

## Parks Commission

### Regular Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, July 09, 2013  
6:00 p.m., Council Chambers



City of South Haven

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

Montgomery Introduced new member Marilyn White.

#### 2. Roll Call

Present: Cobbs, Comeau, Fitzgibbon, Moore, Toneman, White, Montgomery-Reinert

Absent: None

#### 3. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Fitzgibbon, second by Toneman to approve the July 9, 2013 regular meeting agenda as presented.

All in favor. Motion carried.

#### 4. Approval of Minutes – June 11, 2013

Motion by Moore, second by Cobbs to approve the June 11, 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. Elkenburg Park – Phase II

VandenBosch introduced the Elkenburg Park project and noted that Phase 1 came in under budget; the remaining funds are still available through the grant. VandenBosch stated that staff worked with the Elkenburg Park Redevelopment Committee to determine what they most want to see in the park. Sent their list to Abonmarche Engineering to put prices on the items and VandenBosch put together a staff recommendation where he deleted a few items. Since June, most importantly, a group has come forward who want to donate money for

playground equipment. Suggested revisiting and reconsidering the list. VandenBosch noted that there is a range of options; a piece of playground equipment can cost \$25,000 to \$50,000 or more. The initial donation will not cover the whole thing; another donor can also be sought. Asked the commission to listen to the comments on the park and the list of items; consider shifting some of the money toward playground equipment. Also asked the Elkenburg Park committee to work with Gildea to determine what playground equipment may be most desired.

Fitzgibbon questioned the thought behind the fence, whether someone especially wanted a fence. VandenBosch noted that it was suggested to keep children from running in the street.

Moore questioned the budget figures for Phase 1; VandenBosch noted that the figure he quoted included the city match. There was discussion regarding the cost and necessity of engineering; VandenBosch pointed out that the city is required by the state to do engineering. VandenBosch noted that since lighting is no longer one of the items the engineering costs may be less.

Moore asked about the size of the fenced area and noted that fencing an area would limit the amount of playground equipment. After Fitzgibbon pointed out that the grant has a timeline to complete the work VandenBosch noted that the end date is August 2014. Commission members expressed appreciation for time to put information together and make a decision.

Reinert asked for public comments.

Theresa Cunningham, 1059 Indiana Avenue. Appreciated that the community had more input and happy that the community is to have more involvement and have it be a community effort. Glad to have time and said she is sure that she can raise more money for playground equipment. Thanked Gildea for getting all the information to her.

Fitzgibbon asked whether Cunningham is on the Redevelopment Committee. Cunningham is currently President of the Redevelopment Committee. Cunningham credits Ms. Toles with bringing people together.

Moore questioned eliminating fencing since it would protect children from running out into the street. Cunningham responded that she feels it is not necessary to fence the entire play area; perhaps just have a fence along the street side. Cunningham noted that some of the existing playground equipment had to be removed as it was not up to code.

Lisa Bettis Cooper, 871 Indiana. Lives one block from the park. Cooper noticed both a \$16,000 amount and a \$19,000 amount for fencing; wondered if both are available. Cooper feels the park does not look like a playground but like an outdoor sports center with three basketball courts. Bleachers and player benches at those costs seems like additional money that could be spent doing other things like a pavilion or BBQ pit. Pointed out that at the last City Council meeting Rev. Cobbs and Rev. Wilkins brought up that water is standing on those courts and in the park. Glad that there is going to be some discussion on this park. Unhappy with the focus of the park being basketball courts. That park is not child-friendly but creates a place for teen boys and men to come and play ball and pushes children's needs aside.

William Bettis. 22554 M-140. Noted that Lisa Bettis Cooper is his sister and they are long-time residents. Concerned that there is not a 4-way stop. Feels the old playground area was not conducive to children running out in the street after balls. Commented that the old National Motors site would have been a good place for the playground but now it is not available. The environment of Elkenburg Park does not hold appeal for younger children. Noted the bleachers, fencing and scoreboard on the Phase 2 list; feels that eliminating those items would allow extra money to allocate toward the kids' playground. Negative on fencing the kids in; "Psychologically, fencing seems like a cage."

Fitzgibbon, Council Representative. Loves to see people get excited about parks and children. Noted that the issue with the National Motors site is contamination. Felt that Elkenburg Park has always been a basketball park and as such has been utilized so well and during previous discussion there was talk of Cable Street Park being more about the younger children.

Kathy Broadie-Ferguson. Got involved with the park project a couple years down the road. She and her aunt went door-to-door with fliers asking what people wanted. Trying to figure out where things got changed from what people wanted to basketball courts. Broadie-Ferguson thinks some speed bumps would slow cars down around the park.

