

Stow Parks and Recreation Board Meeting
Thursday, January 14, 2016 6 p.m.

Minutes of the Stow Parks and Recreation Board Meeting held Thursday, January 14, 2016 in the Boards and Commissions Room at Stow City Hall.

Members Present: Sindi Harrison, Jennifer Taylor, Houston Morgan, Mario Fiocca, Julie McLain

Members Absent:

Others Present: **Linda Nahrstedt**, Director, Stow Parks and Recreation
Ken Barnhart, Park Attendant

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM in the Boards and Commissions Meeting room at Stow City Hall by Sindi Harrison.

Director Nahrstedt introduced Julie McLain to everyone. Council should be confirming her appointment to the Parks Board at the Council meeting that is taking place right now. Director Nahrstedt stated she has known Julie for quite some time. Julie has a degree in recreation from Kent State. Director Nahrstedt stated that during her career she started as an intern in the City's Parks & Recreation Department. Later, Julie McLain was an intern with the Parks & Recreation Department and then both she and Director Nahrstedt worked in the City's Recycling Department. Julie McLain states she took a job with the YWCA in Alliance among various other jobs, and now is the owner and publisher of Coffee News. She has two grown daughters and has been married 28 years. She grew up in Munroe Falls, graduated from Stow-Munroe Falls High School, and lives in Stow at this time.

Houston Morgan stated he is on his 20th year on the Board and is very involved in scouting. He stated he is still a pharmacist but hasn't practiced since 1993. He is a widower and married his high school sweetheart with 63 years of marriage. The family has taken over the apple butter concession at the Harvest Festival. He is a graduate of Stow High School, class of 1946.

Sindi Harrison stated she is a business attorney and works in Tallmadge. She has been in Stow for 4 years. She has a 6-year-old daughter that goes to Echo Hills.

Jennifer Taylor is still in law school and in her 3rd year and completing her degree in June. She has five kids and went to Stow and graduated in 1993. She has a son that graduated in 2011 from Stow, and has now earned his degree in engineering, and four more that still go to Stow schools.

The Board was still waiting for Mario to arrive to make officer elections. Mario Fiocca arrived and introduced himself. He stated he is a lifelong Stow resident and recently switched positions and will be working during the day, rather than evenings.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Sindi Harrison stated she had the desire to hold the office of Chairperson once again, and Jennifer Taylor stated she would be willing to once again serve as the designee to the Planning Commission. Sindi Harrison made a motion to designate Jennifer Taylor as such. The motion was seconded by Houston Morgan, and all were in favor. Jennifer Taylor nominated Sindi for Chairperson and it was seconded by Mario Fiocca. All were in favor. Mario was nominated for Vice-Chairperson by Sindi Harrison and seconded by Jennifer Taylor. All were in favor. Sindi Harrison asked if Joann Molek was

the Community Cooperation representative. Director Nahrstedt stated she was. Sindi asked how often they meet. Director Nahrstedt stated they meet quarterly, the first Friday of those months. The meeting lasts about an hour. Director Nahrstedt stated it is a combination of city, school and community representation. There are school board members, council members, the planning director and so on. They mainly meet to decide on partnerships. One item would be the potential for some type of light or replacing flashers at the high school, maybe redesigning the entrance and exit for the high school. If that moves forward, then there would be a discussion on how to share costs. Director Nahrstedt stated that we use the school facilities all the time and we want to make sure everyone understands that relationship.

Sindi Harrison stated she would have a hard time to commit to that particular duty due to her work schedule. Mario Fiocca stated he wasn't sure if he could commit but due to his new work schedule, he would surely try. Julie McLain stated she could probably do it. Houston Morgan asked if we could have an alternate and Director Nahrstedt stated we have had that in the past. Director Nahrstedt stated we could appoint both with no specific representation. Sindi Harrison moved to nominate both Mario Fiocca and Julie McLain for the position and it was seconded by Houston. All were in favor.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the Meeting of October 8, 2015 were approved by Jennifer Taylor and seconded by Houston Morgan. All approved.

NO CORRESPONDENCE

DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES REPORT

Director Nahrstedt stated Ken Barnhart will give a talk about the Campground. But she wanted to state that Fox Den had the best year since it has been owned by the City. The Board stated people were golfing well into December due to the weather being so warm. We also kept the Dog Park open till December 24th. Also the new software has been extremely helpful for statistics and it is so much easier to navigate. Also, she wanted to let the Board know that we are hiring a new part-time person who is starting next week.

