

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

OCTOBER 27, 2010

The Champaign Park District Board of Commissioners held a Study Session on Wednesday, October 27, 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, Commissioners Newton Dodds, Joseph Petry and Barbara Kuhl

Absent: Commissioner Alvin Griggs

Staff: Jan Plotner, Director of Finance, Jim Spencer, Director of Operations, Laura Auteberry, Marketing & Development Director, Terri Gibble, Park Planner, Andrew Weiss, Park Planner, Cindy Harvey, Administrative Staff and Elaine Self-Calvin, Office Staff.

Other staff were in attendance.

Call to Order

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

Appointment of Secretary Pro Tem

Commissioner Petry made a motion to appoint Jan Plotner as Secretary Pro Tem. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Dodds. The motion passed 4-0.

Presentation

Natural Areas

President Solon introduced Dan Olsen. Mr. Olsen reported that he was asked to attend the meeting to speak about restoration projects. He stated that he is the Director of Natural Resources for the Champaign County Forest Preserve District and as such he gets to do numerous restoration projects, arborist work, and a variety of other projects. Mr. Olsen reported that restoration and natural areas are imperfect and are very tough to do. He reported that the other aspect of natural areas, prairies, forests and tree plantings is that the public and patrons visiting the parks are looking for an immediate expectation of what it should be. Educating the public about natural areas is essential. Mr. Olsen noted that the Park District has taken on a large restoration project in Porter Park. He stated that the community has been asking for natural areas for a while and would love to have them in their backyards for many different purposes.

Commissioner Dodds asked Mr. Olsen to explain to the Board the proper way to install or create a natural area, timeframe for creating a natural area, and problems if it is not done correctly. Mr. Olsen stated that you have to have proper site preparation, control undesirable species, and a good base to start from. Mr. Olsen stated that many failures happen because site preparation is insufficient. He reported that it takes intense work for three years to establish a prairie restoration project. After this time which most prairies and woodlands can become very self sufficient.

Commissioner Kuhl noted that Porter Park is the largest restoration project the Park District has undertaken. She asked Mr. Olsen his opinion of Porter Park. Mr. Olsen stated that in his opinion, the prairie plantings at Porter Park need to be looked at and possibly redone. Commissioner Kuhl asked Mr. Olsen why the prairie plants at Porter Park need to be redone. Mr. Olsen responded that it could be attributed to several reasons. He stated that this year it was incredibly hard to establish prairie plantings due to the weather. Mr. Olsen also stated that the site preparation could have been better.

He noted that from a recent site visit to Porter Park that very few of the prairie seedlings survived the harsh summer. Mr. Olsen stated that the heat and dryness negatively affected all plantings.

Commissioner Petry stated that the other issue that has been a concern is burning. He asked if the Park District should do burning at Porter Park especially with houses around the perimeter. Mr. Olsen stated that all prairies need to be burned at some time. He reported that there are some plant species that will not grow until they are exposed to smoke or germinate until they have been exposed to heat or flames. Mr. Olsen stated that burns are used to maintain invasive species. Fire is also the most economical way of maintaining a prairie. He reported that mowing is also used. Mr. Olsen stated that education is the key when burning around homes. He reported that in the State of Illinois to burn there is legislation that requires the person to be certified or have certified burn managers on hand. Mr. Olsen stated that as long as burns near homes are done correctly it is often something that can bring communities together. He stated that there is legislation that requires residents to be notified of a burn and other regulations that are required to be followed.

President Solon asked if it was necessary to burn every year. Mr. Olsen responded "no." He stated that there will be more burning/mowing management in the first five or six years. Afterwards, with a site as large as Porter Park it may be four or five years between burns. Mr. Olsen noted that with the size of Porter Park, the Park District may decide to burn half one year and the other half another year.

Commissioner Kuhl asked when would be the best time to redo the prairie at Porter Park. Mr. Olsen stated that he would start as soon as possible getting some things in place including a burn of the area this fall. He explained that a prairie burn looks devastating at first but within several weeks it could look like a green lawn. Discussion ensued about the planting plan. Mr. Spencer stated that the planting specifications were provided by Land Design Collaborative. Mr. Olsen noted that the specifications called for thinner plantings than the Forest Preserve uses. He stated that hydroseeding is probably not the best option for establishing a prairie and also that the time for planting was incorrect.

Commissioner Dodds asked Mr. Olsen for a recommendation on what the Park District should be doing at Porter Park, specifically as it relates to burns. Mr. Olsen responded that information and assistance with burns is available from special interest groups, the Department of Natural Resources, and volunteers. He suggested that the Park District follow up about the treatment plant near Porter Park to make sure that there is no flammable material or that smoke will not have an impact on it. Commissioner Dodds asked Mr. Olsen to provide Park District staff with printed material and procedures on burning. He stated that Park District staff is not in the business of burning and that it should be conducted by professionals.

President Solon asked Mr. Olsen for suggestions of what could be done to the rain garden in Scott Park. Mr. Olsen responded that he likes the look at Scott Park and suggested that the Park District leave the area alone for now. He stated that rain gardens and wet areas are like prairie areas; it takes a while for them to get established. President Solon asked if someone could go in and pull weeds in Scott Park to make it look better. Mr. Olsen responded that it would take someone that knows what they are pulling. He stated that plant species selections for wet areas are extremely important and hard to sort out.

