

STOW PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY WORK SESSION
Monday, September 18, 2023 – 4:00 PM

Minutes of the Stow Parks and Recreation Advisory Work Session held Monday, September 18 at City Hall in the Boards and Commissions room.

Members Present: Bob Pontius, Christie Sheets, Patrick Crawford, Houston Morgan

Members Absent: Jeff Datkuliak

Others Present: Linda Nahrstedt, Director; Chris Sheridan, Supervisor; John Pribonic, Mayor

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Pontius called the meeting to order at 4:05 pm.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Morgan moved to approve the minutes from the August 14, 2023 meeting with noted amendment, seconded by Mr. Crawford. All were in favor.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Nothing to report.

UPDATES

Wayfinding Project

Ms. Nahrstedt reported we are bringing the wayfinding project in house rather than hiring a consultant. We have established the scope of the project, we have made site visits to other parks, we are prioritizing locations and we have met with a sign company. We are looking at breaking it down by location rather than all main signs and then all secondary signs. We have decided to start with Adell Durbin because that was the focus of the Parks board and trying to get some items completed there first.

Phase one will be inventory and prioritizing the park sites, visiting other park systems and then sign company meetings. Phase two will be to determine the design elements – logos, colors, fonts, icons. We already have our green signs with the Fun in Stow logo. We were not planning on getting rid of those because they were expensive and are not that old. We will incorporate some other colors into it, possibly burgundy or brown. We are also trying to figure out how to get City of Stow back on some of those signs and what all of the colors, fonts and icons that need to be on those signs. Then we will determine a hierarchy, for instance at Adell Durbin it has a main park sign. It needs another sign by LaTuchie Tennis and then trail signs. Currently we have signage about the wildflower meadow and there is some signage about the types of trees. We are deciding if we want to keep those signs or if we want the signage

regarding the trees actually on the trees. We are finding other parks doing that and we will contact them to see if the signs eventually harm the trees. You typically see the signs at the base of the tree on a rock. The other thing we saw on the more heavily traveled trails are posts with tabs coming off of them. Mr. Pontius asked are we thinking of mimicking the new welcome to Stow signs? Ms. Nahrstedt stated the only place we are considering those for are the white interior signs at City Hall that have our old City of Stow logo. We will also need to determine the sign mounting surface whether it should be a post or a column.

Once we get all of our ideas together, we will bring them forward with quotes from sign companies and procure a professional design for that art. We would then go through the approval process, production, installation and landscaping with maybe some perennial beds around the signs. Phase one and two we will do internally. The final design, production and possibly installation we will do externally.

Mr. Morgan stated the scout troops are always looking for service projects and maybe they could do the physical part of the installation of the signs for us. Ms. Nahrstedt stated we have a scouting event on November 5 on the green area next to SKIP. They will be doing some promotional activities at SKIP to let people know about scouts and then they will be camping overnight on the green. They will also have a tent display on the front lawn of City Hall.

Mr. Crawford asked will each park have their own signage theme? Ms. Nahrstedt stated we are planning on all of the signage being the same at all of the parks. We will do our inventory of what is needed by park instead of all of the signs at once.

Pickleball Court

Ms. Nahrstedt stated at our last board meeting, I mentioned the paving for the Pickleball Courts would be done next season. My latest update is that there is a possibility they will pave through November therefore it is a possibility there could be some paving work done at Oregon Trail. They were looking at the second revision of the plan with the consultant last week but I have not heard the outcome of that discussion.

Campground

Nothing to report.

Community Bus

Ms. Nahrstedt stated Ms. Lewis has a meeting scheduled with Mr. Crawford on Friday, September 22 to discuss bus amenities. Once we have input from that meeting, we should be able to make some decisions on a new bus.

Other Projects

Mr. Crawford stated he spoke with Jason Dresden from the Stow Soccer Club and he had a concern about the storage door at Oregon Trails. Ms. Nahrstedt stated I will reach out to Mr. Dresden.

Mr. Crawford stated the sand diggers at SKIP appear to be broken. Are they going to get repaired? Ms. Nahrstedt stated yes, they have just been overused and will be repaired soon.

LIBRARY REPORT

Nothing to report.

