

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

April 28, 2010

The Champaign Park District Board of Commissioners held a Study Session on Wednesday, April 28, 2010 at 5:30 p.m. at the Bresnan Meeting Center, 706 Kenwood Road, Champaign, Illinois, pursuant to notice duly given. President Solon presided over the meeting.

Present: President Jane Solon, Vice President Griggs, Commissioners Newton Dodds, Joseph Petry and Barbara Kuhl, Treasurer Gary Wackerlin and Attorney Guy Hall

Staff: Bobbie Herakovich, Executive Director/Secretary, Joe DeLuce, Director of Recreation, Jan Plotner, Director of Finance, Jim Spencer, Director of Operations, Laura Auteberry, Marketing and Development Director, Terri Gibble, Park Planner, and Cindy Harvey, Administrative Assistant

Other staff were present as well as members of the public.

Call to Order

President Solon called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Discussion Items

Update on FY 09-10 Goals

Ms. Herakovich reported that staff wanted to take this opportunity to update the Board on FY 09-10 Park District goals. She stated that one of the goals was to put together a video to use as part of an application for the Gold Medal Award; use on Channel 5; and for other media opportunities. A video on what the Park District does and the services offered was shown. Ms. Herakovich thanked Ms. Auteberry and her staff for putting the video together. She thanked Jennifer Ketchmark, Channel 3 weather reporter, for volunteering her time to do the script for the video.

Ms. Herakovich updated the Board on the FY 09-10 strategic planning goals. Ms. Herakovich stated that she would like to schedule a meeting in June for goal setting.

Ms. Herakovich reported that completed projects included infrastructure and trails (including the Greenbelt connection at Dodds Park). She stated that staff met with the residents surrounding Heritage Park. It appears that the residents are not willing to give the Park District easements. Ms. Herakovich reported that Robert C. Porter Family Park Phase I was completed except for punch list items. She reiterated to the Board that staff applied for an IDNR grant but the Park District did not receive it. She stated that repairs in parks included waterlines, fences, and parking lots. She reported that Skelton Park improvements were completed except for plantings which will be undertaken by the Rotary Club. Ms. Herakovich reported that staff accomplished painting in Spalding Park and that it will be discussed at a meeting in June.

Commissioner Kuhl asked why the bathhouse at Spalding Pool will not be painted until September given the number of people who will visit during the summer. Mr. Spencer responded that the painting usually occurs at the end of the season.

Ms. Herakovich reported that the Toalson Park ribbon cutting ceremony is scheduled for Tuesday, June 22, 2010 at 5:30 p.m. She stated that the playground is open and being used by families. Ms. Herakovich reported that the improvements to the Virginia Theatre are moving forward. She stated that use of the schools to which the Park District contributed funds remains limited and will need to

be addressed. Ms. Herakovich talked about the challenges involved and stated that staff will continue to make it a “best practice” to utilize the schools.

Commissioner Petry commented that he appreciated staff trying to utilize those resources. Commissioner Dodds noted that the \$200,000 contributed to Unit 4 School District was not a gift but for the Park District to use the schools as well. Ms. Herakovich stated that she believes staff has made progress with Unit 4. Mr. DeLuce commented on the fees assessed by Unit 4 School District for facility use by the Park District.

Discussion ensued about use of Unit 4 School District facilities. Commissioner Dodds stated that the need to communicate to top level administrators there. Ms. Herakovich stated that she meets with the school superintendent monthly and that staff had informed Unit 4 staff that there is a need to renegotiate the agreement between the parties.

Ms. Herakovich reported that more information will be presented later in the meeting on ensuring the long term financial viability of the Park District. She stated that staff hopes to present some ideas for facilities in June. Ms. Herakovich reported that staff has done a good job of introducing green technology by retrofitting buildings. She stated staff has started a school curriculum to take children on tours of the Virginia Theatre.

Ms. Herakovich reported that due to the economy it is not a good time to start a capital campaign for the Virginia Theatre. She stated that the Park District has had a very generous former resident who has helped continue improvements to the Virginia Theatre. Ms. Herakovich referred to a report that shows the Park District has spent approximately \$1,834,000 in improvements on the theatre. She reported that this was the first year the Park District has had the opportunity to work with the Kellogg Foundation through the Community Foundation. Ms. Herakovich stated that she continues to work with legislators.

Ms. Herakovich reported that staff wishes to celebrate Park District successes. She stated that the Dog Park and Scott Park were completed and grand openings celebrated. Ms. Herakovich reported that staff is not satisfied with the condition of the City’s portion of Scott Park and will continue to work with the City to resolve the problems. She stated that staff is expecting a large donation for West Side Park to start a rotating sculpture program.

