MEETING MINUTES
Parks & Recreation Commission Regular Meeting
December 9, 2021 - 8:00pm via Zoom

Commissioners in attendance: Joanne Baecher-DiSalvo (Chair), Gene Calamari, Aaron Golembiewski, Mike Jacobs, Amy Listerman, Angela Reeve. A quorum is in order. Also in attendance: Aaron Podhurst (Superintendent), Trustee Morgen Fleisig

1.Call to order

2.Public Comment

Joanne asked that anyone listening in with a public comment about pickle ball please wait until that topic of discussion later this evening.

No public comment at this time.

3.Old Business

-September and November minutes approved. Note, no October meeting was held.

-Follow up - update/edit list of priorities for capital improvements for upcoming budget 2022/2023

Joanne opened a discussion to seek Commissioners’ thoughts/input on our top 5 capital priorities.

Dog Park - this priority still remains from our 2021/2022 capital priorities list.

A discussion ensued of greenscaping and natural swales to address storm water (Joanne noted that while these considerations are important, parks maintenance items/expenses are not a part of our capital ask).

Gene reminds us that the restoration of our current assets have been the typical capital asks these past few years. Aaron G expressed concern that we’re addressing recreation needs and not so much “parks.”

Gene suggests the priorities fall in this order: 1- dog park; 2- 9A parcel (he’ll suggest pickle ball goes there); and 3- access to the back part of Uniontown park.
Joanne - suggests access/repairs to the trails from the Chemka parking lot to Sugar Pond. Aaron P says the area Joanne is referring to is currently being looked at by the Village engineer as part of the overall strategy to address the damage resulting from storm Ida. Joanne questioned Aaron P if we need to budget for this? Aaron indicated that while he does not have any definitive info on this, it is hoped that the damaged area will be addressed with any FEMA funding. Amy pointed out that Hillside School’s new extension is right adjacent to that area, and questioned if the school construction project might pay for some of the drainage issues around that area so it wouldn’t all come out of the Parks & Recreation budget. Aaron P does not yet have an indication as to when we can expect the report from the Village engineer regarding storm damage/issues in this area.

Aaron P - suggests
1- skate park;
2- dog park;
3- then in terms of equipment… a new field grooming machine (our current one has reached its end of life. Hastings Little League (HLL) has indicated they will support 50% of the $30k purchase of a new field groomer.
4- Another capital item for consideration – an all-terrain-vehicle (electric) for $15k. This type of vehicle would allow our parks crew to reach all areas of our Village parks, especially useful considering the Hillside Woods restoration project.
5- Uniontown basketball court is in need of repair. If we’re looking to introduce pickle ball here, this would be an opportunity to dual purpose the basketball court.
5- 9A yes… but we need to look into what direction we want to go with that parcel.

Gene feels that improvement of things we already have (and maintaining that) needs to take priority over the creation of new things.

Joanne feels we need some clarity of the skate park before we can go onto other capital asks.
Mike points out that the first thing we need is a level of commitment from the Board of Trustees. Morgen and Mike did speak about the skatepark over Thanksgiving. Morgen says as far as he’s concerned, P&R Commission has done their job, and made their site recommendation three months ago. The Village has received the intermunicipal agreement (IMA) from the School district (this week) and the Village attorney needs to review that draft. Mike asked Morgen if he thinks it’s reasonable to keep skatepark on the 2022/2023 capital ask list? Morgen says next step would be for the Board of Trustees to review. Joanne thanked Morgen for his report/update, and she is pleased that something is happening. Mike expressed frustration that the process is taking so long.

Joanne noted everyone’s input and recapped the discussion to list capital priorities as follows:
#1 - Dog park - $45k
(pairing that with the pollinator project and planting greenscaping angle to the project)

#2 - Field grooming machine / maintainer - $30k
Note that HLL has agreed to pay for half.
Aaron P noted that there does not exist an electric version of this type of equipment

#3 - Uniontown Park basketball court resurfacing.
This could also be used for a temporary place for pickleball. Gene noted that the court area drainage would need to be addressed. The dry well that is currently there is insufficient. It makes sense to have an engineer take a look at it first before we invest money in resurfacing or laying lines. Aaron P will work on getting an estimate for the drainage.

#4 - development of 9A

Aaron P reminded the Commission that MacEachron Park needs to be considered -- to restore rip/rap to improve erosion control measures, the Village has a secured grant to pay for the design of work. But we need to submit an "ask" to cover the cost of the construction documents to keep this project moving (Morgen and Aaron will follow up with the engineer / MacDonald… they expect their initial report by June 2022).

-Pickleball -
Joanne asked for a Commissioner to serve as the point of contact for pickleball. Gene will take this on if this is initially going to go at Uniontown. Amy is happy to be the point of contact for pickleball for a longer term option.

As a part of the discussions regarding capital priorities, the proposal to “multi-purpose” the Uniontown Park basketball court to also accommodate pickleball (at least for a trial period) was introduced.