Director Nahrstedt stated that basketball is going on right now with the Classic Tournament coming up in February. Elementary basketball, 7th and 8th grade basketball and High School Basketball are all underway at this time.

Director Nahrstedt also wanted the Board to know that since we last met, we concluded a number of events. We had Halloween (Trick or Treat Street) at City Hall and it went off very well. We partnered with the Dane Foundation for the Kandy Kane event in December. Santa's mailbox went well also. Director Nahrstedt then turned it over to Ken Barnhart to talk about the campground.

Ken Barnhart stated last year was our 40th year of operation for the campground and because we have now completed our 40th year of operation, it means that this year we can now celebrate our 40th anniversary. Ken stated he has had to explain this to a few people because it was thought that we celebrated this last year, but we have completed our 40th year of being around. Because of this anniversary, we have a couple of specials. We did a five-night stay at the campground for \$40 and most of you know we have a separate rate for Stow residents and non-residents, so this was regardless of residency. We also had a firewood special as well and both have worked out. Last year turned out to be the best year we have ever had. Ken stated he was pleased that three years in a row now, have been

the biggest years the campground has had. If you look at the graph, it shows the upward growth. The jump went up 22%. And even though we had two or three weeks of rain in June, it still managed to be the third biggest June in the last 16 years.

We had 246 people sign up for the 5 night special and 264 camping families that took advantage of the firewood special. We ended up selling nearly 13,000 pieces of firewood for the year. About 25% of the camping that took place was in a tent and about 75% was in some sort of mobile unit. We have been getting more and more National Park visitors. We are listed on their website. We are the closest campground to the National Park and the least expensive campground and we are a public campground. People that go to National Parks are looking for public campgrounds as opposed to privately owned campgrounds.

Jennifer Taylor wanted to know how we advertise. Ken Barnhart stated we have the website, articles that appear in the Stow Sentry and we are listed on the National Park website. He stated he also distributes fliers to the library, camper city and other locations around town and we have a mailing to promote with past campers to encourage them to come back again. We are also listed in the Preview. Ken stated a lot of it is word of mouth who also camp. Ken stated when he submits an article to the Stow Sentry, they basically print it intact.

Ken stated this year we will again do the five night special for \$40. We are also going to do a firewood special, but since he was going to recommend raising the firewood fees, he is still going to have a special. In addition, we will be putting names into a drawing for the people that do the five night stays or two night stay. And immediately after Labor Day, we will draw 40 names out and those people get a free weekend of camping. Ken stated that once we get past Labor Day, things start trickling off.

People that do a five night stay, will be in a separate drawing and will have the opportunity to win forty nights of free camping and will be able to use it through the end of the following year.

In addition to this, we will be doing an open house at the beginning of the camping season. We will have the open house on April 9th since there is a community showcase the first weekend of April. It will take place at Heritage Barn. We will have refreshments, coupons for free nights, forty door prizes, marshmallows roasting in the fire pit. We will have the National Parks represented there and special guest, Jungle Terry will be there for a few hours for some fun for the kids.

Jennifer Taylor wanted to know if we do weekend themes. Ken stated that rather than organizing something for everyone, he finds that some campers have their own themes and that if someone shows up from out of town, they aren't going to know about a particular theme for that weekend or month, so he feels it is really hard to plan something like that.

Houston Morgan wanted to give Ken a big thank you for all the hard work he has done over the years and it is something that has taken years to do. Ken stated he wants to give credit to his assistant Andy Kemp who has completed his fourth year working with Ken. Ken stated Andy has a great attitude and sets a good tone and also helps with letting the campers know about the five night special.

SERVICE PARKS/MAINTENANCE

Director Nahrstedt wanted to let the Board know that the Mayor, Service Director and she will be talking about plans for the redesign of Skip Park. Currently, Parks maintenance is taking down some of the hazardous pieces at Skip Park. There was removal of a deck from Heritage Lake and we are not looking at replacing it yet, but maybe look into other ways to improve it.

GENERAL DISCUSSION ITEMS

Jennifer Taylor wanted to know about the programs coming up since the Preview will be out in April. Director Nahrstedt stated that in October, we had a retreat with the Mayor and discussed programs and what might work for the future; possibly getting rid of or readjusting programs for the future. Director Nahrstedt noted that the staff is so small and we have so many programs that we tend to go very quickly through the programs and very much need to adjust this for the future.

