

MINUTES OF THE PARK COMMISSION MEETING HELD APRIL 12, 2021

PRESENT: Wesley Posvar, Chairperson; Jay Troutman, Jim Pashek, Susan Crookston, Liz Nelson, Carrie Casey Leemhuis, Michael Schiller, Jessica DeMoise, Jessie Handron, Members; Gary Koehler, Borough Manager; Alex Scott, Mayor; Dempsey Bruce, PWD Superintendent; Shawn Peterson, Borough Secretary

ALSO PRESENT: Mandy Steele, Steve Whittingham, Carolyn Sanford, Cynthia Lackey

Mr. Posvar called the meeting to order at 9:04 AM via Zoom Webinar due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Posvar welcomed the Park Commission's newest member, Jessie Handron.

The minutes of the December 14, 2020, meeting were unanimously approved.

VISITORS

Park Benches

Carolyn Sanford and her sister, Cynthia Lackey, were in attendance to discuss a bench they had donated to the Borough in memory of their father. The particular bench has deteriorated over the years, so a new bench was put in its place. Ms. Sanford and Ms. Lackey asked the Park Commission if the plaque used for the first bench could be used for the second bench and what type of costs may be associated with having a new bench dedicated to their father. They also inquired about the bench devoted to Mr. Graham Smyth that also deteriorated.

After discussion, Mr. Posvar stated that the Park Commission is actively studying the issue of previously donated park benches that have been washed away due to flooding or deterioration over time.

ANNIE'S FIELD PROJECT- Update

Steve Whittingham joined the meeting to update Annie's Field of Dreams Project at McCahill Park. The Lilliput House production has begun, and a deposit for the houses has been sent. The production process should take about twelve weeks, so the houses should arrive sometime in August.

Mr. Pashek updated the Commission on Phase II at McCahill Park. Borough engineers, LSSE, completed their survey of McCahill Park, and the completed material information was sent to DCED. The Borough is awaiting whether DCNR will approve a second grant for McCahill Park, which would change the scope of work. This is causing the design work for McCahill Park to slow. The decision will be made sometime in June.

Because of the pandemic, construction costs have currently increased. Pashek +MTR will wait until after June to complete permits and drawings to bid the project in the fall.

Ms. Nelson reported that a Daisy Girl troop is interested in planting flowers at Annie's Field of Dreams on May 15, 2021. This would allow the ten-member troop to earn their Friendly and Helpful Girl Scout petal. Ms. Nelson motioned to allow the Daisy Girls troop to plant flowers at Annie's Field of Dreams. The motion was seconded by Ms. Casey and passed by a unanimous vote.

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HARDIE VALLEY PARK UPDATE

Ms. Casey stated that the Garden Club of Allegheny County approved a grant for \$10,000 to plant native trees and plants around the waterfall. Ms. Casey has been working with Mr. Pashek, Ms. Steele, Mr. Posvar, Mr. Bruce, and Mr. Koehler on coordinating the planting of the native trees and plants.

A grant from Seeders and Weeders, another garden club, will donate up to \$5,000 to provide fifty trees and mulch that may be planted in the meadow at the park entrance.

COMMISSION-SPONSORED DAYS OF SERVICE

Mr. Posvar stated that a Fox Chapel Community Clean-Up Day is scheduled for April 17, 2021, from 10 AM until 12 PM, beginning at McCahill Park.

Councilmember Betsy Monroe wants to reinstate the Garlic Mustard Pull event in the Borough. Mr. Posvar suggested having an educational class with Ms. Monroe before the event, so volunteers will know what the plants look like during the first and second-year growth. The event is tentatively scheduled for May 15, 2021, at the Trillium Park Trail. Due to the mild winter and spring, this date may be moved up so that the seeds are not spread.

TRAIL AND PARK RENAMING

Mr. Posvar stated that the main Eliza Fox Trail goes through Hardie Valley Park on the valley floor. The previous Old Squaw Trail connector trail on the hillside above the park needs a name.

