

MINUTES OF A THE PARKS AND NATURAL AREAS COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK HELD ON SEPTEMBER 30, 2021, 4:00 PM. PURSUANT TO SECTION 7(e) OF THE OPEN MEETINGS ACT, THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS HAS MADE A FINDING THAT IT IS NOT PRACTICAL OR PRUDENT TO HOLD IN PERSON MEETINGS BECAUSE OF THE COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY. NEITHER THE ELECTED OFFICIALS NOR THE PUBLIC WILL BE ALLOWED TO ATTEND REGULAR OR COMMITTEE MEETINGS IN PERSON BUT WILL PARTICIPATE VIRTUALLY. LINKS TO THE VIRTUAL MEETING CAN BE FOUND ON THE PARK DISTRICT WEBSITE [HTTPS://WWW.PDHP.ORG/PARK-BOARD/MEETINGS/](https://www.pdhp.org/park-board/meetings/)

Present: Commissioner Kaplan, Commissioner Freeman, Vice President Grossberg,

Also, Present: Executive Director Romes; Director Voss, Director Smith; Manager Schwartz, Manager Grill, Manager Johnson

Guest Speaker: None

Approval of the Parks and Natural Areas Committee Meeting Minutes from June 16, 2021

The minutes from the June 16, 2021 Parks and Natural Areas Committee Meeting Minutes were approved.

Millard Park and Beach Project Update

Director Voss reported Greg Wolterstorff, Civil Engineer and Scientist from V3 Companies, conducted a Slope Stability Analysis, and provided recommended strategies for ensuring safety and long-term preservation of the bluff in keeping with its natural character and use as a passive park and beach at the August 24 Regular Board meeting, so he and Manager Grill are here today to provide their repair recommendations.

As a reminder V3 Companies recommended that the trail along the top of the bluff be relocated, graded, and vegetation be planted as a buffer to protect the bluff edge, several trees need to be removed to prevent further tearing of the underlying bluff face, portions of the slope need to be graded along the bluff face, native plants and shrubs need to be planted to cover exposed soil, the concrete seawall needs to be repaired to preserve sand and cobble which protects the toe and restores access to the beach, and additional protection is needed at the toe (base) of the bluff to protect against future wave action. The total costs for these recommendations range from \$1.3 - \$1.8 million.

Staff recommends that the District relocates the trail along the top of the bluff, grades the area, and plants vegetation to protect the bluff edge, remove any trees that would cause further tearing to the underlying bluff face, grade portions of the bluff face, add plants to cover exposed soil, and repair the concrete seawall. The total costs for staff's recommendations are \$313,500.

Timeline

Director Voss reported that the top of bluff trail relocation, grading, and plantings would be completed in-house this fall, and in conjunction with the trail relocation, staff would like the Parks and Natural Areas Committee to allow Executive Director Romes to enter into a Design and Engineering Agreement with V3 Companies. If approved, tree removals, slope regrading, and plantings would occur in the winter and spring of 2022 and the concrete seawall would be repaired in the summer of 2022. Annual monitoring would begin in 2022 after the proposed repairs are completed.

Director Voss shared images of areas needing improvements and provided site-specific improvements, noting that the top of bluff trail relocation repairs will remove the runoff pathway, move the trail back from the bluff, and add native plantings. Hazardous trees will be removed across 4 acres of bluff, slope grading and seeding will occur across 1 acre, and 450 ft of concrete seawall will be repaired. Once complete topographic monitoring would be conducted along 15-20 survey points.

Executive Director Romes reported that the Design and Engineering Contract for \$24,300 does not require Park Board approval since it is under \$25,000, however, staff would like a consensus from the Parks and Naturals Areas Committee to enter into the contract.

Director Voss reported that as a part of the Design and Engineering Contract staff will release bids for the \$100,000 tree removal project and \$100,000 slope grading project. Both those bids will require approval from the Park Board of Commissioners.

Staff received consensus from the Parks and Naturals Areas Committee to allow Executive Director Romes to enter into a Design and Engineering Contract for \$24,300 with V3 Companies.