Dorothy Sherrod, 875 Kalamazoo Street. Resident since 1975. Stated that since 1981 residents have come to the city and said that the park is too small and our cries fall on deaf ears. "I hope the Park Commission will come out and look. The court closest to Kalamazoo Street is not level and when there is rain the bleachers are sitting in water." Sherrod noted that there are underlying issues with the layout. Unhappy that the men's restroom does not have a urinal and does not have a partition. Kalamazoo Street is a busy street, where there are no speed bumps, no signs saying "Caution children playing." Hopes money does not continue to be spent on things that are not beneficial to us and our children. The park has three basketball courts but no parking and now the city has given way to a mid-night basketball tournament. "Unreal; to allow basketball beyond the closing of the park is a detriment to our children." Petitions the Park Commission and the City government to take a good look at the structure at that park and create something that is child-and family-friendly.

Fitzgibbon asked how the Redevelopment Committee arranged the design of the park. VandenBosch said he was not working on the park during that time; the decision would have been made at the time the grant was applied for.

Sharon Toles, 2150 Sanibel Island, Portage, MI. Lived in South Haven for ten to fifteen years. Has nieces and nephews who live in the community. Toles stated, "After you get something you do not want, what you do get is shoddy work. Water on the courts, poor drainage system, and a second drain that has started to clog up now, clogged with debris." Unhappy with the poor quality of work done, including patch where basketball pole was moved and plywood in the ceiling of the structure.

Fitzgibbon noted that is a question for our Assistant City Manager because he made the contract and maybe something can be done to fix what is wrong.

Toles said the Redevelopment Committee, as far as she can remember, included sixty (60) people that came together to get the grant out; then when it was time to vote on the layout, it should not have been just ten (10) people on the committee.

Montgomery-Reinert pointed out that everything has to be laid out on paper very thoroughly before a grant is applied for. Noted that the Parks Commissioners are listening to concerns and comments tonight.

Cunningham said after coming to about ten (10) meetings of the Elkenburg Redevelopment Committee and only having about ten (10) people show up, she took the surveys and she takes responsibility for running with the information she had. She walked the streets with her fiancée Aylworth to Elkenburg, Indiana and Center; we went to every door, Mrs. Cobbs and Darlene Wilkins each took a section. "That was what I did and I take full responsibility for the park. I heard regulation size courts and a junior size court." Noted that the park does not meet her needs for the kids K-8 that she works with. "So I gave what I thought the community wanted; I was wrong and I own that." Cunningham apologized and noted that the more people that we hear from the better.

Reinert said the commission needs to step back and digest what we have heard.

VandenBosch said the reason we have money left is we got a very low bid. We found out why; he was fairly new and had very little experience. The work was supposed to have been done by Memorial Day but did not meet that deadline. He had a lot of time but he was very slow. He had subcontracted much of the work out. Regarding the quality problems with the building, VandenBosch admitted that the ceiling under the patio area does not look good but before the city met with the contractor it was even worse. VandenBosch noted that we got a start on getting things repaired; the city has not accepted the project yet. VandenBosch, City Manager Dissette and Gildea will be meeting with the contractor tomorrow and will be talking about the things we heard.

VandenBosch noted that hydro-seeding is going to be happening this week; this will be the second time to try to keep the grass growing. Drainage issues are partly due to the slope of the ground next to and between the courts. Heavy rains washed dirt out and the contractor had to come in and redo some grading and seeding. There was vandalism; there was some heavy rain and there may be more dirt that moved; we will be looking at that tomorrow. VandenBosch noted that the courts were made level so they are playable but that creates a drainage issue; that is a problem and not sure what can be done about it. The real fix may be to put more asphalt down but not sure if that will even fix that problem. The other drainage can be taken care of.

Fitzgibbon asked if this was indeed shoddy work, how the city will handle that. VandenBosch said the City has retainage and if the contractor will not fix the items, then the money could be used to hire another contractor to fix it. Toneman said everyone knows that outside courts should be crowned; they have to drain. Another concern: "Does the city have standards for the parks for bathrooms?" VandenBosch said the biggest standard that has to be met is the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Those requirements include certain spacing for a wheelchair; Toneman asked about urinals. VandenBosch said we were renovating an existing building and did not have a lot of space to work with. VandenBosch pointed out that the bathrooms are designed by the architect in every case.

Reinert thanked everyone for coming out and sharing their feelings; we do have numbers to work with. Toles said the city was giving \$5,000 in April 2010. This is what we asked for; we knew exactly what we wanted.

Rosa Jackson; lived in the area for forty (40) years. The park was a fun park when she was growing up; stated there is no need for a fence; would like to see some nice play equipment and grass. Hates to look at that park, it's embarrassing. Whoever was over this should have done a little better job. Beautify our park like other parks.

Fitzgibbon suggested that the concerned citizens write down their ideas and concerns and let Paul know what it is you want from the contractor. We have the opportunity to hold the money on this contractor and get these things fixed.

