

Village of Hastings-on-Hudson  
Recreation Commission  
Regular Meeting  
Thursday, October 20, 2016

Time: 8:00pm

Place: James Harmon Community Center, 44 Main Street

- I. Call to Order
- II. Public Comment
- III. Old Business / Updates
  - Upcoming/New Programs
- IV. New Business
  - Public Discussion / Questions: Tennis Courts, 9A park parcel, Uniontown Park
  - Review – Long-Range Plan for Parks
- V. Adjournment

In attendance:

Joanne Baecher-DiSalvo (Chair), Gene Calamari, David Downs, Angela Reeve.  
Kendra Garrison (Superintendent)

Approval of September 8, 2016 Regular Meeting Minutes.

Public Comment:

Riverview Park –

Val Harmon visited Riverview Park since its opening and noted that the pea gravel ramp that leads from the upper level to the lower level and the stone tiered pathway on the western (river) side of the park were not realistic options for anyone with limited mobility issues or walkers, strollers, or wheelchairs to access the lower level of the park. She recalled hearing input from a public meeting earlier this spring that seniors regarded the lower level as a quiet place to enjoy the park. She suggested perhaps a hand rail down along the pea gravel pathway might make it easier for those with limited mobility issues to access the lower level.

David Downs pointed out that the end design changed somewhat from the original plans submitted in spring 2016, where the original plans indicated that the outer path was to be a gradually declining path that sloped into the lower level. Perhaps the ground make-up of the hill and concern for erosion of that section were the reason why the landscaper ultimately built the stone tiered pathway along the western side of the park where there is a steep drop down toward the river.

Shannon Rooney shared a concern that visitors to the Riverview Park could get between the Warburton Avenue side walk and the retaining wall on the eastern side of the park. She suggested that this section be investigated and access blocked.

Kendra Garrison informed those in attendance that the current fence in this area of concern is scheduled to be replaced with a 48" high fence, which will eliminate access between the Warburton sidewalk and the retaining wall of the Riverview Park along the Warburton side.

Joanne Baecher-DiSalvo asked that all Parks and Recreation Commission members visit the Riverview Park in its most recent state before the November regular meeting and walk the areas of concern and note the progress to date.

### Old Business / Updates

#### Halloween Happenings -

K. Garrison briefly reviewed a full array of festivities/programs scheduled for the Oct 27 (Thurs) – Oct 30 (Sun) Halloween weekend in Hastings. In sum, Oct 27: Pumpkin Carving co sponsored by Hastings PBA, Oct 28: Friday Night DEAD @ Chemka Pool; Oct 29: Downtown Window Painting, Pet Parade, Senior Bingo; Oct 30: Bug Walk, Halloween Parade, Senior Halloween Party, Downtown Trick or Treating. (see 11x17" handout entitled "Village of Hastings on Hudson Recreation Department -- Halloween Happenings"). These events/activities are all posted on the Recreation Department's website.

### New Business

Joanne Baecher-DiSalvo gave a brief overview of 3 park areas in Hastings that have been the focus of the Commission's attention/discussions since Spring – the Hillside Park Tennis Courts, Uniontown Park, and the 9A park/parcel.

David Downs went on to highlight the key issues of each property. In sum:

#### Tennis Courts at Hillside Park –

Current Condition: 1 court is not at all usable, the remaining 3 courts are cracked (so much so that the Hastings UFSD opted to bus their student athletes outside of Hastings to gain meaningful play/practice time for the tennis teams). The Hillside Park tennis courts are 50+ years old, which is twice the life expectancy of tennis courts based on industry standards. These same courts were cited in a 2005 Village report as needing repair back then. Because of the current state of the courts, the Parks & Rec Department chose not to sell permits in 2016.

One option that was discussed/considered was to eliminate the courts in the Hillside Park location, paving that area for pool parking, and build new tennis courts on the 9A park/parcel. This option was rejected for many reasons – 9A was not an ideal location as it presents safety concerns to access the parcel by foot or bicycle and has limited parking; the cost of placing new tennis courts on this unprepared foundation would be 20% higher than that of repairing the current courts in Hillside Park; Hastings UFSD and its student athletes would use the Hillside Park courts for their modified sports program and their junior varsity team and students could walk to the Hillside Park location.

After months of discussions factoring in public input, the Commission recommends rebuilding the four tennis courts in Hillside Park, noting the need to address the drainage issue. Initial cost estimates suggested this would run \$200 - \$225K. The rebuilt tennis courts would maintain the same "foot print" and there would be no need to remove any woods to pursue this option.

