

WHITEHALL PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

May 25, 2017

The meeting of the Whitehall Parks and Recreation Commission was called to order at 6:02 PM by Chairman John Fethers. In attendance: Mike Adkins, Chris Bolich, Tiffanie Charles, John Fethers, Katie Quincel, Kyra Thorpe, Zach Wright, Director Shannon Sorrell, and Shannon Werner. Guests: Councilman Wes Kantor, Community Affairs Manager Kaitlin King, and Bob Straits.

First, Kaitlin King addressed the Commission regarding the use of social media by public officials. King distributed a reference guide about dealing with e-hostility or negativity in social media. At this point, Shannon Sorrell reminded the staff members who were present that staff is not to comment or contribute to any online discussions as a representative of the city. King said that most often, she believes that negative comments on social media should be ignored. However, if you are witnessing incorrect information, you may want to simply correct the misinformation with facts and then refrain from further comment.

Next, Sorrell mediated introductions between the staff and the Commission. The Commissioners introduced themselves. Staff members introduced themselves and stated their role in the department.

Fethers then polled the guests for questions or comments. Parks and Recreation Crew Chief Matt Golden stated that he thinks all Parks and Recreation Commission Meetings should begin with the Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag. Fethers moved, seconded by Charles, to begin Commission meeting with reciting the Pledge of Allegiance and the motion carried 7 – 0.

Next, Bob Straits of WYAA informed the Commission that he has been pulled into the recent problem with T-Ball and the restrooms. He has been fielding calls and messages from lots of parents who are unhappy with the T-Ball league. Sorrell asked that he direct people to the department because we can't address concerns unless they are directed to us.

Mr. Straits added that WYAA would have no problem incorporating T-Ball into the league. Also a veteran is throwing the first pitch at the USSSA tournament on Saturday and all members are welcome to attend.

Wright moved, seconded by Adkins, to approve the April 27, 2017 meeting minutes and the motion passed 7 – 0.

The Commission reviewed the following items: employees' wages/ personal service for 4/14/17 through 5/11/17; bills and refunds through 4/30/17; and the Trust Fund, budget, and income through 4/30/17.

Director's Report:

Sorrell passed out invitations to the Norton Field Park block party. The Commission and the Mayor will be hosting and KEMBA Credit Union will be sponsoring the event. There will be bounce houses, music,

entertainment, and the department is working on food partners. The event will be on Monday June 12th from 5:00 PM to 7:30 PM.

The first concrete pour of the Splashpad is complete and two more pours will follow. As soon as the construction clears out, the contractor will be installing the security cameras. At this time, the Splashpad is on track for a July 4th opening but it could be later if the rain persists. The Mayor will do a ribbon cutting and Flavor 91 will be cooking food.

Quincel mentioned that she has seen an extreme increase of geese at John Bishop Park. Sorrell agreed and said we are looking into options with animal control.

The department has received inquiries regarding rentals of the smaller parks for smaller events and/ or fundraising events. Sorrell asked if this is something that the Commission would like to pursue. Charles said maybe a shelter, but not an entire park. Adkins prefers that an organization makes a special request at a meeting. Sorrell agreed to direct special requests to the Commission meetings.

Next, Sorrell said she'd like to have an in-depth strategy and planning session with the Commission prior to submitting the 2018 budget. This would be a work session, not meeting, and could possibly be mediated to discuss short and long-term plans, mission, and policies. The Mayor is also willing to participate to avoid "back and forth" with the administration. A weekend would probably work best, so Sorrell asked everyone to start thinking about dates.

Asphalt work at Norton and Lamby is in progress and looking good.

Public Safety has asked Parks and Recreation to close Lamby Lane Park for the July 3th fireworks. They will close the street and post rangers at the park. In order to provide a safe event, the City's safety forces want people to attend the viewing party at the High School, or not attend at all.

Fetters moved, seconded by Quincel, to support the closure of Lamby Lane Park during the fireworks. On a roll call vote: Fetters – yes; Quincel – yes; Adkins – yes; Bolich – yes; Charles – yes; Thorpe – yes; Wright – no. The motion passed 6 – 1.

Sorrell provided an update on Central Ohio Greenways progress. The City of Columbus is paying for the entire study of the eastside corridor. The department will still encumber about \$5k to do a more detailed study on Whitehall's portion of the trail, which will be necessary to obtain future grant funding for the trail's construction.

The Senior Citizen Center was swept for bedbugs and everything was clear.

The department is currently fundraising for Camp COSI. Sorrell asked members to talk to their friends about supporting the program with scholarships.

Pickleball courts and hopscotch are all lined. Yoga will be housed at the High School for the summer. Half of the staff has been certified in first aid and CPR. Park rangers/ coordinators are now on all evening and weekend shifts.

Charles asked if there was a way for the Commissioners to directly contact staff. Sorrell said that Commissioners could contact her with concerns.

Sorrell is working with the Service Director to identify acreage available through the county land bank and maybe address the need for additional field space or underserved areas.

Softball tournaments are going well.

Wright inquired about the COTA buses that can be seen using the parking lot at the golf dome. Sorrell said she knows the city is actively trying to sell the dome and will see what she can find out.

Charles said she thinks there is a need for more prominent and permanent “no parking” signs at John Bishop Park. Sorrell talked about various strategies staff was using to prevent (especially tournament) parking and driving in the grass.

Sorrell said she hadn’t heard any feedback regarding her job performance/ department priorities and to let her know if anyone had any specific directions or concerns.

Under old/ new business, Bolich expressed the need for the situation with the current T-Ball league to come to an end. He said he’d like to have Sorrell come up with a preliminary budget for the department to run its own recreational T-Ball league. He believes that if the department was running its own league, then the schools would give use of the fields adjacent to Lamby Lane Park to the city (not the current Whitehall T-Ball League). Putting this program in the 2018 budget would give the department flexibility to address the situation, even if they ultimately decide not to do it.

Quincel pointed out that WYAA is already serving that age group and could offer T-Ball in their program. Bolich said that as long as the fields next to Lamby Lane are available to the current T-Ball league, they will use them and continue as an active organization.

Adkins says he doesn’t think the fields will be available to anyone in one to two years, and superintendent was clear that he wasn’t willing to harm a long-existing organization at this time. However, Adkins thinks that this problem will solve itself and the Commission simply needs to exercise patience.

Sorrell also said that about 25 kids participated each day in the extended hours of the YMCA’s High School after-school program. Also, with the department’s support, the YMCA will host a soccer camp for three weeks in July at Lamby Lane Park (one week per age group).

There being no further business, Charles moved, seconded by Quincel, and the meeting adjourned at 7:21 PM.

To the best of my knowledge these minutes are true and correct.

Chairperson