

STOW PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD MEETING
Monday, October 24, 2022 – 4:00 PM
(Rescheduled from Thursday, October 13, 2022)

Minutes of the Stow Parks and Recreation Board Meeting held Monday, October 24 at the Heritage Barn

Members Present: Bob Pontius, Christie Sheets, Houston Morgan, Patrick Crawford, Jeff Datkuliak,

Others Present: John Pribonic, Mayor; Nick Wren, Director of Public Service, Linda Nahrstedt, Director; Anne Baranek, Supervisor; Tracie McNutt, Marketing Specialist, Kristin Spicer, Recreation Assistant, Ann Malthaner, Library Liaison, April Helms, Akron Beacon Journal

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Pontius called the meeting to order at 4:07.

SWEARING IN OF NEW MEMBER

Mayor Pribonic swore in Mr. Datkuliak as an appointed member to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Morgan moved to approve the minutes from the July 14, 2022 meeting, seconded by Mr. Crawford. All were in favor.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Morgan stated I want to thank the Parks & Recreation maintenance department for all of the help and expertise that they gave us during our Harvest Festival, which was very successful this year. We sold 137 pints of apple butter on Saturday. The money we raise goes into maintaining the historical buildings and the barn at the Silver Springs Park. We could not have this festival without the help of the park maintenance team. On behalf of the Historical Society, we thank you.

DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES REPORTS/UPDATES

Capital Projects 2023

Ms. Nahrstedt reported:

We have two work sessions scheduled one on November 14, 2022 at 4:00 pm and another on December 14, 2022 at 4:00 pm. For this meeting, I wanted to focus more on programming and parks administration rather than capital improvement. In your packet that I have handed out, you will see some proposed capital improvements for the parks. This is just to get us started – there is another list beyond this. I am providing this information for you all to look at and consider before we have the upcoming work sessions. We will take priorities from the administration, bring them forward to you, make a list from there that will move back to the administration and then to council for 2023.

Parks Master Plan Update

Ms. Nahrstedt reported:

Council passed the Master Plan in late September and with that came a requirement to have a 10-year capital project plan. When we have our work sessions and we start to talk about capital for 2023, we will also start discussing those projects as well. I do not suspect that this is something we can finish by the end of this year but we will be working in to January, February or March on that. I know just putting this 2023 projection together is difficult. Trying to put together any kind of cost estimate for any project is incredibly difficult and that is going to be something that will be constantly changing as we go along. The longer we do not do projects the more they are going to cost. It is hard to put a 10-year capital plan together but we can at least get those projects on paper, decide how we would like to see them, and move on from there.

Feasibility Study Update – Community Recreation Center

Ms. Nahrstedt reported:

We are currently working on the feasibility study. In your packets, there is a draft document of the feasibility study survey results and the market analysis. Both of these documents were prepared by our consultants for the feasibility study for a recreation center. These documents are drafts. When they are in final form and we have had some input to it, we will have the consultant finalize it and get it out to the community, put it on the website and write up other documents about it.

I have been working on setting up a number of focus groups to happen. They will be meeting next Monday and Tuesday throughout the day. I have a list of about 80 individuals in the community and have been getting those invitations out and the RSVPs back this week. The consultants will handle these focus group meetings completely. There will be no staff involved in the implementation of those focus groups. My staff and maintenance will be one focus group and then I will schedule each of you at a separate time. The consultants would like us to keep like people together like sports people in one group, organizations in another group, and seniors in another group.

We have a rendering of what a potential recreation center might look like. We have made some changes and that is what will be presented at the focus group meetings. Truly it is about what the community wants and what they are willing to pay for.

Mr. Crawford asked on the market analysis is there any indication of how many members like the Natatorium has or the YMCA would have. Ms. Nahrstedt responded I am not sure – I would have to ask the consultants. The next step after the focus groups and the results from it will be an operational plan, which will say if it costs this much this is what type of membership you will need to support it. If we have a levy or we do not have a levy, what type of membership do we need? What we come away with as a conceptual facility, what is the cost and then planning the operational part, what will it take to build it, staff it and then decide on a membership structure. The one thing we know from years of experience and surveys from the Master Plan is people want certain things but do not want to pay for it. We have had that happen with levies in the past. This might come to a point when we decide that we cannot build this facility.