PLANNING COMMISSION REPORT

Ms. Sheets reported the commissioners, the planning department and the law department are being sued by two of the landowners for a decision that we have not officially made yet regarding the Pulte construction project. The land behind the development is platted which means there are streets that are not physically there, just on paper. There are three or four different owners of that property. Pulte is trying to get those paper streets vacated but that causes another issue with the majority landowner who is upset because if that happens it takes away his rights. He has put some improvements in on that land. The people that have the lawsuits have filed a vacate which is supposed to go to city council but then city council pushed it back to the Planning Commission. If it meets the zoning and everything that is in the code, we cannot turn them down. Most likely we can approve it and give our recommendations to city council, which shows that we are listening to the citizens of Stow.

OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Nahrstedt reported I have compiled a five-year projection of projects which is very light. We truly have not spent a lot of money this year and we are slow on making progress on some items. We need to address the nature play project. Oregon Trail could happen this year but most likely will happen in the spring of next year. There is a consultant for the Pickleball courts which I mentioned we are on the second revision and the community bus should be resolved soon and presented to council. Under the wayfinding section, we have amenities which I have been getting prices on. Recently, I had to order additional tables and trash cans and was able to do that fairly quickly. It is a matter of figuring out all of the needs and putting an order together. The chairs at Heritage Barn have been replaced, we demoed the buildings at Bow Wow Beach. Mr. Anderson is putting in a request for the kayak launch at Heritage Lake and also has some asphalt that could be used to repair the tennis courts at Silver Springs Park, which would be a long-term, temporary fix. The Oak Tree pavilion table replacement will go under amenities. They have started on the clearing of the dirt trails, which will need to be completed before the Cross Country meet in October.

As we move into 2024, the community bus will be paid for in 2024 along with phase two of wayfinding and phase two of the amenities. In our commitment to keep activities on the green at the City Center we will need to do the grade and sculpting of the green, which involves sidewalks and some landscaping and a food truck pad so we do not have to close the road during events. We will need to do wayfinding for the SKIP area and some signage for the green to be able to use the space.

Mr. Crawford asked if there has been any discussion about additional restrooms, as we continue to program that space? Ms. Nahrstedt stated we will have to see how things level out with SKIP and the volume of visitors.

Ms. Nahrstedt stated the items listed under Silver Springs Park are all still relevant and will need to be addressed. Mr. Crawford asked are the wash stations going to be replaced at Bow Wow Beach? Mayor Pribonic stated the plumbing parts are on order and will be completed next Spring. Ms. Sheridan stated we will also be installing large tennis balls that are sprinklers in the dog park.

Mayor Pribonic stated the money in the budget for this year is still there. Even though the projects are not completed, the money will be there when the time permits to complete the project. We ran into some issues with the Pickleball Courts at Oregon Trails, and we had to hire a consultant, which is why the project got delayed but it will get completed with the money that is already set aside for it.

Ms. Nahrstedt stated the total on the 2024 proposed budget is \$2.8 million but I will be adjusting the wayfinding amount down because the number will be considerably lower. The Oregon Trail restroom/shelter is on this plan at \$700,000 and I believe that number will also be considerably lower. The items that I would like to see get accomplished for 2024 are the partial playground equipment replacement at Adell Durbin. The Oregon restroom/shelter will need to be completed once we get the Pickleball Courts installed. Heather Hills playground needs evaluated and replaced, the Heritage Lake kayak launch and a plan for a launch at Meadowbrook the following year.

Mr. Crawford stated with the installation of the loop trail at Oregon Trail a connection to the Red Park would be a nice enhancement for that playground for parents with smaller children.

Mr. Pontius stated with the installation of a kayak launch at Meadowbrook, do we need to inform the residents there? Ms. Nahrstedt said yes, we will. When we had our pop up at the park, engineering attended the pop up to take suggestions and answer questions from the residents. There has been a study done on Meadowbrook and there are a number of items that could happen there. I will have to ask Mike Jones if he is able to come to our next meeting and inform us of what could be done there. We do have a playground coming for that park some time in November.

