

**MINUTES OF THE STUDY SESSION MEETING
CHAMPAIGN PARK DISTRICT BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

March 26, 2008

The Champaign Park District Board of Commissioners held a Study Session meeting on Wednesday, March 26, 2008 at City Hall, 102 N. Neil Street, Champaign, Illinois, pursuant to notice duly given. Vice-President Jane Solon presided over the meeting.

Present: Vice-President Jane Solon, Commissioners Alvin Griggs, Newt Dodds, and Joe Petry, and Treasurer Gary Wackerlin.

Not present: President Barb Kuhl

Staff present: Bobbie Herakovich, Executive Director; Jan Plotner, Director of Finance; Joe DeLuce, Director of Recreation; Jim Spencer, Director of Operations; and Terri Gibble, Park Planner.

Other staff was present; however no members of the public attended.

ACTION ITEMS

08/09 Salary Increase

Ms. Plotner advised the board that staff was recommending a 1.5% fiscal year increase and a 3% merit increase for a total possible percentage increase of 4.5%, and a total dollar amount of \$101,000. She stated an increase or decrease of .25% would change the total \$5,600 either way. She informed the board of the salary increases made to Unit 4 and the City of Champaign. She also noted that the CPI increase for 2007 was 4.1%. She advised the board that the 5 full-time staff for CUSR and the Executive Director are not included in these numbers. Ms. Plotner then asked for questions and comments from the board.

Commissioner Dodds asked if any one has spoken on this topic before.

Ms. Herakovich advised no, and that she would like comments from staff and the board since it will go before the board for a vote at the next board meeting.

Commissioner Petry wanted to make a note about the process. He recommends that the Executive Director make the decision on pay increases, not staff. He also stated the increase should be merit across the board. He is not in favor of step increases. He is fine with the proposed percentage rate.

Commissioner Griggs was comfortable with the recommendation.

Vice President Solon stated she agrees with Commissioner Petry regarding the merit vs. the cost of living increases. She is fine with the percentages, but all should be merit.

Commissioner Dodds advised he also agrees with Commissioner Petry. He feels it is the job of the Executive Director to discuss increases. He is also fine with the percentages.

Ms. Herakovich clarified with the board that they want to change the past salary increase process whereby staff recommends a merit pool amount to the Director and instead have the Director recommend the amount in closed session.

FY08/09 CAPITAL BUDGET

Vice President Solon stated the next action item to be discussed is the FY08/09 Capital Budget. Ms. Herakovich advised the board Ms. Plotner would brief the board on the proposed capital budget.

Ms. Plotner explained the proposed capital project list totals \$6.7 million dollars. Approximately \$3 million dollars would be carryover from the current fiscal year and \$3.7 million would be new funds. The areas discussed were funding, grant projects, ADA projects, Porter Park Development, Sholem Aquatic Center, Virginia Theatre, Trail Development, including the Pipeline Trail, Dodds Park Complex, and Kaufman Lake.

Commissioner Dodds inquired about the parking situation at the Sholem Aquatic Center.

Mr. Spencer explained after detailed studies completed by staff, the need for additional parking space was not necessarily the issue. The addition of a sidewalk and crosswalk on the east side of Crescent Drive would improve these issues.

Commissioner Dodds would like to see contact made with the city regarding the sidewalk, crosswalk and speed bumps to slow traffic.

Ms. Herakovich advised the board the proposed capital budget will not affect the 90 day reserves and she welcomed other questions and comments.

Vice President Solon expressed concern regarding grant money and the assurance the district would actually receive the money with the state's current financial situation. Ms. Herakovich explained the process and assured the board if we are awarded a grant the money is pretty much guaranteed; however the state may be late with the payment.

Commissioner Dodds expressed that he would like to see Scott Park brought up to its proper condition before any money was spent on water features.

Ms. Gibble explained that the plan for redevelopment at Scott Park includes replacement of the existing amenities and the addition of some amenities. If the District does not receive a grant for the redevelopment, the additional amenities take a lower priority.

Commissioner Dodds also questioned the age of the Showmobile. Ms. Herakovich explained the maintenance issues with the current Showmobile and the need for a new one. Mr. Spencer confirmed that the Showmobile is 17 years old.

Commissioner Petry expressed concern regarding the funding for the Virginia Theatre. He would like to see clarification on where and how it will be funded, whether it is from the operating fund or the Foundation.

Ms. Herakovich further explained how capital funds from the Museum Fund could be used. She stated the funds could be used for Springer Center, the Virginia Theatre, Prairie Farm, and special events.

Commissioner Petry requested additional information on the funds associated with Sholem Aquatic Center. Ms. Herakovich explained in order to do any additional projects, such as a deep well or a second slide, and to keep the center in new condition, the money would need to build up over time.

Commissioner Petry expressed concern regarding the time it will take to complete all phases of Porter Park. He stated he would like to see it happen quicker if possible.

Ms. Gibble stated the phase idea was in place in order to maximize the district funds. Grants are available for a maximum of \$400,000 with matching funds for each grant award, which is why the original plan would take the 5-6 years to complete.

Commissioner Dodds asked for clarification on the cost of a new aerial truck. Mr. Spencer advised the cost of the aerial truck is \$58,000.