Some of the program changes that came out of the retreat were to cut pre-school camp. We decided to adjust Summer Sunset Blast this year and make it one day instead of the two-day event it was last year. We will still have fireworks, but we noted that the attendance has not grown. Director Nahrstedt wanted the Board to know that there is a lot of planning involved with it, for example tenting of the vendors along with labor with our staff for hooking up water, electricity, parking, etc. One of the other aspects was that it was hard to get donations for it and we were never able to sustain the event with the proceeds from the sale of alcohol. This year we are looking at some type of community picnic, but utilizing smaller vendors, and just one thing for kids to do. The basket raffle will have a change of venue also.

Houston Morgan asked if the food trucks worked on a percentage basis. Director Nahrstedt stated that was one of the more difficult aspects of the event. Food truck vendors are more "fly by night" businesses. They don't wish to commit to a weekend and we have been unable to accommodate that. The non-profits were given one price and for-profits were given another. When we started this event, we thought we would charge a lot more as the years went on, but that has not happened. For instance, one vendor wanted to know how much they would make during the Blast weekend, but we are not able to advise on that due to weather and attendance.

Director Nahrstedt stated she is not going to do a formal year-end report this year, but every other year, because it is almost the same. We do not have the Fox Den statistics yet. Our new software shows the revenue for programs for the year along with how many transactions have been handled by the front office. Our revenue for the year was \$320,000, which is a little above where we were in 2014.

Some of the items Parks maintenance updated were the stair treads and risers at the Silver Springs Lodge. The hardwood floor was replaced on both landings, which was in addition to the prior year replacement of the full floor. Heritage Barn had a kitchen renovation with the barn door. Ballfield One at Silver Springs had the completion of a dugout and re-lamping of the field lighting. Ballfield Two, installation of the new dugout and this was a partnership with Lowe's and field renovation to improve water flow. At Bow Wow Beach, we relocated the small dog area. SOAR Playground had replacement of two of the slides and put in a new swing, and at Partridge Highlands playground, replacement of a large 360 degree slide.

PLANNING COMMISSION REPORT

Jennifer Taylor stated the Planning Commission met once since the last Parks Board meeting and the only thing different was that the new home complex, Baker Glen, will have a model home in March with 63 homes. The builder is Pulte Homes. The homes will be high 200's to 300's with some more space between the homes. One of the other subjects Planning discussed was regarding the corner of Fishcreek and Stow Road where Dollar General will be. She stated they talked about how to prevent this from occurring in the future. Director Nahrstedt stated this would be discussed at tonight's council meeting. Houston Morgan stated we don't need another dollar store. Jennifer Taylor stated her concern was the splitting of the lot where there was a culvert and this would be close to the road and Dollar General wanted the City to pay for the sidewalk. So she felt it needed more discussion.

Sindi Harrison stated she thought people were worried that the Dollar store wouldn't keep up the store and use trailers for storage behind the building.

(Mayor Drew came to the meeting to swear in new member Julie McLain at 7:08 p.m.)

Jennifer Taylor stated that the Planning Commission will be going over how things are done in the future.

Houston Morgan wanted to know if there was anything in the future for the Stambaugh property. Jennifer stated that Meijer is still slated for that area. The Board spoke about the fact that there are more vet clinics than ever before and another one being built on Fishcreek Road.

Director Nahrstedt stated that shortly and visibly we will be able to see construction starting. The Board discussed the closing of Macy's and if it would have an impact on the Stow store. Julie McLain stated she used to work there and noted that since it was a stand-alone store, people have a tendency to want to run in and out as opposed to having to park and go through a mall to get to the store. She also stated the cosmetics department has already moved out since they rent their areas.

Houston Morgan stated he was going over the survey and he wanted some clarification on the fact that there is an asterisk, however there is nothing stating what the asterisk is for. Director Nahrstedt stated she would try to find out or contact the company. Director Nahrstedt wanted to re-iterate how the Stow Sentry is one of the best advertisements we have.

OLD BUSINESS - None

NEW BUSINESS

The Budget for 2016 has not been completed by the Finance Department, however Director Nahrstedt stated that they have already had budget meetings and noted that not much will change for 2016.

Member Jennifer Taylor wanted to know if there had been any further discussion of the potential of leasing Fox Den. Director Nahrstedt stated not that she was aware of.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 14, 2016 at 6 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Sindi Harrison moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:20 PM by Sindi Harrison, and seconded by Mario Fiocca. The motion passed unanimously.

Sindi Harrison, Chairperson, Parks and Recreation Board

Monica Dunton, Secretary to the Board