Ms. Herakovich reported that next year the Park District plans to celebrate its 100 years of service in the community and the Virginia Theatre’s 90 years of existence. She stated that staff has been brainstorming ideas. Ms. Herakovich stated that staff would like Board assistance with the task force to help with planning events. She reported that staff continues to assist with the City of Champaign’s 150th celebration.

Ms. Herakovich stated that staff were all instrumental in accomplishing the goals as well as the Board.

Budget Line Transfers

Ms. Plotner reported that staff was requesting Board approval to transfer funds from one line item to another in the same funds.

This item will be placed on the May 12th Board agenda for consideration.

Review of FY 09-10 Finances

Ms. Plotner reported that the FY ends April 30, 2010. She stated that the Park District received over 99% of what was levied. Ms. Plotner reported that the Park District submitted and received the \$1.2

million grant revenue from the state. She stated that expenditures were all under budget which will create a surplus of approximately \$1 million. Ms. Plotner reported that the Park District did not receive the majority of the \$120,000 from the City of Champaign to help pay for improvements to Scott Park. Ms. Herakovich reported that the Park District expects to receive the remainder of the funds for Scott Park from TIF funds.

Ms. Plotner reported that pool revenues were down due to the weather. She stated that there was a slight reduction in program fees which will be compensated for in next year's budget.

Ms. Plotner reported that she is looking at adding approximately \$900,000 to reserves in the general fund mostly due to under spending of expenditures because nearly 100% of revenue budgeted was received. She stated in the recreation fund the Park District received 99% of tax revenue collected. Ms. Plotner reported that program fees and sponsorships were behind. She stated that approximately 90% of budgeted tax revenue was received. The museum fund percentage was the same as the recreation fund, at 99%.

Ms. Plotner presented an update on various Park District programs. She stated that next year indirect costs will be included with direct costs. She reported that the flower island program shows a tax support of 30% of direct expenditures. The cost of flowers will be included in next year's report. Ms. Plotner stated that the tax support for all flower island and park flower programs totaled \$302,000. She reported that a new program, developmental sports, shows positive revenue of \$13,000 from youth sports and \$31,000 from adult sports.

Commissioner Kuhl asked about the projected expenditures over budget for the Douglass Community Center. Mr. DeLuce stated that it was because an afterschool program was created at Douglass. Ms. Plotner stated that in next year's budget afterschool costs will be shown in its own budget.

Ms. Plotner reported that the total tax support for aquatics was \$146,000. She stated that a break even budget will be shown for Sholem Aquatic Center next year. Ms. Plotner reported that the after school day camp shows positive revenue of \$82,000 and the dance programs positive revenue of \$37,000.

Ms. Plotner presented a chart showing reserves which included both the 90-day reserve and other reserves. She stated that the total expected year end reserve total is \$8.8 million.

Ms. Herakovich noted that when talking about profit and loss, the Park District does not have a profit, per se, as it is a public entity. She reported that next year will be the first time where the program budget will show overhead and administrative costs.

Ms. Plotner reported that in the new budget it will show a decrease of two positions. One of the positions will be from the Eager Beaver Program and the other a manager position in the recreation department. Ms. Plotner indicated the budget will reflect a slight increase in operation expenditures.

Commissioner Kuhl questioned whether it could be considered eliminating a position in the Eager Beaver Preschool since the program is being eliminated. She commented that she considers it to be one position eliminated. Ms. Herakovich stated that the teen coordinator position was eliminated and other duties and responsibilities were combined. Commissioner Kuhl commented that staff has done a great job.

Ms. Herakovich reported that in the future additional staff will need to be added in operations because of the development of Porter Park, Toalson Park and the Pipeline Trail.

Commissioner Petry commented that he appreciated the work by Ms. Plotner on the budget and Ms. Herakovich's direction in having it completed.

Virginia Theatre Marquee

Ms. Herakovich reported that Ms. Auteberry and Mr. Spencer met with a retired U of I architect who created the drawing of the Virginia Theatre presented to the Board. She stated that staff will receive a color drawing in approximately two weeks. Ms. Herakovich reported that copies of renovated marquees have also been included with the staff report. She stated that the existing marquee is in a terrible state of repair and needs to be fixed. Ms. Herakovich reported that there is a group of people who would like to see the current marquee repaired and kept the way it is. She stated that others in the community have expressed their concerns about the marquee. Ms. Herakovich reported that there is an email on the table from Tim Bartlett, a planner with the Urbana Park District, who was chair of the Historic Preservation Commission when the Theatre received its status. She stated that the Park District the contract for design/build is part of the overall bid awarded whether the Park District goes forward with repair or replacement of the marquee.

