

WHITEHALL PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

September 12, 2018

The meeting of the Whitehall Parks and Recreation Commission was called to order at 6:01 PM by Chairman John Feters. On a roll call, the following members were in attendance: Mike Adkins, Feters, Katie Quincel, Mark Schieber, Zach Wright, Director Shannon Sorrell, and Shannon Werner. Guests: Councilperson Wes Kantor, Treasurer Steve Quincel, and Bob Straits. Absent: Chris Bolich and Tiffanie Charles.

Quincel moved, seconded by Adkins, to excuse the absent members and the motion carried 5 – 0.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by those assembled.

Bob Straits, president of the Whitehall Youth Athletic Association, presented a financial report for the league's 2018 season. The league netted over \$10k in profits. Next year, 2 new leagues are expected to join WYAA, so they will be growing greatly. Straits requested more interest in the league from the City and the Commission, like attending league events or helping to garner local media attention.

Sorrell asked for plenty of advance notice on sign-ups so the department may help their promotions.

Straits also noted the league made several community donations and are making an effort to be more than just sports.

Adkins moved, seconded by Quincel to approve the minutes from the August 8, 2018 meeting and the motion carried 5 – 0.

The Commission reviewed the following items: Employees' wages/ personal service for 7/22/18 through 9/1/18; bills and refunds for August 2018; and the Trust Fund, budget, and income for August 2018.

Next, the Commission discussed the proposed updates to the Park Shelters and Athletic Field rental agreements. Sorrell began by discussing adding the two new shelters in Whitehall Community Park and the shelter in Lamby Lane Park to be reserved and rented for a nominal fee, but with a security deposit. The new security deposit policy for the shelter at John Bishop Park in 2018 has been very successful. The department has not had cause to withhold a single deposit and the shelter and park have not been abused by renters. Conversely, the shelter at Lamby Lane Park (as a first come, first served amenity) has been a source of conflict nearly every weekend and is routinely left in a state of disarray.

As such, staff recommends that the shelter at Lamby Lane (and the new shelters at WCP) be rented for a \$25 fee, plus a \$100 deposit. The cost is less than the shelter at JBP because these shelters are smaller and have no electricity. Sorrell speculates that the only potential pushback will be when staff does not open the restroom facilities at Lamby Lane Park. However, she explained that there will be portables and the \$25 fee will not cover staff time to stock and clean the restrooms. She explained that the intent is not to generate revenue, but to hold the time slot and create accountability for the site.

The Commission agreed that this is a reasonable policy. Wright asked that staff install signage at Lamby Lane to notify users of the pending changes. Sorrell agreed and said the changes would also go on the website and she would also notify Whitehall News.

Next the Commission discussed proposed updates to the Athletic Field Rental Agreement. Sorrell explained that after a cost comparison of surrounding communities, she recommends an increase in the base field rental fee and requiring tournament organizers either provide a dumpster or pay the department to provide a dumpster. Additionally, the update clarifies that renters will be charged for fields where there is any kind of organized play (including warm-ups and practice) and the renter is responsible for restroom clean-up (or will be charged by the department). Lastly, the new contract explicitly says that all field drying agents must be purchased through the department and renters are responsible for putting out and taking in bases. Every update is a direct response to repeating issues over the last 24 months.

Adkins said he would prefer that dumpsters are solely provided by the department, to ensure there are no problems and the dumpster is sited correctly.

Sorrell also recommended that WYAA consider raising the rates they charge for-profit tournament organizers to assist with trash, clean-up, etc. She also said that extending the backstop fencing is a high priority budget line item in order to address safety concerns.

Schieber moved, seconded by Adkins, to approve the updated Shelter and Athletic Field Rental Agreement (with the change that tournament organizers must pay the department a dumpster fee) and the motion carried 5 – 0.