Mr. Pontius asked when do you think that decision would be made. Ms. Nahrstedt replied by the beginning of next year. Mayor Pribonic stated the city is great at doing surveys. Once we do them, we tuck away that information and nothing further is done. This project is one thing that we are committed to where we are going to investigate it fully and then let the people decide from that point. It has been 22 years since we presented something like this to the people so demographics have changed and now is the time to see if this is something we really want in Stow.

Mr. Morgan stated that 22 years ago, we had plans to do this and it was voted down at the polls twice. I am not sure what we can do to convince the people to vote for this recreation center. With inflation the way it is now and the school levy that is currently on the ballot for this November, it is going to be interesting to see how people vote. I think we are going to have to have an awesome campaign to convince people that we are sincere in wanting to bring them something of value but they are going to have to pay for it. Ms. Nahrstedt commented it is truly up to the people – if they want it they will vote yes and if they do not want it they will vote no and we will go from there.

As you are reading the information that I provided, if you have questions feel free to reach out to the Mayor, Mr. Wren or myself. You can also ask the consultants at the focus groups on Monday or Tuesday.

Fox Den Golf Course Update

Mr. Wren reported:

The golf course continues to do well. As of yesterday, we were at \$97,365 for the month, which is well above average. We had \$122,000 in October last year and I am sure we will end up right around that number this October, as long as the weather stays nice. We aerified all of the greens and practice greens, which is when you punch holes in the greens and pull out grass and compact it and fill back with sand. This helps us control the speed of the greens, creates a healthier root system, and allows the greens to drain better after it rains.

Perrin Asphalt has paved another section of our cart paths. We are now down to a few small parking areas and two holes that need paved, which will be part of the 2023 paving program. The construction of the pergola has been finished and we are currently waiting on some specialty hardware. In the spring, we will add fabric for a roof as well as Edison lights to hang

down from the pergola and at that point I think we will be able to start doing our programming for outdoor activities.

We have some staging taking place for a new driving range. On council's agenda, there is an expense for about \$40,000 to add new irrigation heads and wiring, as well as an expense for \$158,000 plus a contingency for a golf course construction company from Columbus. We will eventually have a teaching area but for now, we are going to get the tee area put in along with three target greens. We will put a dormancy on that and cover that area for the winter and when the weather breaks we will pull off the cover and then put barriers around that area to make sure no one walks on it until hopefully July 1. Then on July 1, the plan is to close our normal driving range, open the new driving range, which will not be as large but it still allows us to bring in revenue. At that point, we will do the construction on the main driving range area. At first that will be the shaping of the new teeing area along with a 150 foot concrete pad, where we will put down hitting mats so even when there are muddy conditions we will still have revenue coming in. Eventually, we will have a building on that driving range which will have the garage doors that open up to the driving range and heaters so we will be able to use the driving range year round. We will install a trackman system, which analyses your entire swing so we can custom fit clubs according to your swing speed.

Parks Maintenance and Improvements

Mr. Wren reported:

We are starting to close things down for the winter. We will be starting our city wide leaf program so we will be losing two people from parks maintenance for about 6-7 weeks because we are responsible to supply drivers for that program. At the same time, we are responsible for leaf pick up in the parks. We have contractors that do the small parks but we take care of the larger parks. Marc Anderson and I are currently working on the Parks and Recreation capital list and about five other lists that we have to put together. Mr. Anderson and I are working on a list of equipment from a maintenance standpoint for next year, as well as all the other equipment throughout the city.

Mr. Morgan asked what is the status of the building at Adell Durbin. Mr. Wren replied we just augured for the new pillars to be installed. We have farmed out the plumbing aspect to Shuman and we are probably going to farm out the building of the walls. By farming those two aspects that will speed up the progress. We just have to get the pillars in the ground and get the roof on and go from there. Mr. Morgan asked are there supply issues? Mr. Wren stated that everything is in for the project we just have to execute it. Shuman has all of the plumbing and equipment he needs at his facility. We have had some permit issues through the county, which have slowed us down. This is why the Mayor made the decision to farm out some parts of this project in order to speed up the completion. We are hoping in the next 3-4 weeks to have a finished product there.

Programs & Events Update

Ms. Nahrstedt reported:

This past weekend we just had a program, in collaboration with the library, called Haunted Hearth Stories for Adults in the Sancturetum. The program went very well and was well attended.