Mr. Olsen offered the assistance of the Forest Preserve to the Park District. Mr. Olsen thanked the Board for inviting him to speak at the meeting. The Board thanked Mr. Olsen for his expertise and sharing information on natural areas.

Action Items

Consideration of an Agreement for Independent Contractual Services with Mike Frederick

Ms. Plotner stated that the agreement for contractual services with Mike Frederick to provide services to the Park District for theatrical and other events at the Virginia Theatre is being reviewed by the attorney. She asked the Board if there were any comments or concerns about the terms of the contract.

Commissioner Kuhl expressed concern with committing to paying for 100 hours per month whether or not events are taking place at the Theatre and would like clarification of this aspect of the agreement. She also would like the agreement to include a termination clause should the Virginia Theatre close for remodeling in 2011.

Staff will forward Board comments to the attorney and bring this item back for Board for consideration.

Consideration of a Change to Douglas Park Closing Hours

Ms. Plotner reported that currently Douglass Park closes at 9 p.m. She stated that staff is requesting Board approval to change Douglass Park closing time to 11 p.m.

Commissioner Dodds made a motion to forward this item to the Park Board for consideration at the November 10, 2010 Regular Board meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Petry and unanimously approved.

Consideration of the Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD) Credentials Certificate

Ms. Plotner reported that staff recommends that the Board designate Commissioner Petry as delegate, President Solon as 1st Alternate, Vice President Griggs as 2nd Alternate and Executive Director Bobbie Herakovich as 3rd Alternate. The annual conference will be held in January 27-29, 2011 in Chicago.

Commissioner Dodds made a motion to forward this item to the Park Board for consideration at the November 10, 2010 Regular Board meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Kuhl and unanimously approved.

Consideration of a Trademark License Agreement Ms. Plotner stated that the proposed Trademark License Agreement between the United States Olympic Committee and the Park District solidifies prior discussion about use of logos and trademarks.

Commissioner Kuhl made a motion to forward this item to the Park Board for consideration at the November 10, 2010 Regular Board meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Dodds and unanimously approved.

Discussion Items

Summer Day Camp Report

Ms. Plotner introduced Lucas Thurman, Sports Manager. Mr. Thurman stated that the revised Summer Day Camp After-Action Report was distributed to the Board and includes information regarding camp attendance at the various recreation centers, comparison charts and graphs detailing the percentages of campers' attendance and programs, activities, a summary of changes and budget analysis. He stated that an important change was that the Park District contracted with Unit 4 for bus transportation. Mr. Thurman stated that Leonhard Recreation Center attendance was up approximately 110 kids this summer. He reported on several changes that were made from 2009 to the 2010 program year and stated that plans for the upcoming year are to provide more extensive training and better accounting procedures to improve the billing and payment process.

Commissioner Kuhl commented that this information was very valuable and commended Mr. Thurman for a great presentation. President Solon commented that she was glad to see people continue to use day camps.

Summer Aquatics Report

Ms. Plotner introduced Amy Doll, Aquatics, Tennis & Wellness Manager. Ms. Doll stated that this was the best summer since 2006. She stated that due to the number of 90+degree days this past summer, Sholem added extra swim hours. She stated that the report includes information regarding attendance at Sholem Aquatic Center and Spalding Pools with graphs and charts indicating the attendance percentage of general admission, group admission; weather statistics and the effect of attendance, and budget summaries for both locations. Ms. Doll highlighted a few staff recommendations and changes for 2011 that are listed in the report. The staff would recommend that daily fees and group fees remain the same for the summer of 2011; that Spalding Pool remain open for the 10 weeks that the District hold day camps; that Sholem be open from the Saturday prior to Memorial Day until Labor Day; and the daily schedule for Sholem remain the same for summer 2011. Commissioner Kuhl commended Ms. Doll on a nice report.

Special Events Summary

Ms Plotner introduced Tony Oligney-Estill, Special Events Manager. Mr. Oligney-Estill reported that the staff did a fantastic job with the summer special events. He reported that the Taste of Champaign-Urbana was moved up a week from previous years in an attempt to be the first big outdoor event in the area. Unfortunately, the weather did not cooperate and seven hours of the event were rained out which significantly impacted attendance and sales. He reported that plans are to move this event back a week for the next year and reduce the number of vendors to less than thirty. Mr. Oligney-Estill reported that the Music Festival had good participation. He reviewed the budget amounts for the Music Festival. Mr. Oligney-Estill reported that the Downtown Festival of the Arts was fantastic and that attendance was higher than last year. He reported that attendance for Symphony at Sunset increased from last year and that the event was successful. He reported that Summer Concerts were a big hit. He stated that nine Neighborhood Concerts; eight Sunday Night Concerts; and six Eat to the Beat Concerts were held this year.

Honorary Commissioner Nomination

Ms. Plotner stated that each year the Board selects an individual or individuals for Honorary Commissioner for the December Board meeting. She reported that staff has identified two individuals for the Board's consideration: Eric Robeson and Joan Dixon.

It was the Board recommendation that both individuals be designated as Honorary Commissioners.

Adjourn

There being no further business to come before the Board, Commissioner Dodds made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Petry. The motion passed 4-0 and the meeting adjourned at 7:34 p.m.

Approved:

Jane L. Solon, President

Jan Plotner, Secretary Pro Tem