**MINUTES OF THE PARK COMMISSION MEETING HELD DECEMBER 14, 2020**

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

ALSO PRESENT: Mandy Steele, Fredrick Leech, Betsy Monroe, Steve Whittingham

Mr. Posvar called the meeting to order at 9:03 AM via Zoom Webinar due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The minutes of September 14, 2020, meeting were unanimously approved.

RESIGNATION

Lois Folino has advised that she and her husband have sold their home and that she is resigning from the Commission. Mrs. Folino has served on the Borough Commission for four years. Mr. Posvar thanked Mrs. Folino for her service to her community, stating that she had a lot of insight, good energy, and was quite protective of the dog parks.

It was decided to advertise the opening in the Winter 2021 newsletter and the Borough website. The Parks Commission will then recommend the new member at the next meeting held on April 12, 2021, for Council’s consideration.

ANNIE’S FIELD PROJECT- Update

Steve Whittingham joined the meeting to update Annie’s Field of Dreams Project at McCahill Park. The opening of Annie’s Field of Dreams was held on Sunday, October 2, 2020. Since the opening, the park's popularity has grown, and each day sees more and more children enjoying all the activities it offers.

Mr. Whittingham also stated that the design of the playhouses and the entrance signage is moving ahead. The completed plans for the playhouses should be ready by the next meeting.

Mr. Pashek updated the Commission on the DCNR and DCED grants for McCahill Park. The DCNR grant was awarded to the Borough for $128,944 as a 50/50 match from the Borough, bringing the total amount to $257,888. Mr. Pashek will meet with DCNR to go over the requirements of the grant in January. A decision is expected soon about the DCED grant. If the DCED grant is awarded, Mr. Pashek would like to amend the scope of work for the two grants to include innovative stormwater management options.

Mr. Posvar discussed the Design and Implementation Proposal for McCahill Park Improvements from Pashek +MTR. The proposal includes the design fee fixed at $34,500 for the construction budget and an optional fee for Stormwater and Green Infrastructure Improvements not to exceed $20,000. Mr. Posvar suggested tabling the Stormwater option due to the Army Corps of Engineers Study being performed in Fox Chapel and O’Hara Township. Until the Parks Commission knows the true scope of work being done, it is best to hold off on paying for the Stormwater option.

Mr. Koehler stated that in the November 25, 2020, DCNR grant award letter, that if a design consultant has not been chosen for the work, one needs to be. Mr. Troutman motioned to recommend to Council to engage Pashek +MTR for the contract with the Stormwater Management and Green Infrastructure Improvements set aside until the Army Corps of Engineers' report is received. Mr. Schiller seconded the motion. All were in favor of the motion, with Mr. Pashek abstaining from voting due to the appearance of a conflict of interest.

It was noted that Mr. Pashek’s fees were not included in the scope; therefore, he will be donating his time. The members of the Parks Commission thanked him for his service once again.

HARDIE VALLEY PARK UPDATE

Mayor Scott updated the Commission on the Opening Ceremony on Saturday, October 17, 2020. This was a dedication to the Hardie Family and the generous donors who made the park possible. There has been $972,000 donated by over 250 donors and organizations to the acquisition and preservation of Hardie Valley Park. Mayor Scott also stated that the goal of $1 Million would be reached with recent commitments made. A ‘Thank You’ to Mr. Koehler for arranging a DCNR grant will bring the total to $1,440,000.

Ms. Casey stated that the Garden Club of Allegheny County approached her about a grant request. It was discussed that the best option might be a contribution to the natural plantings at the waterfall. Ms. Casey also pointed out that Mr. Schiller has been working with Seeders and Weeders, another garden club, who may donate up to $5,000 to provide fifty trees and mulch. These trees may be planted in the meadow at the entrance to the park.

Ms. Casey also discussed tree donations. She thought it was a great idea to provide trees to those who like to donate in honor of a family member and provide a certificate stating that a tree has been planted in someone’s honor. She also said that a large fundraiser could be created for Arbor Day, where trees that are already sourced and chosen are provided to the public for planting within the community. Mr. Posvar thought this was a terrific idea for the Fox Chapel Parks Conservancy to undertake when set up and ready.

Mr. Troutman asked that the list of trees be circulated among the members of the Parks Commission. Ms. Casey stated that Mr. Schiller, Mr. Pashek, and herself had the list and would provide it.

