

Parks Commission

Regular Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, September 9, 2014
6:00 p.m., Council Chambers



City of South Haven

1. Call to Order by Reinert at ~~4:00~~ 6:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Present: Cobbs, Fitzgibbon, Moore, Toneman, White, Reinert
Absent: Comeau

3. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Fitzgibbon, second by Moore to approve the September 8, 2014 regular meeting agenda as presented.

All in favor. Motion carried.

4. Approval of Minutes for the Record – July 8, 2014

Motion by Fitzgibbon, second by Moore to approve the July 8, 2014 regular meeting minutes with correction.

All in favor. Motion carried.

5. Public Comments and Inquiries Concerning Items not on the Agenda

There were none.

OLD BUSINESS

6. Commission will be requested to review conceptual plans for the Dyckman Beach Access Improvements.

Halberstadt introduced Pat Cornelisse, of Cornelisse Design Associates, who has developed and will display some concept drawings which incorporate some of the items discussed at the last meeting.

After comments about beach grass, Cornelisse noted that dune grass, which she shows on this concept plan, is a native grass, not an ornamental grass; that dune grass is hardy and

grows in moving sand; and that all of the City's beach accesses have blowing sand. This grass can handle that, according to Cornelisse; roots may be five foot (5') to six foot (6') deep due to grasses, over time, being covered by blowing sand.

Cornelisse also showed photographs of some parks she has worked on which use the dune grass. In response to further questions, Cornelisse noted that dune grass is an aggressive material which tends to move into the lawn. Because of that, Cornelisse recommends an edging be used to prevent the dune grass from growing where you do not want it.

Discussion ensued regarding the grasses at Ellen Avery Park and whether it is dune grass or ornamental grass. Fitzgibbon commented on the problem of the grasses growing tall and flopping over to block the sidewalks. Moore noted that the dune grass at South Beach is only about 2' tall. Halberstadt pulled up photographs of the Ellen Avery Park grasses and Cornelisse confirmed that the grasses there are ornamental grasses. Halberstadt explained that choosing the dune grasses is to try to eliminate the problem of grasses that fall over onto the sidewalk and take over the area.

Reinert requested that we go back to the three (3) concept drawings, A, B and C. After questions, Cornelisse explained that the wall depicted is like the ones used elsewhere in the City, specifically in front of City Hall. Halberstadt noted that he promises the wording will be "Dyckman Beach" not "Access."

Fitzgibbon said she hates ornamental grass and has worked really hard not to get any more in the City. Concern was expressed that the grasses on the parkway will grow tall enough to block the wording on the beach sign. Reinert said the softer look is good and things could be changed later if they don't work out. Cornelisse noted that the sign/bench depicted at the Dyckman Beach access is a little higher than the ones in front of City Hall, more bar stool height.

Fitzgibbon asked if dune grass is, in Cornelisse's estimation as a professional, the best choice, to which Cornelisse responded that it is and noted that she has used it in many places along the lakefront. There was discussion regarding the maintenance issues of the streets departments in plowing blown sand away from these accesses and beaches each spring.

Moore pointed out that there is some signage at the Dyckman Beach access presently that is not shown in these drawings. Moore also noted that there is a lot of erosion remediation being done in that area and wondered who was doing that work. Halberstadt said he is not aware of whether it is City staff or someone else that is doing that work. Halberstadt pointed out that there is also a beach parking sign informing that one is entering a paid parking area.

Discussion ensued regarding where you pay for the parking for the accesses. Halberstadt noted that it is not the City's intention to have people go to North Beach to pay for parking at a remote location. White commented on the way the existing parking system and paying works. In response to questions regarding whether the beach parking system makes money for the City, Fitzgibbon assured the Commission that it is a good source of income for the City.

Motion by Fitzgibbon, second by White, to recommend Revised Plan A for Dyckman Beach Access Improvements to City Council.

All in favor. Motion carried.

Halberstadt noted that Cornelisse has started working on the Black River Park concept plan. Cornelisse previewed the drawing that she has created. Pointed out the parking area which could be fifteen (15) to twenty-seven (27) spaces depending upon the configuration. Noted that a gazebo that was originally in Dyckman Park (across from City hall) that is to be relocated down here. Cornelisse also noted that the plan attempts to connect the west area with a bridge and add an eight foot (8') trail so it becomes an offshoot of the actual trail and gives some choices. There were several comments regarding what could be done with the large grassy area in the plan. Cornelisse suggested possibly doing small concerts from the gazebo.

Fitzgibbon said the City has been applying for grants for that wall but have not received anything. Halberstadt said the Great Lakes Fisheries is opposed to sheet wall. According to Fitzgibbon the Celery Pond Advocates are heavily involved and they want a natural effect. Cornelisse pointed out that the Black River has a lot of wave action and she doesn't recommend soft landscaping; her recommendation is rip rap. Cornelisse noted that in the area going out to the channel she suggests a type of grass that grows taller than regular mown turf; "the geese don't like it as well and it only has to be mown a couple of times a year." Discussion ensued regarding whether any of the soil on that site can be moved and sculpted. Halberstadt stated he likes the concept of creating a no-mow area, particularly along the creek, since it does deter the geese from hanging out there. Cornelisse said she'd like to see such things as picnic tables, benches and something "a little more lounge-y," and showed commissioners a brochure with concrete seating.

To recap, Cornelisse stated her design tries to incorporate trails going somewhere; places to sit; places to park (without overdoing the parking) and trying to minimize mowing.

