



MIDDLETOWN PARK BOARD MINUTES
January 11th, 2021

TYPE	REGULAR MEETING
PLACE	CONFERENCE ROOM 2C, 2ND FLOOR, CITY BUILDING ONE DONHAM PLAZA ZOOM: MEETING ID: 834 8383 9718, PASSCODE: 475903
PARK BOARD MEMBERS	TRAVIS BAUTZ, IRENE EARL, ADAM JOHNSON, CAROLYN KEIFFER, STEVE LEWIS
COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE	AMI VITORI
LIAISONS	JEFF MICHEL OF KEEP MIDDLETOWN BEAUTIFUL
MEETING	CALLED TO ORDER AT 7:12 P.M.
ROLL CALL:	IRENE EARL, ADAM JOHNSON, CAROLYN KEIFFER, STEVE LEWIS
Excused Absence	TRAVIS BAUTZ
APPROVAL OF MINUTES	Mr. Lewis motioned to approve the minutes from the July 13th and November 9th, Mr. Johnson seconded. None opposed. Motion passed.
AUDIENCE COMMENTS	None.
OLD BUSINESS	
URBAN FORESTRY DISCUSSION	
Tree Removal Report 2020	Ms. Manning distributed the final current tree removal report for 2020. Ms. Manning noted that many of the latest trees removed were from the arboretum and the right-of-way. Ms. Keiffer noted that 104 trees were removed for 2020. She asked how many trees were planted in 2020. Ms. Manning said she thought approximately 45 but was very unsure about that number. She said she would check the numbers and bring that information to the next meeting. Ms. Keiffer remarked that at the current rate three fourths of trees are being removed and they are not being replaced. She said ideally, she would like to see at least one tree planted for every tree removed. Ms. Manning noted that the list can be misleading because not all tree on the list removed are from public spaces. She explained that trees that fall into the right-of-way are sometimes from private property. She also remarked that it has been a goal to replace trees that have been removed from parks back into those specific parks, while also planting in areas that have been identified as good locations for future trees. She stated the City's goal this year is to find funding for a "tree giveaway". She said she anticipates challenges with the upcoming Arbor Day/Earth Day celebration due to COVID-19 restrictions and wanted residents to be able to celebrate by at least planting a tree. As another goal for the City, she explained that there is important to recognize that the City is made up of both private and public lands and a larger effort needs to be made to get trees planted on private land as well. Ms. Keiffer described a "tree lottery" program where approximately 5 trees a year were given away to residents. She said tree commission members would go to the locations and suggest planting locations and tree types. She remarked that one disadvantage of the program was that it was not well advertised. Ms. Manning remarked that she wanted to focus on programs that would encourage tree plantings on private land in general this year.
Buckeye Yard and Garden onLine	Ms. Manning distributed the different handouts about street trees of Ohio, emerald ash borer update, and invasive species updates. Mr. Lewis began a discussion about the replacement and repair of the urban canopy from the removal of ash trees. He felt the same approach needs to be like the above discussion, that an effort needs to be made to involve the residents in replacing these quantities of lost trees on private land, not just public. He also said he felt that the Parks Master Plan project shouldn't contradict efforts to repair the urban canopy and that it should support the strengthening of the urban canopy.

Tree City Application Update

Ms. Manning informed the board that the City submitted a Tree City USA application and Growth Award application on December 4th. She distributed an email about the status of the application. She said that it's her understanding that the ODNR-forestry division has approved the application and it has been passed along to the Arbor Day foundation for final approval. Ms. Keiffer asked if this was the City's first Growth Award. Ms. Manning replied saying that it would be the City's third. She said that all the standards were met for 2020 except for a large Arbor Day celebration, which the Arbor Day excused for all applying communities.

NEW BUSINESS

Parks Maintenance Update – Monthly report

Ms. Manning distributed the monthly report for November and December. Ms. Keiffer mentioned that she forgot there was snow. Ms. Manning reminded the board that the snow hours included any hours for salting bridges and overpasses. Mr. Lewis also reminded everyone that there was snowfall on Christmas that was supposed to end at 11 p.m. but didn't wrap up until 3 a.m.

Ms. Keiffer asked what type of activities were included in COVID-19 activities. Ms. Manning said the line item included things like restroom sanitation, building facilities maintenance, and setting up and refilling temporary handwashing stations in the parks, along with other COVID-19 mandated activities.

Parks Master Plan Update

Ms. Manning stated that the public parks survey closed on December 31st. She said she thought the preliminary number of received responses was around 230, which staff felt was respectable considering the City Comprehensive Plan received around 130 responses. She said that so far, the City had only received 2 hard copies of the survey

Consult should have the survey results analyzed within the next couple weeks. She said staff would then meet with the consultant to see if there were any missed demographics and develop opportunities and goals from the survey data. She said at initial viewing it looks like the survey is light on responses from the 10 to 18-year-old age demographic, so staff and consultant are working to reach out to the schools to gather additional information, possibly with a shortened survey format. She said she hopes to get a more accurate picture of park use by getting responses from a wider variety of demographics by utilizing the students and schools. Ms. Manning also stated that Shelby Quinlivan, Communications Manager for the City, was helping with the effort to engage the schools. Councilwoman Vitori said that she also had a contact with the schools that she could reach out to in an effort to gain traction. She also said she also had a contact at the John XXIII school as well. Ms. Manning said any help would be appreciated.

Ms. Keiffer asked if the community center at Douglass was included in the survey participation. Ms. Manning said they were included in the survey efforts and are a stakeholder in the project advisory groups.