Mr. Posvar discussed the Stormwater Hydro-Geological Study proposals from Ethos Collaborative and LSSE for Hardie Valley Park. Ethos became aware of the park plan's next phase and sent in a proposal to the Borough. Mr. Koehler then requested a proposal from the Borough Engineers, LSSE. Mr. Posvar recommended that the Commission table the proposals until after the Army Corps of Engineers’ report is received.

FOX CHAPEL GARDEN CLUB GRANT REQUEST

The Fox Chapel Garden Club asked if the Parks Commission would like to request anything this year. It was discussed that the Foxhurst Intersections be a good idea for the planting of trees. Mr. Posvar stated that the Fox Chapel Garden Club has not responded to this idea yet, but he believes they will meet this month of next to discuss it. Mr. Posvar shared drawings of the intersection’s alignments to illustrate the possible planting areas.

“SQUAW” COUNCIL ACTION

At the November 16, 2020, Council meeting, Council decided that the Borough will rename the two streets and trail that contain the word ‘squaw’. The Parks Commission will be responsible for recommending a name for Old Squaw Trail. Mr. Posvar proposed consolidating Old Squaw Trail and Salamander Trail to emphasize a full North-South connection. It was discussed if a contest for additional names would be a good idea, focusing on school-aged children's submissions. The Commission decided to advertise for the input and suggestions for the name change in the Winter 2021 newsletter and the Borough website, encouraging children to participate.

An Ad-Hoc Committee consisting of Mr. Posvar, Ms. Crookston, and Ms. DeMoise will collect the suggested names and review them. A special Parks Commission meeting where members vote on a recommended name change may be needed to meet the March 1, 2021 deadline created by Borough Council. Mr. Troutman would be willing to discuss with Borough Council that the next scheduled Parks Commission meeting is not until April 12, 2021, and could there be an extension on the name change for the trail due to this, if needed.

FOX CHAPEL PARKS CONSERVANCY – NEW 501(C)3

Mayor Scott updated the Commission on creating the Fox Chapel Parks Conservancy with the Community Foundation of the Alleghenies. He stated that this would be a great source of funds for the future. Mayor Scott thanked Councilwoman Mandy Steele for her hard work and finding the Community Foundation of the Alleghenies. He also wanted to recognize Borough Solicitor Bruce Bowden, who has been working pro-bono on this matter.

Ms. Steele was in attendance to discuss the Lantern Installation event she has been putting together for the Fox Chapel Parks Conservancy. This event will feature lanterns placed on display at McCahill Park that can be viewed from a car safely, or if people chose, a walk through with masks on. For a $25 donation to the Conservancy, a lantern will be placed at the park. This event is scheduled for January 1, 2021. Other lantern events will be planned and scheduled in the future.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

Mr. Bruce reported eight park benches, new trash receptacles for Annie’s Field of Dreams, the stepping stones for the creek crossings, and the signs for Hardie Valley Park requiring dogs to be on leashes are all at the Borough Building. The benches will be placed where previous benches were washed away due to flooding. Mayor Scott and his brother Gregg will fund the replacement of park benches in Scott Park.

Ms. Casey discussed an unsafe hillside washing out on the trail from Riding Meadow heading toward Hardie Valley Park. Mr. Bruce stated that he would look into the matter and see if he can correct the issue.

Mr. Koehler noted that the Borough had received two permits for two-stepping stone crossings. 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. The Public Works Department will complete this work over the winter season. The Hardie Valley Park crossing does not have a permit as of yet. Mr. Koehler stated that the crossing would need to be looked at and a permit needed.

PARK STEWARD REPORTS

Ms. Casey stated that the parking at Beechwood Farms has become increasingly busier now that Hardie Valley Park is open. She also thanked Mr. Bruce and the Public Works Department for their work to lay stone and cut back debris along the trail. Ms. Crookston stated that due to the increase in foot traffic, there is an increase in garbage being left behind, especially dog waste.

Mr. Pashek noted that Pashek +MTR has design work at Beechwood Farms to design a trailhead and parking across the street to the right of the firehouse. This lot has not yet been built due to funding. Mr. Pashek suggested that the Fox Chapel Parks Conservancy may want to help fund the parking lot in the future to help cut back on the volume of parking at Beechwood Farms and also Riding Meadow Park.

UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

* Ad-Hoc Meeting for trail name change contest
* Possible special Commission Meeting to determine recommending name for trail name change on February 22, 2021
* The next regular meeting will be held on Monday, April 12, 2020, at 9 AM.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Posvar stated that he is a member of the Fox Chapel-O’Hara Township Joint Comprehensive Plan Committee and will provide updates to the Parks Commission.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:37 AM.

Shawn M. Peterson

BOROUGH SECRETARY