Mr. Spencer stated that the Board has the option to restore the existing marquee, build the 1921 style marquee or design a new one. He noted that time is of the essence because the current marquee is in poor repair. Mr. Spencer stated that he believes the current marquee's structural elements are serviceable. He commented that he is more concerned about the electrical components of the marquee.

Ms. Auteberry reported that the architect who created the drawing of the Virginia Theatre used the original blueprints from the original marquee as well as the original rendering created by C. Howard Crane.

Ms. Herakovich stated that staff is looking for comments and direction from the Board to move forward with design/build to repair or replace the marquee.

Commissioner Petry stated that personally he would prefer going back to the original marquee design. However, he stated given the input through the newspaper and emails, it seems apparent to him that a strong majority of people in the community really feel that the current marquee has its own historical significance. Commissioner Petry stated that he is very comfortable with and would encourage the Board to keep the current design. He stated the Board tries to represent the people in the community who pay taxes and unless there are other considerations it will be considerably cheaper to keep the current marquee.

President Solon stated that the Park District's largest donor to date believed that the Park District was restoring the current Virginia Theatre marquee.

Vice President Griggs stated that he liked the original marquee. However, he stated that he would not object to keeping the current marquee.

Commissioner Dodds stated that with the condition of the current marquee it is a wonder that it still exists. He reported that the only components of the marquee that could be used for either style is the steel structure and the support mechanisms. Commissioner Dodds stated that the marquee was included in the bid to get an idea of the construction cost. The Park District now has a rough idea of the cost to build a marquee which is between \$200,000 and \$250,000. He reported that he personally would like to see the Board go back to the original rectangular shaped marquee. Commissioner Dodds stated that he has no problem with the current marquee design. He stated that he did not know if the people who addressed the Board about the current marquee liked the

word “Virginia” or the style of the word “Virginia” on the Theatre.” Commissioner Dodds stated that it may be possible to incorporate part of the current with a new marquee. He reported that he would personally like to see the Park District hire an architect to prepare three to four color drawings. Commissioner Dodds stated that he is open-minded about the marquee issue.

Commissioner Kuhl stated that she has received only 11 emails out of a community of 60,000-70,000 people other than the people who attended the Board meeting. She commented that after listening to comments about the current marquee, she is not sure what people like about it. She has not heard anyone say what it is about the current marquee that ignites their passion. She stated that in her opinion the current marquee does not go with the style of the building and looks totally out of place. Commissioner Kuhl reported that when she looks at the Virginia Theatre she envisions the rectangular marquee and believes that it would look best. She questioned if it was possible to take what people want from the existing marquee and incorporate it into a rectangular marquee. However, she agreed with Commissioner Petry, if the people want the current marquee, she can live with it as well. She commented that she applaud the people who are passionate enough to share their comments with the Board. She commented that the letter from Tim Bartlett was more in line with what she thought should have come from the Local Historic Preservation. Commissioner Kuhl expressed her concern about the accuracy of the costs presented.

Discussion ensued. Commissioner Kuhl asked if people liked the neon, could it be incorporated in the rectangular style marquee.

President Solon stated that people have told her that they like the current marquee because mainly at night it lights up. Commissioner Kuhl commented that she believes that the Park District has not show people that it could do the same thing with a rectangular style marquee. President Solon stated that some people like the shape and feel that the current marquee is inviting.

Commissioner Dodds suggested that several different color versions of the marquee be submitted to the Board for consideration. Commissioner Dodds stated that it is the Board responsibility to decide on a marquee. It was the consensus of the Board that staff has several color versions of a marquee prepared for the Board’s consideration.

In response to a question by President Solon, Mr. Spencer responded that as long as the project is proceeding in some direction, the matter should be fine. He also stated that there is no beginning and end date for the project at this time, although the targeted completion day is December 1, 2010.

Park Development

Use of Sustainable Landscape Methods within our Parks

Ms. Gibble reported that in an effort to become more sustainable, staff has begun the process of naturalization within parks, such as the just planted Mesic Prairie in Porter Family Park, the rain garden and bioswale in Scott Park and the soon-to-be planted rain garden in Hallbeck Park. Ms. Gibble reported that naturalization is often confused with abandonment; however, it is not. It requires research, planning and hard work. She stated that some of the benefits of naturalization include attracting wildlife, eliminating chemical treatments, reducing maintenance, and nurturing native species. Ms. Gibble presented pictures of naturalized areas in public parks.

Discussion ensued about the non-working rain garden in Scott Park. Ms. Gibble stated that the City will address the issue as the project is still under contract and has not been turned over to the Park District yet. She talked about the differences in rain gardens. Comments were made about whether Scott Park was an appropriate park for the rain garden. Ms. Gibble talked about the grant funds received by the City of Champaign and the need to include educational areas.

Ms. Gibble showed an example of a wetland area with wetland planting. She stated that it takes approximately three years for such areas to become established. Ms. Gibble showed an example of a no mow and low mow areas.