Ms. Manning also presented the most current project binder and offered information to the board at their request. She said that stakeholder meetings would be scheduled soon and encouraged board members to keep an eye out for email invitations.

Example User Group Agreements

Mr. Johnson asked if contracts had been signed this year. Ms. Manning said that some had been signed for the 2021 year but not all. Ms. Manning reminded the board about the previous discussion on the topic, referencing previous meeting minutes:

“Ms. Manning reminded the Board that the City's standard user group agreement along with other example user group agreements were distributed at the last meeting. She asked if there were any questions, comments, or suggestions about them. Mr. Lewis asked who administers the contracts? Ms. Manning said that Scott Tadych, Public Works Director, and the Law Department review the documents and the City Manager signs the final agreements. Mr. Lewis asked who polices the agreements. Ms. Manning said that Charlie Anderson, Public Works Superintendent, and Donna Beauregard, Parks Leadman, supervise and enforce the agreements.

Mr. Lewis said he reviewed Warren County and Lebanon's agreements. He said that they seemed like simplified agreements. Mr. Lewis said he felt at this point, since he felt like this was dumped on the Board as homework and felt like it wouldn't be beneficial to discuss the agreements and comments without the council liaison present, since she was the driving force of the topic. Ms. Manning said the topic didn't have to be discussed at this meeting and could be tabled to the next meeting. Mr. Lewis said of all of them he felt that the City of Lebanon's agreements seemed the most suitable to follow as an example.

Mr. Jones asked that the topic be added to the next meeting's agenda.”

She asked if the board would like to continue to discussion. Mr. Johnson asked is there a standard use agreement. Ms. Manning informed him that yes there is, although the standard agreement is often modified to fit user-groups specific needs or unique circumstances. Mr. Johnson asked if existing agreements are

automatically renewed. Ms. Manning said no groups are required to reapply or resubmit. Ms. Keiffer said she hadn't had time to review the agreements. She said in general she would like financial statements of the groups and agreements to be reviewed, and that it has been difficult to do this in the past. She explained that she only remembers Light Up Middletown giving money to the improvements of the parks. Ms. Manning said that to her knowledge soccer, Light Up Middletown, and pickleball groups are all giving money back for the improvement of parks.

Mr. Lewis said he felt that his biggest concern is the follow-up of the agreement and the understanding of the agreements. He said that all the examples provided by staff looked good and were efficient in their own manner, but as with anything it's about follow-up. He asked if the City allows the continued use without monitoring the groups what is the point? He restated again his biggest concern is follow-up.

Ms. Manning said she felt the discussion about the topic originated from the content of the contract and the desire for it to be improved. She asked if the board has changed direction from modifying the contract to the application and enforcement of the contract?

Councilwoman Vitori specified she feels the issue stemmed from the soccer agreement specifically, and the City making a special agreement with soccer in a time when the city was lacking staff. She said she felt procedures need to be tightened up and, in the process, look around to see what other communities are doing. She stated her main desire was to have a standardized agreement that makes sure revenue generated covers the cost of the use of the parks. She also suggested that at the upcoming council retreat, this body should make recommendations, that are then passed to the Legal Department and staff, who would then present it to City Council.

Mr. Lewis asked who follows up on the agreements. Ms. Manning said it was a collaborative effort of application and enforcement, but the physical use of the parks would fall to Charlie Anderson, Publics Work Superintendent, and Donna Beauregard, Parks Leader.

Ms. Keiffer said a simple adjustment would be the requirement of having all agreements signed by a set date in January. Ms. Manning said she felt that this type of recommendation that would be beneficial for the process and improve the group agreements.

Ms. Keiffer also stated that the soccer user group once asked for a calendar of events. She expressed frustration and asserted that she didn't understand why it was difficult for the City to achieve this. There was a short discussion about the collaboration and creation of such a calendar.

Mr. Lewis said he felt that it may be beneficial to have staff give their perspective of the application and enforcement of the agreements. He said that as the Parks Master Plan progresses the encouraged use of the parks and programming will only compound the problem.

Ms. Manning said she can speak with staff about the agreements but anticipates that the biggest concern about the agreements is the clarity of the contracts and the enforcement.

She asked the board if there were any other additions to the contacts desired such as does the board want user groups to provide certain amenities, like port-a-lets, during use. Mr. Johnson said yes, general cleanup and care need to be specified more and more easily enforced. He stated that he felt a deposit to use the parks should be required.

Ms. Manning reviewed to the group the following adjustments to present to council: signing of agreement by January, care and clean up of parks, deposit requirements, facilities use, and a deadline for applications at two weeks in advance.

There was a discussion about multiple groups using facilities, and the power of staff to enforce the agreements, as well as how quickly the issues would ideally be addressed.

Councilwoman Vitori thought maybe the retreat would be a good platform for the presentation of these topics and would reach out to staff to collaborate this. Ms. Manning asked for the board to send any follow-up comments within the next week via email.

Mr. Johnson motioned for the election of the Chairman and Vice Chairman to be tabled until the next meeting. None opposed. Motion passed.

Mr. Lewis asked if Jason Jones was no longer a park board member. Ms. Manning informed the board that council did not reappoint Mr. Jones. There was a short discussion about the reappointment and the frustration about notification specifically from City Council. Councilwoman Vitori expressed that the appointment changes were about consistency, but she hopes there will still be involvement and welcomes input.

Park Board of
Chairman & Vice
Chairman

**COMMENTS –
BOARD MEMBERS,
LIAISONS,
COUNCILMEMBERS**

OTHER

None.

ADJOURN

Mr. Johnson motioned to adjourn, Ms. Earl seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Board Member

Alison Manning –Secretary