Toneman asked what is next. Gildea is sure this group will work together and provide us with a list.

### **7a. Disc Golf.**

Gildea said the report/memo was emailed out just recently. Gave an overview of the various locations and what has been done so far.

Moore said it could be a terrific draw. Noted that the Disc Golf National Championship is coming to Michigan in 2016, and he would like to be able to recommend South Haven as the place to be. Said the course would only need mowed twice a season.

Toneman asked what else is needed. Gildea said mostly low maintenance but would need mowing every other week; signage is a one-time expense but needs to be checked periodically. Toneman asked if there was any need for staff. Gildea said no, just needs to be checked weekly or so.

Reinert-Montgomery said it could be an attractive inexpensive thing for people to do.

Fitzgibbon said most of these things, such as SHARP Park, the Dog Park and others are community driven and funded by donations and grants.

## **7. Park Commissioner's Comments**

Cobbs: Problem with the drainage needs to be fixed.

Toneman found this meeting really hard because Parks Commission and staff spent two years working on this and assumed that we were doing what people in the neighborhood wanted. Finds it upsetting that things were passed through that people did not want; does not know where we could have missed it. Feels bad because people should be excited. We needed to have found a happy medium but somehow we missed it.

Fitzgibbon is quite frustrated with City Administration that did not hold the contractor liable and she will be calling the City Manager to let him know that is unacceptable. Regarding the neighborhood disconnect Fitzgibbon does not know where that happened. We definitely need to move forward; the contractor did an unacceptable job and the City Manager will be called tomorrow.

Moore: Someone pointed out that the basketball rims are unequal heights. Discussion that they should be 10' high.

Comeau: Understand that here is a good opportunity; there is some money left over so let us accommodate what those people want.

White. Lives in the area, too. Attended some of the Ward 1 meetings when we were discussing the design for the park; remembers benches, flower pots, sidewalks. Supposed to have been child and family friendly park; "I have four granddaughters and they are not allowed at Elkenburg Park; my grandkids spend their time at the Cable Street Park. White noted that she dealt with Gildea on getting more swings and such for the Cable Street Park. Only lived here seventeen (17) years and always heard the bad part about the park; "It seems like it has gotten a lot better." Reiterated that there should have been more room for the younger children; three basketball courts are a bit too much.

Fitzgibbons asked what the plan in Cobbs' store had. White said she feels that what people were looking for did not happen.

Reinert: In life, we cannot make everybody happy, but hopefully we can use some of the money for the simple things that people are looking for. Reinert pointed out that she has taken her grandchildren to the school playgrounds near the elementary school, which are in walking distance of the Elkenburg Park neighborhood, too. It is time to take in this information being brought to the commission tonight.

Toneman agreed that maybe some of this stuff can be fixed.

Bettis Cooper: Has made FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) requests to the City Manager and to the Assistant City Manager. Wants minutes of all the committee meetings and the grant application and plans. Fitzgibbons said if the city hired Abonmarche to come in there would be minutes from their presentation, but that the city would not have minutes of the committee meetings, as they were not official city meetings.

Sherrad: "What about the accountability of this commission to hire someone?"

Fitzgibbon explained that the City Council is the only entity over the City Manager. Explained the city's obligation to give preference to local contractors if they come in within 10% of the low bidder. So if there is a local person we make that a stipulation. If there is not a local bidder within 10% then we are required to go to the lowest bid. The City Manager, Assistant City Manager and Parks Supervisor have accountability; that is their job.

Sherrad: "Have you gotten a report from the City Manager?" Gildea explained that because she has many issues herself, she will be at the meeting with the contractor tomorrow. She plans to go over what needs to be fixed.

Bettis: Not satisfied that the requests for documentation have not been made available. Asked If the retainer is not large enough to cover the problems, whether the remaining budget can be used for making necessary repairs.

Fitzgibbons said that when Gail Patterson, your Ward 1 representative, and I go to the City Manager we will be heard.

White: At the beginning of this, no one was keeping minutes. Everyone just signed a sheet, and she does not recall anyone keeping any minutes. Attended four to five meetings.

Fitzgibbon noted that when a neighborhood meeting happens there may not be any minutes.

White said she believes the basketball courts were pushed due to the young man that got killed in the car accident and others that passed around that time.

Cobbs: Since Theresa has been president there have been minutes. Does not know why they do not send them when they are requested.

Reinert noted that the Parks Commission has never gotten those minutes.

Bettis Cooper: Wants to get educated on the process and see the grant application.

## **9. Adjourn**

Motion by Fitzgibbon, second by Cobbs to adjourn at 7:40 p.m.

All in favor. Motion carried.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Marsha Ransom  
Recording Secretary