In response to Cornelisse's request for questions, concerns and ideas, Fitzgibbon pointed out that the Celery Pond Advocates are a 501(c)(3) charitable organization that does a lot of cleanup work and have money; they have donated some art pieces for the area. Cornelisse stated that she could provide places for art. Discussion ensued regarding the expense of the Abonmarche plan and Halberstadt said we are probably going to have to use local funding, donations and volunteers to complete this project. Cornelisse suggested this site might have some possibilities for a recreation passport grant. Fitzgibbon said it would be a nice place for bikers to relax. Moore pointed out that the light green area on the plan could be turned into a picnic area. Cornelisse noted that when she is designing she has to think of accessibility; there could be a combination of paved and compacted gravel until you could afford to pave it. Fitzgibbon commented that since this is a floodplain area paving might be a negative.

Reinert asked where the closest restroom area is; Halberstadt noted it is shown on this plan, and one of the factors is to provide access to the nearby boat access site. Cornelisse noted that some of the native grasses are nice but there is a lot of maintenance for the first three (3) years; Halberstadt noted that maintenance might be a project for the Celery Pond Advocates.

NEW BUSINESS

Moore commented that he would like updates regarding things that were brought up at the last meeting. Reinert suggested that if anyone has particular items they would like discussed

to contact Larry Halberstadt to have them put on the agenda. For tonight Reinert suggested that these items can be addressed during Commissioner Comments.

7. Commissioner Comments

Toneman asked whether the Parks Commission has a right to rule on the Dyckman Beach Access improvements, which he asked about previously, as noted in the July minutes.

Fitzgibbon said all of the accesses are considered under the Parks Commission including the ones along North Shore Drive. Toneman noted that he abstained at the last meeting because he did not feel sure that the Parks Commission should be involved with this. Fitzgibbon explained that an abstention is the same as a “no” vote and that abstention is to be used when a commissioner has a financial or personal conflict of interest. Fitzgibbon also noted that while the Commissions are charged with making recommendations to Council; Council makes the final decision.

Halberstadt pointed out that we are looking at something that may be applied to other Parks as well; a signage treatment and landscaping treatment that may be applied elsewhere in the City.

Toneman asked where the Dyckman Beach access is listed as a park. Halberstadt noted that some are listed in the City Charter and some are listed in the Park and Rec Plan. Toneman commented it would be nice to have something listed that would prove that issues should be before us. It was noted that the City Manager requested that this go before the Park Commission.

Moore questioned what happened about the bike racks. Halberstadt noted that a portable bike rack was installed at Oak Street and that options for the other beaches are still being reviewed with staff. Bike racks must be removable over the winter due to the large amounts of blowing sand that build up at the beaches and the need to use heavy construction equipment in the spring to remove the sand.

Reinert said, “We could work towards that but we do want to have bike racks available where possible. The City is asking people to come with bikes but is not providing bike racks; need to look at consistency and whether we can get a certain design eventually, but at least offer something so we’re sending a message.”

Moore asked got an update regarding the injuries to a child at Kids Corner; Halberstadt said we sent crews out to do additional sanding on the wood. Halberstadt also noted that the City did get an insurance claim in one case and a settlement offer was made.

Moore asked about the status of the issue of dogs at the farmer’s market to which Halberstadt noted that the concern had been passed on to the City Manager and it is his understanding that some research has been done by the DDA Director. Some

commissioners noted that they frequent the farmer’s market and had not noticed a problem with dogs.

Moore asked about the paddleboard rentals. Reinert stated she has ridden by on her bike but has never seen the rental group there. Fitzgibbon noted that the contract was for one year “so if he doesn’t come back next year we’ll know it didn’t work out.”

Moore wondered about the safety concerns of the Kids Corner play structure and the historic significance because citizens built it. Fitzgibbon and Reinert spoke to how the project was conducted and the feeling of community that was achieved as a result of the Kids Corner project. Halberstadt stated that it is a sensitive subject, noting a similar situation in Traverse City when a similar structure was planned to be leveled to be replaced with a typical modern metal play structure.

Discussion ensued regarding the funding sources for projects and Halberstadt pointed out things are not always able to be done just the way the City envisioned them. For example, if transportation grant funding was used, the Department of Transportation puts some limits as to what can be put there.

White commented that parents have asked why there were no swings in the play structure that was placed at Elkenburg Park. Fitzgibbon explained that the neighborhood group made the decisions. Cobbs said it was decided not to have swings. White said that she is seeing older kids coming over to the Tot Lot to swing because there are swings there. Moore asked if there was room for swings; White said there isn’t really room.

White also noted that after a recent Bobby Walker event trash bags were left to sit out overnight. Wanted to know if there is any way an early pickup could be arranged, because there was food garbage in the bags and raccoons, cats and other animals were tearing into the bags and spreading the garbage around. Halberstadt said when there is a special event our crews usually are told to clean it up as soon as possible. Reinert suggested Halberstadt bring that to the attention of someone. Halberstadt suggested that in the future a citizen should call the dispatch number, 637-5151, and let them know there is a problem so crews can be asked to take care of the issue. Toneman suggested extra trash cans for special events. White noted that because the trash cans were full, volunteers pulled the bags out of the trash receptacles and were able to put more in them. In response to questions, it was noted that once the bags were removed there were no more trash bags available to put into the trash receptacles. Halberstadt commented that there may be some items ordered for Elkenburg Park that have not arrived yet that were purchased with the leftover money from the Elkenburg Park project.

White noted that while she did not previously go to Elkenburg Park much it is more inviting now and she enjoys sitting on a bench in the shade. Discussion ensued regarding the use of the bleachers and White assured that the bleachers are used constantly; “there is always someone there playing basketball.”

8. Adjourn

Motion by Fitzgibbon, second by Cobb to adjourn at 7:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marsha Ransom
Recording Secretary