### Uniontown Park project

Proposed upgrades to Uniontown Park would include:

- 1- Expanded Parking
- 2- Alter the Outfield dimensions to confirm to regulation play standards
- 3- Remove the current playground, build a new playground in the back of the park.

Mayor Peter Swiderski (in attendance) questioned if Zinnser Park had been considered for a Little League location. Gene Calamari indicated that the current set up at Zinsser Park is to accommodate softball, with flat pitching mounds and no fencing. There are currently two ball fields back to back.

The Mayor questioned if consideration had been given to “shifting” the current Uniontown Park playground which could allow for more parking. J. Baecher-DiSalvo and D. Downs responded that there was much discussion about the safety of having a playground adjacent to a parking lot at all. D. Downs also pointed out that while reducing the size and modifying the location of the current playground could yield a few more parking spaces, moving the playground altogether would yield more parking and eliminate the concern of having a playground adjacent to a parking lot.

Dan Sbrega (Hastings Little League Board) expressed that the LL supports the idea of a new playground, and suggested that current members of the Friends of Reynolds Playground would be a resource to help fund raise and lend experience in this area to organize efforts to address the Uniontown Park playground upgrade.

The Mayor questioned the Commission as to what input/concerns local residents have voiced/shared pertaining to the upgrades suggested for Uniontown Park. D. Downs shared that local residents have shared concerns about traffic volume, particularly on Rose Street, parking on the neighboring side streets, and the size of the Uniontown project. G. Calamari indicated that Little League uses Uniontown Park from March thru October and also indicated that cars parked on High Street have posed a safety concern to motorists and pedestrians.

S. Rooney pointed out that when cars park on Rose Street, the width of Rose Street is reduce to 14', which according to industry standards constitutes a one-way road.

D. Sbrega informed the Commission that a full size tree fell on the Uniontown batting cage on October 20<sup>th</sup>. K. Garrison indicated that she would advise the Parks foreman to resolve that issue.

Mayor questioned if the Little League’s “concept design” would require the cutting of trees in Uniontown Park in order to extend the outfield fence. G. Calamari indicated that some sapplings would need to be removed, and that no major woods would be affected. Mayor questioned the rocky outcrop of the landscape where the proposed outfield expansion would take place. G. Calamari indicated that dealing with the rocky landscape would constitute an expense in the proposed expansion.

It was noted that the height of the fencing in the outfield would be high enough to protect the children playing in the playground at the new proposed location in right field.

## 9A Park Parcel

The Commission indicated that Ginsburg's July 22<sup>nd</sup> proposal to Mayor Swiderski to use the \$420K recreation fees to create 2 tennis courts and a fenced children's play area was considered this summer and rejected. The Commission cited the need for the \$420K in recreation fees to address a multitude of other Parks & Rec needs in the Village and regarded Ginsburg's proposal more in line with an amenities package for residents of The Lofts.

In considering the 9A parcel/park land donated to the Village, the Commission would like to consider this piece of land for use as large playing (half size soccer) field. Rationale for this line of thinking was supported by these considerations:

- Limited / restricted use of the Hastings UFSD playing fields. The football field at Reynolds will be used strictly by school teams (no youth teams will be permitted to play/practice there, and no casual play will be allowed) while the fields at Burke (1 full-sized field and two smaller-sized fields) will be used by school teams and, on a permit basis, certain non-school youth soccer teams for practices and games. The fields at Burke will however also be closed to casual play, and regularly patrolled to discourage trespassers.
- The Village currently does not have youth soccer fields
- Based on National Recreation and Park Association guidelines, Hastings falls below what is recommended for a community our size to supply access to large playing fields. Hastings youth have been able to enjoy participation in soccer programming largely thanks to the quad-Village partnerships that allow Hastings youth to play on Dobbs, Irvington, and Ardsley field space.

A NEW concern/development since the September regular Commission Meeting was brought to the attention of the Commission by D. Downs -- there is now question as to the actual dimensions of that 9A parcel/park which seem to be smaller than the dimensions that were originally communicated to the Village.

K. Garrison indicated that the Village Manager is scheduled to discuss this concern with the Ginsburg developers and she will communicate the results back to the Commission. The Mayor indicated that the Village Manager and lawyer would need to look at what the Planning Board and Ginsburg had agreed to pertaining to the specifications of that parcel.

The Commission is hoping to consider the 9A park/parcel as a playing field that would accommodate soccer teams up to the 12& under age group (8&under, 10&under, and 12&under).

