

MEETING MINUTES

Parks & Recreation Commission Regular Meeting

October 12, 2023, 8:00pm @ the James Harmon Community Center

Commissioners In Attendance: Joanne Baecher-DiSalvo (Chair), Aaron Drahushuk, Mike Jacobs, Angela Reeve. Absent are Gene Calamari, Aaron Golembiewski and Amy Listerman. A quorum is in order.

Also in attendance: Aaron Podhurst, Superintendent.

1. Call to Order

2. Public Comment

- none

3. Old Business

- Review/Approve September Meeting Minutes - approved
- Zinsser Community Gardens - follow up
Brooks Ballard, Mark Christie (gardeners) met with Superintendent Podhurst at the Zinsser Gardens to create a map. With the help of these gardeners, the Department will hold a “clean out” event at the gardens on October 14th (rain date Oct 15). The event will start at 9am and go as long as we have volunteers. Aaron P reiterated that the department has very limited parks staff so we really need gardeners and volunteers to help get the plots cleared.

All those on the “wait list” for garden plots were sent an email invite advising them of the garden clean out event. Current gardeners were invited to come and pitch in. There are 25 plots to be assigned at the clean out.

Brooks suggested that it would be helpful to have the map, and a list of assigned plots made available to the public.

Discussion of whether garden plots can be assigned before they have been prepped. Let's see how this weekend's clean out goes.

- Skate Park - follow up
Mike Jacobs reported that the skate group (now called Rivertown Skate Society) is still working out the inter-municipal agreement (IMA) between the school district and the Village. The school board is requesting a surveyor's description

of the part the Village is responsible for and what the school board is offering. The skate group expects that will come together in the next few weeks.

Note: "Big Air Skate Scare" (a fund raising event hosted by the skate group) will be held on October 22nd (1pm - 5pm) on Southside Avenue under the bridge – Tell your friends!

4. New Business

- Upcoming/New Programs -

For complete details on current Recreation Department program offerings, visit: <https://www.hastingsgov.org/parks-and-recreation-department>

Some highlights include:

For Youth -

Rec Basketball (grades 3-8)

Aaron P noted that longtime volunteers (and Hastings couple Steve Tuber and Jodie Meyer) retired from the Rec Basketball program at the end of the 2022-2023 season. The couple was presented with an engraved whistle at the last game of the 2022-2023 season and this upcoming season's first game "tip off" will be dedicated to the couple. Commissioners asked if something additional could be done to honor the couples volunteer service (perhaps naming the league in their honor, or perhaps naming the championship game in their honor).

For Seniors -

Trip to Cold Spring - Oct 20

Senior Halloween Party - Oct 26

For Community -

Drs. Mamie & Kenneth Clark Dedication Ceremony - Oct 14 (Sun)

Halloween Happenings:

- Oct 21 (Sat) - Scarecrow making, pumpkin carving
- Oct 22 (Sun) - Downtown window painting, pet parade
- Oct 27 (Fri) - Friday Night Spooktacular downtown

Community Tag Sale - Oct 21 (Sat)

Terry Ryan Memorial Run - Nov 12 (Sun)

Noted that the senior open house was well attended (near 200 participants), geared toward educating local seniors about services that are available.

Superintendent's Report:

- Part of the capital budget that was approved included funds earmarked for improvements to the Historical Society and improvements at Draper Park. Mike is very interested (if the Parks Dept is overseeing the upgrades to the building), noting that it is important that any work is overseen by people who have some historical perspective as well as constructive perspective given the age and historical significance of the Draper cottage. Aaron P gave a couple examples of how we want to keep the "essentials bones" of the building. Aaron P has been discussing directly with folks at the Historical Society (Natalie Barry, President and Jan Clough, Vice President) what repairs need to be done.

Mike J suggested someone local, with some knowledge of the historical perspective, be consulted. Someone who will have a sensibility of the history and architecture and know about the preservation of these types of buildings that we can consult to help steer decision making.

Aaron P said discussions to this point has been superficial upkeep (scraping of paint, windows).