Director's Report:

Sorrell provided an update on Whitehall Community Park and the YMCA. Picnic tables are being ordered and a gate to the lower level is slated for fall installation. Legislation has been passed to accept all related contracts for the Activity Center reno/build and at this time we are still on target for a late November demolition.

Upcoming events include the Trick or Treat 5K, the September Social, and Norton Crossing groundbreaking.

Impressive new crime stats have been released and the Police and Fire Chiefs received My Hero awards from the Chamber of Commerce.

Contributions to the Trust Fund increased again in 2018 and the trend is expected to continue.

The Ashford on Broad will be providing transportation for Senior Programming for the remainder of the year and the Community Garden at the Senior Center is scheduled to receive an overhaul in the fall too.

A new flyer with programming for the next 3 months is out to print.

Regarding the Armory/ Parks Maintenance Addition, EMH&T and the department is continuing to pressure the City of Columbus for a resolution to the water service plan. The department is expecting the final design in the next 2 weeks so interior walls can begin to go up.

Next, Sorrell shared attendance numbers for the Splashpad's 2018 season. Attendance saw an increase from the previous year, but daily attendance was very weather dependent and there were many rainy days.

The Commission discussed citizen concern of the department's policy which does not allow for residents to bring their non-resident grandchildren to the Splashpad at no cost. Sorrell reminded that this policy was born from a desire to ensure the Splashpad was an amenity for Whitehall resident children. However now, after one and a half operating seasons, we see that the Splashpad is generally under capacity so now is a good time to re-evaluate this policy.

She suggested allowing members of the Senior Center (who must be 55 or older and a Whitehall resident) to bring their grandchildren for free. This would help police residents from falsely claiming they are a grandparent and, as a secondary benefit, could help drive membership to the Center. The downside is that this would exclude grandparents under the age of 55.

Another option is a ticket/ guest pass system similar to how the City now operates the July 4th Fireworks event. Guest passes could go out in the resident guide or be picked up at the office.

Adkins moved, seconded by Feters, to allow Whitehall Senior Center members to bring their grandchildren to the Splashpad, at no cost, effective for the 2019 season, and the motion carried 5 – 0.

Next Sorrell discussed the 2019 proposed event list. Community Cleanup Day will be moved to May. Music in the Park/ John Bishop Park Party will kick off the summer on June 2nd. Music in the Park will conclude at the end of July, the weekend of the Food Truck Festival, for a total of 9 concerts. Similar to last year, July will end with: Movie Night on 7/26/18; Food Truck Festival on 7/27/18; and Basketball Tournament and Music in the Park on 7/28/18. In August, Parks and Rec. will host Movie Night in John Bishop Park the first two Fridays and National Night Out on 8/6/18. Park parties will continue in Lamby and Norton Field Parks again, too.

Regarding the 2019 Parks and Recreation budget proposal, Sorrell included a capital project list for 2019, 2020, and 2021. These projects may ultimately be included in operating lines, but they are the high dollar items the department and Commission have already identified. Also, once more information is available, we will continue to discuss building a dog park, but in the meantime it is not included on that potential project list. Sorrell will have a better idea of what the department's available budget total is by the next meeting and the Commission will vote on its approval then.

The PD's Safe Parks Grant, which has put foot patrols in the parks and built a presence at department events, has concluded. While the PD intends to re-apply for the grant, the department will use seasonal wages and staff to help cover their absence.

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Sorrell will be attending the Columbus Realtor's Association meeting and is a panel speaker at the MORPC Summit on Sustainability.

Kantor asked about smoking rules in the parks to follow up on resident questions he has received. Sorrell explained the department would be setting up designated smoking areas in John Bishop Park, which will be easier to enforce than a blanket ban.

Additionally, nearly the entire staff took a rainy afternoon for a brain storming session and developed goals to meet the City-wide objectives.

There being no further business, Quincel moved, seconded by Schieber, and the meeting adjourned at 7:40 PM.

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

Chairperson

Prepared by

Shannon Werner