Mr. Morgan stated all of these improvements, trails, buildings sounds great but we need the additional maintenance personnel to make these improvements happen and to maintain the improvements. Mayor Pribonic stated there will always be extenuating circumstances like we had with the storm brush clean up. The brush had to go somewhere, and it was a huge undertaking for the maintenance personnel, which caused parks maintenance to be behind for about three weeks. At that point, other departments had to assist to get things caught up in Parks Maintenance. Ms. Nahrstedt stated it is just like Sunset Blast every department works that event.

Ms. Nahrstedt stated I would like input from all of you, so I do not forget to plug in something that is long-term. In successive years, I do have a nature center at Adell Durbin and an amphitheater for the green. These are long-term projects that we need to plan for over time. Is there anything I am missing that should be plugged in so that we can start saving for 2025-2026? Ms. Sheets asked do we need to be looking at SOAR Playground? Has the playground pad been repaired? Ms. Nahrstedt stated we had some recent damage due to the storm and the pad was repaired a few years ago.

Ms. Sheets asked should we look at putting the splash pad back in? Ms. Nahrstedt stated at the end of last year it was not a priority at that time – getting to the playground was the priority. Mr. Crawford stated one thing that came up a lot in the master plan was to have an outdoor pool for the community. I am not a fan of putting in a pool that you can only use three months out of the year in Ohio, but it comes up a lot in the surveys and ranks higher than other amenities that we are focusing on. Mr. Pontius stated with the closing of two big community pools in the area, Waterworks and LifeCenter Plus has not seen an increase in business. Mr. Morgan stated a community pool is something that should be in the Recreation Center where it can be used year-round.

Mayor Pribonic stated regarding the splash pad, it is a good thing we did not include it with the installation of the playground – the crowds would have been unbelievable. Wherever the splash pad is, I believe we need to consider one because they are the norm now and we are falling behind because we do not offer one. I would be willing to go out and help raise money to help purchase one because people have seen the benefit of SKIP and it is a driving force for economic development. We have some bigger stores like Home Goods and T.J. Maxx. They are starting to empty out the bowling alley in order to move forward with that. We have 2-3 major restaurants coming in and the buyer of Macys will be announced soon. We have to keep moving on improving our city, so we do not become stagnant.

Ms. Sheets stated if we scale back on the wayfinding and the shelter/restroom at Oregon Trails will that give us some money to put in a splash pad? Ms. Nahrstedt stated I think it could be possible. Mr. Crawford stated the board voted to put the splash pad on the 2023 list but prioritized it at the bottom – isn't that money already allocated for this project? Ms. Nahrstedt stated specific items are not approved. The board's decision was to put it on hold for 2023. I can put it on the 2023 list and move it forward to 2024 if that is what we want to do.

Mayor Pribonic stated looking at the crowds, it was a good decision to put that project on hold and now decide is that still the area we want to put it. Mr. Crawford stated having small children and having been at the park I think it would be a fantastic addition to that area. Ms. Nahrstedt stated I can put a number to it, and we can discuss where to put it moving forward. Is that something we would look at for Oregon Trail, where the skate park is?

Skate Park Future

Ms. Nahrstedt stated due to the asphalt project we could install temporary Pickleball Courts where the skate park is currently until the ones at Oregon Trail are completed and still be able to repair the tennis courts. It will be a quick pull out of the skate park equipment, pave, and line the area. Mr. Pontius stated I drive by Adell Durbin several times a week and there are so many people playing pickleball – all ages. Mr. Crawford asked do people call the office to complain about not being able to use the courts for pickleball? Ms. Nahrstedt said no, because it is open play. We

do have the people that call to inform us that the lines are not right, or we put the nets away too early.

Mr. Anderson's thought process was to get the asphalt in that spot because it would be a low investment for us. Then once the big pickleball courts are done the skate park area could be a basketball court or a wading pool. By doing this, it does not prohibit the area from being something else in the future.

Mr. Crawford stated in my discussion with Mr. Dresden, he did say he does not see a lot of use at the skate park and the younger siblings do not have anything to do there. If we fenced it in with a little spray pad maybe that would be a great addition. I did walk over to the skate park recently and took some pictures and it does look pretty bad.

Mayor Pribonic stated if we get rid of the skate park, we have to have something that is going to replace it. People do not like to see something taken away and not replaced with something else. Ms. Nahrstedt stated should we put temporary pickleball courts in that area? Mr. Crawford moved to remove the skate park and replace it with temporary pickleball courts and then something more interactive once all of the upgrades have been made to the park; Mr. Pontius seconded. All were in favor.