Public Comment (pertaining to pickleball):

-Bettina making a public comment for pickleball. Keep in mind that pickleball can be a money making operation because people are willing to pay a pickleball fee. She suggests two pickleball courts will be ample. She can help create a method for sign up (Briarcliff has a system). She has offered to pay for a temporary pickleball net and set of lines. She has collected over 50 signatures of people who are interested. Riverview Park would have been ideal, but bocce is there now. She has been in touch with Hastings UFSD and Reynolds courts lines are not correct for pickleball. Zinsser lot parking lot (flat part up top in back) could accommodate 2 courts, but there would need
to be fencing installed around the perimeter. She would be happy to be part of the pickleball conversation.

-Follow-up - Dog park location discussion

Area proposed is the area behind the tennis courts. Not firm on how far back it would go. Mike’s recollection was that when we met with the dog park expert, the minimum space is ½ acre of land. Mike suggests based on size, the area behind the tennis courts is a viable site. Joanne mentioned that there seemed to be a rumor going around town that Quarry Park (the area between Quarry Park and Draper Park) was being considered, but she wants to make it clear that the “pan handle” is actually part of Quarry Park and cannot be considered. Amy asked why Draper Park could not be considered as a possible site. Joanne explained Draper Park has a special covenant and when researched in the past, it was determined that this location could not be used as a dog park. She also noted that when we met with the dog park expert, that location didn’t have some of the requirements that we would need. Aaron P pointed out that Draper Park is deemed a passive park and cannot have any permanent structures added to that site. Joanne will get in touch with Anthony Costantini to review what were the issues as to why Draper Park cannot be considered. Mike J mentioned that he sits on the Draper Park board, and will take a look at the verbage used in the covenant.

The site behind the Hillside Park tennis courts would have to have the drainage issue addressed. Then, we would need more information as to how much space we need, and verify how much space this site could offer.

Joanne asked if anyone had any other thoughts on proposed sites? She asked Aaron P if we could get an idea of the dimensions the space available behind the Hillside Park tennis courts. Aaron P will get that info.

-Follow-up on urban forester parks department position

Aaron P has been trying to work with Westchester County Parks department to get a salary range for this proposed position. He has also been working with Aaron G to further define the roles/responsibilities of what this position would entail. Hillside Woods restoration would be a very big part of this position, but it would not be the only responsibility. Village tree inventory, pollinator pathway, parklands, etc could all be included in such a position. He wants P&R Commission support, the Conservation Commission support, and then the Village Manager’s support so that we can present it to the Village Board of Trustees. Mike Jacobs feels its a bit unclear to him as to the scope of work for this position, and suggests it would be beneficial to have info that outlines
how the Superintendent’s job would be delineated from this new position. Aaron P is looking to cover a needed skill set with the proposed new position (tree maintenance, tree identification, arborist type knowledge/skill set). Joanne suggested perhaps Amy could speak with the Conservation Commission to get input on what they would envision such a position could address.

Aaron G in looking at what Aaron P has created and noted it may be worth checking with Dobbs to see if this proposed position might be a position that could be shared between the Villages.

4. New Business

-Upcoming/New Programs
(Commissioners please reference Aaron P’s email “packet”)
Seniors are very happy to be inside with their programs. There is masking indoors. Hillside Afterschool Program is underway.

Current programs/schedules can be viewed on the Parks & Recreation department website:  https://www.hastingsgov.org/parks-and-recreation-department

-Superintendent’s report
The Rec department is working with Greenleaf Pharmacy and have set up two vaccine clinics to be held at the JHCC

We are also working with the Hastings schools to offer a pop-up clinic for the younger population on December 15 at the JHCC

Chemka Pool - all the pressure testing, electrical, mechanical (motors / pumps) info has been provided to the aquatics engineer who is having conversations with the Westchester County Department of Health as to what needs to be done. We are hopeful that some items can be classified as “repair” (note, items that are classified as “repairs” do not require as extensive a review/approval process with WCDoH as items needing to be “replaced” )

Hillside Woods - demo area has been prepped. Haven Colgate (Hillside Woods Steering Committee) and the volunteers have been helping as well. Aaron P just met with Taro (arborist for Westchester County) and Haven the other day and evaluated the demo area and are discussing next steps (which will be discussed at the next Hillside Woods steering committee meeting). We are running into a supply chain delay with the fencing,
Sledding at Zinsser - Aaron P (along with some of the Commissioners) took a look at the area where sledding takes place at Zinsser. He discussed with our parks foreman and the parks crew will put up the orange fencing that will help enhance the safety of that area.

Quarry Park - temporary signage is up “No Dogs.” Fresh plantings (protected by deer fencing). Aaron P thinks there still is a goal to have the whole park enclosed in fencing, but not sure of the status of that budgetary considerations.

Next Meeting: Thursday, January 13, 2022

Minutes prepared by: A. Reeve

December meeting minutes approved Jan 12, 2022