Mr. Troutman motioned to recommend to Council to name the hillside trail, Hardie Valley Overlook Trail. The motion was seconded by Mr. Schiller and passed by a unanimous vote.

PARK SPECIAL EVENT REVIEW AND PERMIT ISSUANCE

Mr. Posvar presented a number of safety concerns and deviations from statutory Park Regulations he observed at the March 20 Fox Chapel Conservancy Lantern Walk event. Many of these could be attributed to insufficient communications before the event. This discussion highlighted the need for Park Commission prior review and permit issuance for major organized special events where waivers from Park Regulations would be necessary. With some concern expressed regarding the Park Commission needing to approve “every event” in our parks, it was noted that there are very few special events in Borough Parks and that this review would not be necessary for contractual use of the ballfields, etc.

FOX CHAPEL PARKS CONSERVANCY

Ms. Steele was in attendance to discuss the summer lantern event. The Pittsburgh Opera has agreed to have a singer perform in the backfield of Hardie Valley Park. Patrons will walk down the lit driveway to the backfield, where at sundown, the singer will begin their performance until sunset. The Conservancy is planning to have shuttles available at Beechwood Farms and on Fairview Road.

If plans need to be changed, the Conservancy will hold the summer event on the Trillium Trail as a drive-by lantern event.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

Mr. Bruce noted that the Public Works Department had completed two of the stepping-stone crossings that the DEP approved. The stepping-stones are secured with concrete, so they should not wash away.

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The first one is at the edge of the Field Club property, crossing from Salamander Park to the Riding Meadow parking lot. The second crossing is at Riding Meadow to the Lockhart Loop. Mr. Koehler noted that streambank restoration in Riding Meadow Park would begin as part of the same DEP permit.

Next year, there are plans to apply for another permit to cross the stream at the end of Hardie Valley Park to Riding Meadow Park. Mr. Koehler will coordinate with Mr. Pashek on the exact crossing location so that LSSE can move forward with the permit application to DEP.

PARK STEWARD REPORTS

Ms. Handron will be the new park steward for the Eliza Fox Trail from Beechwood Farms to Hardie Valley Park.

Ms. Casey stated that the Public Works Department had done a phenomenal job of making the trails more accessible by adding a ground cover. She also thanked Mr. Koehler and Mr. Bruce for coordinating invasive species removal with Eichenlaub Inc. Landscaping with grant money.

Ms. DeMoise stated that the deer fence on the Trillium Trail needs to be repaired or removed. Mr. Bruce noted that Public Works fixed the top portion of the fence recently.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Posvar stated that the Fox Chapel-O'Hara Township Joint Comprehensive Plan Committee has recently sent out an RFP to four architectural firms and is awaiting their responses. The Committee is using the time to conduct educational sessions for members of the Committee and the public.

The Aspinwall Riverfront Park has the opportunity to buy the Brilliant Line of the Allegheny Valley Railroad. This is an urban/wooded rail-to-trail opportunity that lies on both sides of the Allegheny River, ranging from Verona to Homewood/Larimer/Point Breeze to O'Hara. It includes likely the only (future) dedicated pedestrian/biking bridge over the Allegheny River.

Ms. Crookston thanked everyone who contributed to the 408 letters she was able to send to State Representative Connor Lamb for the Brilliant Line Project. She stated that almost 3,000 individuals responded to the question, "Why is this important to you?" via email as well.

UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

- Fox Chapel Community Clean-Up – April 17, 2021, 10 AM – 12 PM, McCahill Park
- Fox Chapel and O'Hara Township Joint Comprehensive Plan Committee Visit Hikes
 - April 24, 2021, 1:00 PM – North from McCahill to Beechwood and back
 - May 1, 2021, 1:00 PM – South from McCahill to Allegheny river and back
- Park Commission Meeting – May 10, 2021, 1:00 PM
- Garlic Mustard Pull – May 15, 2021, time TBD, Trillium Trail
- Park Commission Meeting – June 14, 2021, 9:00 AM

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:03 AM.

Shawn M. Peterson
BOROUGH SECRETARY