NEW BUSINESS

Nothing to report.

GENERAL DISCUSSION ITEMS

Sound Study

Ms. Nahrstedt stated we did have a consultant come out regarding the decibel levels. Mr. Wren is working on that with him. The consultant should be able to present to us what small fixes can be done to reduce the sound from carrying into the surrounding neighborhoods. Mr. Crawford stated there sounds like there is some legislation being considered in council that can redesign noise ordinances and what we decide to do could hinge on that. Mayor Pribonic stated we have to be careful when that conversation occurs that we do not hurt our tree lighting event. We have to make sure this decision takes into consideration all of our events.

Outdoor Equipment Lending Library

Mr. Pontius stated the Cuyahoga Falls Public Library is talking about a "things" library, where you can check out kayaks, fishing rods, mountain bikes and backpacks. According to the survey, outdoor education like camping, canoeing, and water education was in the top five.

Mr. Crawford stated I spoke with Patrick Davis who is a part-time fitness coordinator for the City of Glenwood Springs in Colorado. Their vision was to break down barriers that may prevent people from accessing the outdoors. The program began a few years ago when they received money from the Colorado Office of Recreation and a donation from Smartwool. In Colorado, outdoor recreation like fishing, mountain climbing, kayaking is huge. They first started with inflatable kayaks, stand up paddleboards, snowshoes and fishing gear. Last year they added

camping and backpacking gear through a partnership and a grant from the White River National Forest. Their goal has been to purchase everything locally. He stated there was no one in their area doing this but there were some organizations in the pacific northwest that have been doing this for some time and are very well equipped. They rent their items out for a small fee. A \$600 paddleboard can be rented for \$10 a day. He stated the paddleboards are out all of the time. Camping gear is busy every other weekend. He said the usage is about 50% residents and 50% non-residents. He manages all aspects of this library on a part-time basis, probably about 5-8 hours per week. They use their existing reservation system to reserve the equipment. When they send out the gear, they include a checklist of how to clean the equipment, package and return it to them. Sometimes with the camping gear they have issues where they need to air the gear out before renting it again. For future development they said their goal is awareness. Most people that would benefit from this program do not even know it exists. They are also trying to create more programming geared around the items that are available.

Mr. Pontius stated I really think this is a program we should strongly look into. I would be willing to volunteer 5-8 hours a week. I would also be willing to find equipment deals for us to purchase the gear. We have several businesses in the area that we could contact for donations of the equipment. Mr. Crawford stated the National Park Service has grants for outdoor recreation initiatives that we could look into also.

Mr. Morgan stated we used to have rental units at the campground years ago for a couple of years and if I remember correctly, it was not a successful program. We had built two tent platforms and we had tents and cots for rent but we did not supply sleeping bags. We need to look into why it did not work then and tweak the idea so that we can make it work now.

Mr. Crawford stated I received an email regarding the OPRA Awards. I was considering, if the board would be interested, in submitting SKIP to acknowledge all of the groups that made this playground become a reality. Ms. Nahrstedt stated I think that would be a great idea and I will look into it. Mr. Crawford stated you have to submit a narrative and it has to describe the community impact, that it provides a broad community benefit and serves to improve the quality of life for the people of the community. Ms. Sheets stated the deadline to submit is not until October 18, 2023. Ms. Nahrstedt stated we have a lot of written material for when we were fundraising for SKIP that I would be happy to share with you. Mr. Crawford stated the board can fill out the template online and submit it. Mr. Morgan moved to have Mr. Crawford proceed with submitting SKIP Playground for an OPRA Award, Mr. Pontius seconded. All were in favor.

Mr. Morgan stated the Historical Society will be having their Harvest Festival September 30 and October 1. We will have Model T Fords on Saturday and Corvairs on Sunday. We appreciate all of the help from the city's maintenance department to make this festival a success.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Morgan and seconded by Ms. Sheets at 5:40 pm. All were in favor.

Bob Pontius, Chairperson
Parks and Recreation Board

Deanna Davis, Secretary
Parks and Recreation Department