The rescheduled fireworks from Sunset Blast are Friday, October 28 at Silver Springs Park. We will have food trucks on site and viewing from the ballfields and Groundhog Hill. There will be parking on both sides of the park. There will not be a sound system or band – just simply food trucks and fireworks. We have had a big response on social media about the program. We have procedures in place to keep the event organized and will have to turn people away if the park becomes full.

A couple of weeks ago we had our Haunted Hayride at Silver Spring park. We had over 700 people attend. Every campsite was decorated and our campers did a fantastic job. We have pictures of the event on our Facebook page to view.

Ms. Baranek reported we are in the process of winding down for flag football. We have four teams, 71 boys and girls, grades 3-6. We started the season playing a night game at Stow Munroe Fall High School. We will finish our championship games on November 5 at the high school, where all four teams compete and they all will be awarded a medal win or lose. Our other games are being held at the Lakeview stadium. Stow Youth Football has done a nice job letting us use that facility. Coaches and referees are all doing a great job. We did make a change halfway through the season. In the past, we were always 7 on 7 for the games but we are using a regulation football field so we switched to 9 on 9 because our rosters are so big with 17 or 18 on a team.

We are starting our elementary basketball program this week for grades 2-6. We added second grade this year. We have 26 teams, 240 children, which is six more teams than last year. We have been trying to work out a lot of glitches, making sure children are on the right team. We are still looking for a few coaches. I am still taking children for the program. The only one that is completely full is 6th grade, because we cannot have more than 10 on a roster due to playing time. We play at Kimpton and Lakeview with 10 minute quarters. Our first games will start on December 3.

Registration is currently open for our 7th and 8th grade league. We also have a high school league with two divisions, 9th and 10th and 11th and 12th, where they bring in their own team. The Men's league will start in November.

Ms. Lewis reported the November/December newsletter has been mailed out. The registration this month is going to change slightly with Stow residents having the first opportunity to register on Wednesday, October 26 and then everyone else on Thursday, October 27. The popularity of our programs and the amount of people that have been trying to register has grown tremendously over the last six months. At our last sign up the wait for the seniors was close to two hours. People seem to be getting more comfortable with covid so our programs are starting to fill up again.

We also conducted some sessions to show the seniors how to do online registration. We had about 15 seniors sign up for these sessions so we are hoping that may help with the lines also. Starting in 2023, we are going to have a \$5.00 subscription fee for the newsletter. The reason for that is we are sending out about 600 newsletters to several different communities and we are not seeing involvement from many of the people we are sending it to. This is our way of saying if you are truly interested in the programs then help us with the postage. They will still be able to view the newsletter online but without the subscription they will not be mailed a hard copy.

We have our annual trunk or treat on Friday, October 28, where we have about 100 seniors registered for that event. Our Thanksgiving Feast is coming up on November 18 at The Leona Farris Lodge, where we have 75 seniors registered for that. We will be doing another bigger event called Music Bingo on Friday, December 16 at the Leona Farris Lodge with 50s and 60s music and some holiday music. We also have several day trips planned that are close to full.

Mr. Pontius stated I noticed that there are many advertisements in the newsletter. How will this change affect them? Ms. Lewis responded our newsletter is published for us free of charge through a company called LPI and they pay for the newsletter to be published through the advertisements. Our hope is that people see the value in our programs and they will want to continue receiving the publication. Mr. Pontius asked is there an email option. Ms. Lewis stated the only email option they will have is if they pay the subscription fee because LPI actually sends out the email version of the newsletter.

Mr. Crawford asked was there ever a consideration to waive the fee if they lived in Stow. Ms. Lewis responded we made the subscription for everyone because we are making considerations for Stow residents to be able to register early. We also have a resident fee and a non-resident fee that we will be starting to charge. It is a small upcharge but we felt like it was time to start giving the Stow residents a small advantage. Mr. Pontius stated that every community in Northeast Ohio that deals with senior center programs is doing this and we needed to do this five years ago. Ms. Lewis stated this has been an issue with our seniors for years. Our waitlists are really increasing but it is the amount of people that want to do programs. Some could be just signing up for bingo or just sign up for our K-9 program but it is the amount of people who are interested in our programs that has significantly increased. Ms. Nahrstedt stated that we are reaching a wider audience because of the programs that we started doing during covid and pulling in people from outside of Stow. We have always had that but we gained more of an audience during covid. We have looked at some of the programs where Stow residents may have not been able to get in so we are trying to balance that out.

