all the neighborhood kids.

Chris Baner 768 Huron Street. Lived there when the playground equipment was behind Hartman; it was taken out for a reason; there were a lot of unattended children playing there. Thinks that behind the school would be a good place for playground equipment. It is safer; it already has pea gravel and it is gated.

Lewis asked how many would object to a swing set.

Andrew Baner. "More detail is needed before the neighbors can answer that question."

Reinert-Montgomery asked if Gildea knew why the playground equipment was removed. Gildea wondered if it was liability and will contact the school and see what she can find out.

Lori Schooley, 762 Phoenix Street. Her children utilize the park to do the running part of it; with childhood obesity activity is important. Playground equipment should be at one end so children have a place to run.

Lewis gave an overview of what he observed and heard so far.

Toneman agrees that this is nothing that can be decided tonight. Went and looked the park over; noted that in the 5-year Recreation Plan we talked about retaining some open land park area. This area fits with the beautiful trees. "We are not even anywhere near deciding anything." Toneman noted the grill and asked about picnic tables. Gildea explained that the tables will be delivered to the park soon. Toneman added that the playground could go behind the historical society, as suggested.

Fenske noted that there are no sidewalks, no parking on the park side of the street.

Gildea pointed out that South Haven is very lucky to have so much park variety and so many parks and beaches, plus the marinas. "We do not want to have all the parks exactly the same; we want to keep variety." The Recreation Plan talks about green space and keeping playground parks; the Parks Commission did not look into budgeting for a playground there this year. Gildea reminded that the City has gotten grants for the Elkenburg Park and South Beach improvements and just applied for one for North Beach updates. Gildea agreed that parking is an issue at the Hartman Park and sidewalks would take away from the amount of existing green space.

Dotson said that park has been there a long time; the band prepares in that park. Recommended that the Parks Commission look very closely at every safety aspect of that little park. There are no sidewalks; no crosswalks; Phoenix Street can be a disaster to cross. "There is a lot of work to go into this before anything can be done."

Lewis asked for a motion.

Comeau responded that he does not see the need for a motion. This seems like a public hearing for public input but we have no plan.

After Lewis asked again about a motion, motion by Comeau to table this item until the commission has more information. Toneman said some want to start and some want to stop. Gildea will contact the school and try to find out why the playground equipment was removed behind the Hartman School/Historical Society. This might take some time to find out whether the city can work with the school to put equipment there. Second by Fenske.

Erika Morrison, 313 Hubbard Street. Would like a crosswalk for the park, whether or not any playground equipment is added.

Fenske asked Dotson who in the city would need to be talked to about a crosswalk. Dotson said we need to sit down with the city engineers and the Department of Public Works director.

Lewis called the motion.

All in favor. Motion carried.

7. Maritime District

Lewis noted the district being referred to includes both sides of the river up to the bridge.

Gildea asked John Marple to explain the concept.

John Marple, 515 Williams Street, manager of Old Harbor Inn. Apologized that he was not at the last meeting. Noted that the interpretive sign was removed from the Williams Street area during the reconstruction. The displays gave a basic introduction about the rich maritime heritage we have here in South Haven, beginning in the 1850s with lumbering and shipping, then steamships and around 1900 tourism started. We have a very rich maritime heritage; a number of us business people would like to have a plaque commemorating this heritage. Hope to rebuild/renew all the interpretive signage, maybe even add a few. Create some signage within the downtown district that will let people know we have a harbor front.

Marple noted all of the entities that have given their support to take this proposal to the City Council. "If you read Gildea's memo and the letters of support you should understand what we are trying to do."

Comeau expressed concerns with the boundaries and legal descriptions of the Maritime District. Marple said there are no legal descriptions; it is not a taxing district. It is just branding a certain area of our town as the Maritime District. Fenske asked if there was a map. Marple said the proposed Maritime District basically follows the harbor walk. Toneman said when this came before us at the last meeting, the concern was that the board did not know exactly what you were asking about.

Toneman said we understand all the reasons to do it. "But we wonder about someone who has a B & B across the street, will they feel like they cannot be in it?" Fenske questioned, "What about All-Seasons Marina, which is a big business?" Marple reiterated that the Maritime District is basically the Harbor Walk; the district has no legal authority The Nichols Hotel can advertise they are in the Maritime District if they want to, according to Marple.

Comeau stated that there are boundaries; there is a map; so that is a legal description. "Who has the authority to change who is in or out? The issue of boundaries and legal descriptions will be there." "No one is going to make a determination whether a certain entity will be included or not," according to Marple. Comeau stated he is pro-history but, does not think tourists have any problem determining where the water front is.

Patty Reinert-Montgomery explained that the City Manager wants to be able to put up directional signage pointing people to the Maritime District, even as the City already has directional signage indicating "Downtown" and "North Beach." Comeau wants to have the private sector involved. Marple noted that the private sector will be involved in providing the signs and that he understands the legal issues but he disagrees with Comeau.

Lewis noted that he thinks the Commission will look rather foolish if everyone else is comfortable supporting or recommending the Maritime District. Reinert-Montgomery said the request is just to support the concept. Fenske said we have to be true to our own self, not just do it because everyone else does it. Comeau had an issue with a map depicting the Maritime District but being unclear of exactly what is included. Reinert-Montgomery said the map is not of the Maritime District but of the Harbor Walk. Comeau pointed out that the map could just be crumpled up then.

Motion by Toneman to accept the concept of the Maritime District for the City of South Haven. Second by Cobbs.

Lewis called for discussion. Since there was no further discussion, Lewis called the question.

Ayes: All. Motion carried.

Fenske was in city hall a couple of days ago picking up her packet and did not see the Parks Commission on the calendar board. Gildea will talk to the city clerk.

Reinert-Montgomery asked for an update on progress with Elkenburg Park. Cobbs is excited to see the progress. Gildea said the contractors are on schedule and hope to open by Memorial Day. Comeau asked about holding a grand opening.

Motion by Reinert-Montgomery, second by Toneman to adjourn at 6:55 p.m.

All in favor. Motion carried.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Marsha Ransom
Recording Secretary