Commissioner Dodds inquired about the Virginia Theatre alarm system. He does not want to invest the money without knowing the direction of the theatre, such as drawings and a plan. Mr. Spencer expressed the need for some type of alarm system for liability issues and the security of other groups/businesses equipment and supplies being kept at the theatre. The theatre currently has no type of security system. Mr. Spencer stated he would look into other types of security that may not cost as much.

Commissioner Dodds also raised concerns regarding the recycling grant and funding a collection truck. He stated you start with the truck, then you need to hire someone to work it, and to purchase recycling containers for the parks. There is also the question of re-occurring expenses.

Mr. Spencer stated that recycling cans have been added to the parks. The recycling cans have been at special events for awhile. The truck being looked at would not be dedicated to recycling. It would have a bed that can be exchanged. As far as staff, one person is already dedicated to trash year round that a seasonal staff person would be utilized. Commissioner Dodds noted that even if recycling becomes successful, the district would still not make any money.

Ms. Herakovich requested that the board look over the capital list and call with any questions or ideas since it will go before the board for a vote at the next board meeting.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Comprehensive Park and Open Space Plan "Big Moves"

Mr. DeLuce presented the attached powerpoint presentation to the board. A copy of the presentation is attached.

Ms. Herakovich stated this is a way to be informative of what we are currently doing and some ideas for the future. She asked the board to keep in mind these ideas are for over the next 10-15 years. Ms. Herakovich assured the board the Centennial Celebration would only be a couple of days. As far as the PROS report and staff recommendations, we want to be responsive to the residents in what they would like us to do but at the same time be cost effective.

Commission Griggs asked if we have started any discussions with the community on some of the issues like the large facilities.

Ms. Herakovich stated we started eight months ago meeting with YMCA, Parkland, Carle, Little Illini Soccer, Boys and Girls Club, and the 50 meter group to see if there was a need in the community for an indoor field house and or community center. The consensus among the different parties was that there is a need for these types of centers. A meeting has been scheduled with the YMCA to talk with their foundation board and discuss different ideas and options.

Commissioner Petry asked if these items were in order and if so, were trails really that low on the staff's priority list.

Ms. Herakovich stated the items were in order and staff does feel that trails are important. Staff felt the trails have progressed enough in their development that they did not need to be listed as top priority.

Commissioner Petry asked staff if we would like to see an indoor field house or a community recreation center and questioned where it would be built.

Mr. DeLuce responded, in his opinion, if staff had to choose it would be a community recreation center. With Leonhard and Douglass facilities so out of date that we really need some place to provide quality programming. We also feel that both adult and youth sports are important to the community and would like to eventually see both; however a rec community center would address some of our current issues better. He stated there have been several options discussed regarding locations, with the Centennial Park location being one idea.

Commission Petry asked about Prairie Farm, recalling he didn't see it mentioned anywhere in the report and if we bought into redoing Centennial Park.

Mr. DeLuce advised Prairie Farm was mentioned only that it might need to be relocated should a rec center be built on that part of the park. He stated he did not buy into the whole concept.

Ms. Herakovich advised realistically our only option would be the south end of the park. The north end would not be an option unless public works and park operations would be together in the future or it would be too costly to relocate. If we were able to have an extra 20 acres at Zahnd Park, the fields could be put together and make a great facility in that area. This would not be as expensive as trying to relocate a facility or office building.

Ms. Herakovich turned it over to staff for comments:

Ms. Gible, Mr. Spencer, and Mr. DeLuce stated opinions and answered Board questions.

Commissioner Dodds expressed concern over the length of time it was taking for the transfer of Ashland Park land.

Ms. Herakovich updated the Board.

Vice President Solon commented on the big moves and the indoor rec center. The examples they show are great and they show they make money. Her concern is that these locations are in the suburbs where the population is much denser than what it is in Champaign, Urbana, Mahomet and Savoy. If we were to build one, we would have to draw people from these communities to make it profitable and questioned whether our area was large enough to draw the numbers needed to make it profitable.

Mr. DeLuce commented that the one center he visited in Ohio a couple of years ago was doing very well. He felt whatever organization was to build the first one in our area would be successful because there is a need in our community. He said there is no guarantee it would make money but there is a great opportunity for whoever builds the first one.

Vice President Solon stated she felt there was a great need in our community for an indoor field house that could be used by youth baseball, youth soccer, and other groups.

Mr. DeLuce stated the question of an indoor field house or rec community center is an interesting question because we feel they are both needed. It could be a survey question to find out what the community feels is needed.

Vice President Solon wanted to make the point that this is why it is important to survey the community again to find out what their priorities are and what they are willing to pay for.

Ms. Herakovich stated we have already received a proposal for conducting another survey and staff will be bringing it back to the board with the proposed budget. She thanked the board for listening and for some good discussion. She stated we have only touched the tip of the iceberg and that we need to come back with some long-range financial plans.

Vice President Solon adjourned the meeting at 6:45 p.m.

Adjourn

There being no further business to come before the Board, Vice President Solon adjourned the meeting at 8:30 p.m.

Approved:

Jane L. Solon, Vice President

Bobbie Herakovich, Secretary