Mr. Crawford asked was there an increase in attendance pre covid also. Ms. Lewis stated that some of our programs have changed. Before covid, bingo was a drop in program and now we have about 35 people registering for bingo. I think the numbers are similar it is just the way we are doing the programs. With the increase in registrations, we may go back and make some of those programs a drop in program again. Mayor Pribonic stated that it just seems like any new program that you put out there is instantly successful. Ms. Malthaner stated that in the libraries community survey, it stated that the seniors wanted programs that were not about seniors. They do not want to learn about banking or computers they just want entertainment. Ms. Lewis stated that we just had a probate program that we ended up moving to The Leona Farris Lodge because we had 60 seniors register for it. We typically do not do many of these types of programs because our senior center is a social and recreational center first.

Ms. Sheridan reported that our Holiday Lighting Glow with Stow will be Saturday, December 3 from 5:00 pm-9:00 pm and we will have the food trucks, some food vendors, choirs, live reindeer, toy kits from Home Depot for Santa's Workshop, Santa and Mrs. Claus, and some characters.

We are having an adult program in collaboration with the library called Charcuterie Styling for the Holidays. We have a local company called 2 Board Sisters that will lead a class of 30. This program is full with 16 people on the waitlist. She will have two boards that they can snack on and see ahead of time and then they will make their own. They can bring whatever beverage of choice they want and they will leave with a box of items.

We have three more programs that we are going to do with the train that we use for Glow with Stow. On December 7, 8 and 20 we will have two sessions each night with 80 people in each session for Stow residents only. December 7 is Harry Potter night and there will be four stations each night with one of the stations being the train ride, a snack, a craft and activity. On the 20th when it is Polar Express, that activity will be reading the Polar Express book. Both of the Polar Express sessions are currently full.

Ms. Mihalus reported that the campground is closing on October 31. This year we brought in \$70,621 in revenue. Last year our revenue was \$54,414, which is a difference of \$16,207. Some of that difference in revenue is due to our fees increasing and we had to issue many refunds in the beginning of the year due to muddy conditions in April. Hopefully, if we do get pads installed that will resolve that issue for next year.

This year we had 3,100 reservations and last year we had 2,515, which is an increase of 584 reservations this year. Our campground is definitely becoming very popular. We have many people that come to camp with us to visit Cuyahoga Valley National Park. Almost every weekend we continue to be completely booked and in order for those campers to get those weekend sites, they need to make their reservation two weeks in advance.

We have not had any major concerns this year at the campground and the campers really enjoyed decorating for the Haunted Hayride. During the off season we will look again at some other reservation systems just to make sure the one that we have works for our campground.

Ms. Nahrstedt stated that due to covid, we had to put the reservation system in place and I contribute our campground being full due to the system. People are able to reserve their spots ahead of time and plan out their trips. Ms. Mihalus added people are already asking when we are going to open the system to make reservations for next year.

Mr. Crawford asked is it 2/3 of the sites that have electric hook ups. Ms. Mihalus stated that all of the sites have electric hook ups. Some have 30 amp and some have 20 amp. Mr. Wren stated that we talked to Ohio Edison and we have to get the service on the pole out front increased in order to get 50 amp to each campsite.

Ms. McNutt stated after the majority of our programs we send out a quick 5 minute or less survey asking simple questions like how did you hear of the event, what was the quality of the program, did you like the price of the program, comments on the program and then list ideas for future programs. For instance, we sent out 650 hayride evaluations and we received 90 responses, which is a 14% response. People are hearing about our events through social media

(58%), family/friends, newsletter, other and website were all 12% and under. These results tell you that everybody is getting this information from all avenues of our marketing. I sent out the evaluation on Sunday for the Haunted Hearth that we had on Saturday and we had seven responses, which is a 12% response rate. Again, most, 43%, heard about the event from social media. I just wanted to let you know that we do these surveys because we want to put our programs out and see how the programs are being perceived.

Ms. Spicer stated that our new city website launched on October 11. It looks a lot better and it seems like the information on there is much easier to navigate for residents. The Contact Us section has some good preset questions and they go automatically to the departments that need to follow up. We actually have our own Parks and Recreation header page. If you click on the Fun in Stow button, our department has its own main set up like the city. Our events are always on the front calendar and on our calendar. You can view the senior newsletter, you can register for the campground, and there are graphic buttons for people to use to find our information.