Discussion ensued about Porter Family Park. Ms. Herakovich stated that the plan was always to have a mowed strip around the edge at Porter Park. President Solon stated that a problem with a mowed strip and a prairie is that people may come to think it is a part of their backyard. Ms. Herakovich stated that the Park District has had this problem in one of the parks and would have to be very active in educating people. Ms. Gibble stated that it happened with the Pipeline Trail when the path was constructed.

Ms. Gibble showed a picture of a mowed path through a prairie which will be incorporated at Porter Family Park. She also showed a picture of a sign with perennial plantings, grasses and annuals surrounding it. Ms. Gibble reported that these are all things that staff is trying to incorporate at the Park District.

She reported that staff has conducted research in trying to determine how other park districts address naturalization in parks. Ms. Gibble stated that staff's recommendation includes evaluating what the Park District has; creating a management plan; continuing current naturalization efforts; and informing and involving the respective neighborhood.

Commissioner Kuhl expressed her concern about making sure that the naturalized area is appropriate for the chosen park. Commissioner Petry commented to staff that he thought the naturalization process proposed was great. He noted that the surveys showed that residents wanted more naturalized areas and that the Park District is moving more toward a happy medium adding such areas where appropriate.

Ms. Gibble noted that the Park District has no mow areas in Dodds and Heritage Parks. She stated that the only problem is that there is a lack of signage identifying the no mow areas. Commissioner Petry stated that the Heritage Park area looked great. President Solon suggested adding signage. President Solon asked staff if there would be prairie burns at Porter Family Park once it is established. Ms. Gibble responded that there may not be burns, but there may be annual mows.

Ms. Gibble reported that she sent meeting notices to the residents bordering Heritage Park. Eight people attended the meeting. She stated that the residents viewed the preliminary plans of Path A and B. Ms. Gibble reported that the residents who attended the meeting were not in favor of a path. However, residents were not opposed to something similar if other concerns were addressed. She stated that residents would prefer that the Park District spend money on the lake. The lake needs to be dredged. Ms. Gibble reported that on the west side of the lake, 10 ft. of shoreline per year is being lost and the shore is currently about 10 ft. from property lines. She stated that if the Park District corrected the shore problem, the residents would encourage building a path. Ms. Gibble reported that the other concern is that there is no public access from the west to the park. She stated that residents would like the Park District to create a better entrance to the park from the west. Ms. Gibble commented that the Park District does not want to build a path to the edge of the lake or on private property. She stated that filling in a part of the lake and shoring it up is probably the most feasible way to proceed.

Ms. Herakovich reported that attached to the goals sheet was the mission statement, statement of core values and value statements. She stated that the information was put together with input from all staff. Ms. Herakovich asked the Board to let her know if they had comments.

Planning Process

Ms. Herakovich reported that Ms. Gibble will present a proposed park master planning process timeline for a new park to be developed. She stated that during the open space in new growth areas study process, developer representatives wanted to know if a donation of park land were made, the timeframe in which the park would be developed.

Ms. Gibble reported that prior to any park development taking place the Board has to identify project funding sources. She stated that this is sometimes discussed three to five years beforehand. Ms. Gibble presented timelines for development of parks being funded using capital funds and grant funding. She stated that staff is trying to put together a schedule for developers of an estimated timeline it would take to develop a park. The average time required to build a park if capital improvement project funds are used is 16 to 24 months. The average time required to build a park if Illinois Department of Natural Resources funding is used is 23 to 31 months.

Commissioner Kuhl stated that this was a good starting point. Commissioner Petry commented on the possibility of jointly developing marketing materials that developers can use as a way to sell lots to receive an economic benefit for donating park land.

Closed Session

Commissioner Petry made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Kuhl to convene into Executive Session under the Illinois Open Meetings Act, specifically 5 ILCS, Par. 120/2(c)(1) for the discussion of the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, dismissal, performance, or personnel status of employees, officers and legal counsel for the Park District, Par. 120/2(c)(2) collective negotiating matters between the public body and its employees of their representatives, or deliberations concerning salary schedules for one or more classes of employees and Par. 120/2(c)(11) litigation that has been filed or that is probable or imminent. Upon roll call vote, the vote was as follows: Commissioner Petry – yes; Vice President Griggs – yes; President Solon – yes; Commissioner Dodds – yes; and Commissioner Kuhl. The motion passed 5-0.

Return to Regular Meeting

Following the adjournment of the Closed Session, the Board reconvened in open meeting.

Adjourn

There being no further business to come before the Board, Commissioner Dodds made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Vice President Griggs seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0 and the meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Approved:

Jane L. Solon, President

Bobbie Herakovich, Secretary