The Mayor questioned if AYSO makes any contributions to the Villages for use of fields. D. Downs indicated that AYSO does not pay field rental fees, but indicated that traveling teams do pay field rental fees and would possibly consider a field at 9A as a resource.

The Mayor also echoed the Commissions concerns with access to the 9A parcel (currently, safest access is by car, the location is not realistically accessible by foot along 9A or the South County Trail, or by bicycle) and parking for the 9A location is limited.

A playing field at the 9A location would result in expenses to sod, plumb and fence the field.

The New Business Discussion (Tennis Courts, Uniontown Park Project, 9A Park Parcel) turned to the topic of project costs. The Commission expects that the total cost of all 3 projects will exceed the \$420K

in recreation fees that are expected to come from the Ginsburg developers. The Commission intends to approach the Village Board of Trustees with a proposal outlining all 3 projects in hopes that the excess in costs can be considered in next year's Village budget. G. Calamari also pointed out that "packaging" the 3 projects may yield the most competitive prices when put to bid.

The Mayor questioned the ordered sequence of the joint project proposal. Commission indicated it would like to first address the tennis courts with the needs of Uniontown Park upgrades right behind.

The Mayor indicated that an excellent summary of projects had been outlined, and suggested to sequence the proposal and get it before the Board of Trustees soon so that any considerations needed would be included in the capital planning process. The Mayor asked "how polished" are the plans for Uniontown Park to which G. Calamari offered that the conceptual drawing (dated 5/19/16) supplied to the Rec Commission by the Hastings Little League was still a conceptual design. The Little League is pursuing obtaining formal architectural plans.

D. Sbrega (Hastings Little League) indicated that the Little League was willing to fund raise to move the Uniontown Project forward.

Mayor suggests Parks and Rec Commission sequence the projects, and if the 9A parcel turns out to be less than the dimensions originally indicated (meaning that this location may not be feasible for a youth playing field) then the Commission should still plan on proceeding with the top 2 projects to present to the Board.

Long-Range Plan for Strategic Management of Parks and Recreation Assets for Village of Hastings on Hudson (document prepared by Parks and Recreation Commission October 2016) – the latest version of this document was presented by D. Downs who prepared the document with the guidance / input of Trustee Sturgis. D. Downs summarized a few key points from this document:

- Good News – Hastings is blessed with twice the national average of parks that industry standards would suggest to accommodate a community this size
- Bad News – we have not done a very good job at maintaining the parks.
- There has been a lack of an annual financial commitment, where we seem to respond to complaints / needs as they arise and have not had a real ability to long term plan for our parks and anticipated needs
- Hastings has a higher proportion of "passive" recreational parks rather than parks that promote a more "active" use / lifestyle
- There are 2 key areas in terms of parks where Hastings is lacking: large playing fields, and a dog park
- The waterfront area will be a chance to tip the balance toward more "active" recreation
- How do we address or identify the need for staffing to maintain the parks. Do we include identify this need in the chapter (Village Parks & Recreation Needs) of this Long-Range Plan document? The sustainability of the parks' beauty and usefulness rely heavily on the need to adequately staff for the maintenance of these properties.

D. Downs asked K. Garrison if she could compile a chapter for the Long-Range Plan document that would serve to identify staffing needs to sustain current and projected growing needs of the parks' maintenance.

Mayor's comments on the Long-Range Plan document suggested that in its current form, this document may be better described as a "needs assessment" versus a strategic plan. He suggested including a

chapter to identify the 3 projects discussed this evening (Tennis Courts, Uniontown Park, 9A park/parcel) and include that information in this Long-Range Plan document.

Mayor suggested that a member of the Parks and Rec Commission should attend the regular meetings of the Village's Shoreline Advisory Committee (with Trustee Walker, et al). The output of the Shoreline Advisory Committee's efforts will drive what BP does with the 100' length of shoreline, that will ultimately affect the parks and recreation of the waterfront. S. Rooney (who currently sits on the Shoreline Advisory Committee) indicated that this Committee will be meeting with a consultant in November and that the Committee posts information on their efforts to the Village website. J. Baecher-DiSalvo suggested putting this topic on the November agenda to select a Parks and Recreation Commission member who could serve as liaison between the P&R Commission and Shoreline Advisory Committee.

Adjournment. October 20<sup>th</sup> regular meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission was adjourned at 9:40pm.

Next Meeting: November 10 (Thursday) – 8:00pm – James Harmon Community Center.

October 20, 2016 Meeting Minutes prepared by: A. Reeve

October 20, 2016 Meeting Minutes Adopted on: Nov 10, 2016