We have through the website a new Notify Me section. Notifications and alerts are on the front page. The Notify Me is for non-emergency alerts. This is new for us and we are still trying to package up the Notify Me and the Civic Ready. The Civic Ready is the emergency alert system that we wanted to implement when we had a hard time with the water main break letting people know there was a boil alert. Instead of going through Summit County's alerts, we now have our own alert system. The Notify Me section is interesting for citizens to sign up for because if you make an update on the website it will notify them on the areas that they choose.

We also continue to participate in the Community Connection magazine with the City of Munroe Falls and the schools. We have a City of Stow Facebook and the FunInStow Facebook. The City of Stow Facebook, since our last meeting, increased in 37 followers so we have about 7,400 followers. The biggest post reach for that page was 15,000 and that goes back to Sunset Blast. The reach for the city is about 46,000 people. If you go to our FunInStow site, which is Parks and Recreation, we have increased our followers by 121 in 90 days so now we have 5,600 followers on that page. The reason we are so concerned about parking for the fireworks is because that post has reached 25,000 people, has 3,262 people engaging, and it has been shared over 230 times. We usually have a good reach between 1,500 and 2,500 on a regular, everyday post.

Ms. Nahrstedt stated that implementing the new website was a huge project and we are still changing it and updating it every day. Ms. Spicer added that we are going to be educating department leaders on how to update their own pages on the website. Ms. Nahrstedt stated that we have done one departmental training to show how to upload documents and police accident reports. The police reports is probably one of the most important departments because they load probably between 70-100 documents a month. Now people will be able to locate the documents right on our website.

Mr. Crawford stated that the website is mobile friendly also. Ms. Spicer stated that is why we decided we did not need an app because it looks good, it is user friendly on the phone, and it is much easier to search for items.

Mr. Morgan asked if a description could be added for each campsite. Ms. Spicer replied we already have descriptions of each site on our Firefly reservation system. In addition, on the website there is a section called "How Do I". If you are on the website, and you cannot really

figure out something, and then you figure it out and you think other people would be interested in this information, you could let us know and we could add it to what we have.

LIBRARY REPORT

Ms. Malthaner stated I just want to commend the marketing team for this because I know what a big deal this is. Our library website went live September 1 and it was probably a year and half of planning. We have it completely locked down to where only I and another person can make changes to it. I agree going with a reactive site instead of an app makes it so much nicer.

We love our partnership with the Parks and Recreation team. There is nothing but wins for us on that and I hope for you people too. I just wanted to tell you a little about our diversity campaign. I think we presented it here months ago. Gail Koritansky and I have taken it on the road and presented it to OLC the Northeastern Ohio division. We did that last week to all of the other northeastern libraries and they asked us to take it state wide. Many libraries are coming and seeing how we are changing our collection development policy – which affects every area of our library. Therefore, we will be doing that for the state right before the holidays.

This is the week of the Friends of the Library book sale. We are having a little issue because we do not have enough friends in the group. We lost probably about eight of them when covid struck, which is a lot of our friends board so we are really trying to think ahead what will we do when the Friends of the Library ceases to exist. We rely on them for so many things at the library, they make about \$30,000-\$40,000 a year, and that is what we pay for our programming with. Therefore, we are trying to think of alternate revenue streams.

Things at the library are great and we are really thriving. We are reading all of the community responses from our survey. We got about 5,000 responses back. We have heard some good constructive criticism and if anyone took the time to write anything, we are writing it down and distributing it amongst the library. Some good changes will be coming at the library and some things that we were attached to for many years are going to go away because it just is not relevant anymore.

PLANNING COMMISSION REPORT

Ms. Sheets reported:

We have not had a meeting for a couple of weeks. We have a scheduled meeting tomorrow night and there are several things on the docket. I know that the Stow Glen parcel is on the list but there has not been too much recently. A sign for Woodland schools has been requested. They want to put in a marquee sign but it has not been approved by the schools.

OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Morgan asked has anything been done on the memorial at Wetmore Park? Mr. Wren stated that the memorial is finished and is located on the Park Drive side of the park.

NEW BUSINESS

Nothing to report.

GENERAL DISCUSSION ITEMS

Nothing to report.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Morgan and seconded by Ms. Sheets at 5:22 pm. All were in favor.

Bob Pontius, Chairperson
Parks and Recreation Board

Deanna Mihalus, Secretary
Parks and Recreation Department