The Preserve of Highland Park Project Update

Manager Grill provided highlights of work that have been completed over the past few months and shared images of the updated progress, which includes decking for the wetland overlook, seeds, and hydro-mulch have been placed along the paths so guests may walk an asphalt or grassy path, the stone base for the north pond overlook have been placed along with stones for the seating area, the picnic area west side of the north pond is complete, and lastly, native plants, sand bunkers, and nests have been added to the turtle meadow. Some of the outstanding items for this project include surfacing and amenities for the sand play area, final grading and paving of the gateway path and south plaza, decking for the north pond overlook, signage, benches, waster stations, and final restorations and landscaping. As of today, the Park District has spent \$901,738 from the projected \$1.5 million.

Commissioner Kaplan reported that he has been utilizing the open paths and loves the progress.

Sunset Woods Playground Renovation Project Update

Manager Schwartz provided project highlights and shared images of the updated progress noting that construction began in mid-August, so demolition is complete, and crews are focused on installing the drainage system and grade staking. Concrete masonry for paths, pavers, and subsurface are scheduled to begin in late September, fencing will be installed in early November, and unfortunately, since playground equipment will not arrive until late November, pour-in-place and landscaping will occur in Spring of 2022. Regardless the grand opening will still occur in the Spring of 2022.

Sunset Woods Site Master Plan Update

Manager Schwartz reported that staff are currently reviewing the master plan document and plan to share it with this committee over the next few days for review, so it can be discussed at the October 28 Parks and Natural Areas Committee Meeting. As a reminder staff conducted community engagement efforts over the summer, began examining how the Park Sie Planning imitative would impact this project and are hoping the Park Board of Commissioners approves this plan in the fall. Regarding the community engagement efforts, there were three events on July 10, September 11, and September 25. Overall, the community supports the preservation of mature trees throughout the park, utilizing the paths and open spaces for passive recreation, maintaining existing amenities, installing a water play amenity and adult fitness equipment, and designating a portion of the park as an off-leash dog park. Furthermore, the

community is opposed to expanding hardscapes throughout the park. As a result, the concept master plan will preserve the natural character of the park, improve connectivity and parking, enhance and repurpose existing amenities which includes the tennis and basketball courts, the skate park, field house renovations, and lastly, adding new desired recreation such as the adult fitness area, an amphitheater with natural tiered seating, and a water play area. Some future considerations include dog amenities such as an off-leash dog park, ongoing evaluation of the clay courts, considering Sunset Woods as a possible site for pickleball courts, and evaluating the interest from the community regarding a pump track.

Park Site Plan Update

Manager Schwartz reported that the Park Site Plan initiative sets standards for outdoor parks to easily identify areas needing improvements, and whether those improvements fall under capital, operational, or maintenance expenses. Through this process, staff will have a strong grasp of what needs to be accomplished to meet both short and long-term goals while remaining fiscally responsible and within budget. The standards examine capacity, access, quality, and experience.

- **Capacity:** looks at diverse elements within the neighborhood.
- **Access:** are parks easily accessible for pedestrians, bikers, vehicles, etc.
- **Quality:** identifies the scale of landscaping and ongoing maintenance needed.
- **Experience:** examines how parks contribute to the community.

Manager Schwartz reported that our summer intern visited the parks that are included in this analysis which totals 32 sites and created maps confirming inventory and completed an assessment of each park. The assessment tool evaluates the park from the perspective of user experience, overall condition and cleanliness, and landscaping. Using the evaluation tool and the site standards our intern identified opportunities at each park and she shared her findings first with the Planning and Projects team and Director Voss.

For example, Port Clinton Park's does not meet the Park District's capacity standard set for neighboring Parks since it only has 3 core recreation amenities, nor does it meet the standard for access since the bike rack is not located near the park entrance, the quality of landscaping is lacking, and the overall experience falls below the set standard.

As for the next steps, the Planning and Projects team are identifying opportunities and looking at the overall level of service to identify priority improvements. Ince the level of service assessment is complete; staff will finalize the opportunity list for each park and present the recommended improvements at a future Parks and Natural Areas Committee Meeting.

Commissioner Freeman would like to know where this information is stored.

Executive Director Romes reported that when plans are approved by the Park Board of Commissioners their shared on the website.

Other Business

The next Parks and Natural Areas Committee Meeting is Thursday, October 28 at 4:00 p.m.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