- The Board of Trustees approved funds for an electric 4 wheel drive vehicle that can help us with access to Hillside Woods and Village parks.
- Hillside Woods - about 95% of the fence is up. We're still speaking with wildlife experts about the deer drive.
- Aaron P advised the Hillside Woods Steering Committee that on Oct 19 at noon we will have a site visit with Bartlett Tree Experts about the scope of work regarding the invasives. We want to narrow the scope down.
- Quarry Park ribbon cutting was again canceled due to the weather. The Village will reschedule the ribbon cutting for Spring 2024.

-Discussion for new location for dog park - Graham Park

Mike J gave a presentation to reintroduce the topic of a dog park. He reminded the Commission that In Nov 2016, we identified the creation of a dog park in the Village as a priority in our Long Range Parks & Recreation Plan.

Ideal Criteria for a Dog Park (as identified by Dr Marilynn Glasser, Dog Park Concepts and Consulting, Inc.)

- Safe area
- Easily accessible
- Access to water

- Generally open space
- Relatively flat and/or slightly sloped area
- Suitability

Mike J gave a brief history of past discussions the Commission has had regarding potential locations in the Village:

Waterfront Park - future consideration with waterfront development
 Quarry Park - resistance from local QP group and potential limited parking
 Hillside Woods (Judson Ave) - challenging access & conflict w/ Hillside Woods restoration
 9A Parcel Park - bldg owner / developer resistance. Not walkable for most Village residents.
 Graham Park Hubbard Ext. Trail - would be limited to "dog run" - long & narrow. Costly.
 Behind Chemka Tennis - stormwater challenges. (this may be resolved?)
 ?Is it large enough?
 Farragut Parkway Parcel - challenging access. Village entryway. Expense?
 Draper Park - local resistance. close to homes. possible covenant violation.
 Graham Park Parcel

Graham Park Parcel - summary notes from Dr Glasser's site visit (Aug 2023)

Size of the site is adequate
 Site will require tree and brush cleaning
 Location is convenient for the community
 Site has minimal proximity to immediate residences
 The proximity of the site to the Old Croton Aqueduct may be a "plus"

Dr. Glasser's biggest concerns:

1- ADA access and public access -

There is parking along Warburton Ave, but then we would have to have an accessible ramp to bring people up to the level area off the road

2- Access for maintenance vehicles -

To maintain/clean the site. Note vehicles can't drive over the OCA, but possibly a hypothetical agreement for the use of the private driveway that leads up past the site

3- Access to water for the park.
Perhaps that could be achieved by tapping into the street water off Warburton. Or, possibly port non-potable water from a nearby stream.

No decisions were made this evening, nor “next steps” identified regarding the consideration of Graham Park as a site.

-Conservation Commission update -

Joanne shared a few items that Amy Listerman (liaison) provided for this evenings meeting:

- the group was very excited to hear from Trustee Lambert about the USDA urban forestry grant
- Conservation Commission has discussed the proposed gas leaf blower ban, and there will be a trustee meeting with public comment on the proposal on October 17th. In a related note, there will be a green vehicles event this Saturday at the Farmer’s Market.
- Amy wanted to make sure P&R Commissioners saw, in one of the Mayor’s recent eBlasts, that the Village of Hastings has earned the highest Climate Smart Community rating.
- The Conservation Commission discussed the Electric Owl site plan. There was a tree inventory done of the site. There are about 200 trees slated to be cut down (and 400 new trees to be planted). It isn’t clear to us which trees in the tree inventory are the 200 that would be cut down. This is an area where the Conservation Commission will continue to explore to better understand the proposal.
- Work continues to support the plantings at exit 12 off the SMRP. There remains a longer term question about how to protect these plantings from the deer.
- The group is anxious to hear the latest update regarding Hillside Woods.

5. Adjournment

Note Agenda Items to consider for the November Meeting:

Dog Park

Update list of Village Parks/Facilities assigned to Commissioners

Next Meeting: Thursday, November 9, 2023 8:00pm at the JHCC

October 12 2023 Meeting Minutes prepared by: A. Reeve
October 12 2023 Meeting Minutes approved on: Nov 9, 2023