

STOW PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD MEETING
Thursday, February 23, 2017

Minutes of the Stow Parks and Recreation Board Meeting held Thursday, February 23, 2017 in the Boards and Commissions Room at Stow City Hall.

Members Present: Houston Morgan, Sindi Harrison, Mario Fiocca

Others Present: **Linda Nahrstedt**, Director, Stow Parks and Recreation
Joe Vojtko, General Manager, Fox Den

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m. in the Boards and Commissions Meeting room at City Hall.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Sindi Harrison was nominated by Mario Fiocca for the position of Board Chairperson, seconded by Houston Morgan. Sindi stated she would be happy to do it again. All were in favor. Sindi Harrison nominated Mario Fiocca as Vice Chairperson, seconded by Houston Morgan. Mario stated he would be happy to do it again also. All were in favor.

Mario Fiocca stated that the Board had taken care of selecting the Planning Commission representative at the beginning of the year. Mario had nominated Sindi Harrison, seconded by Houston Morgan. All were in favor.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Sindi Harrison asked for approval of the minutes from October 6, 2016. Houston Morgan moved to approve, seconded by Mario Fiocca. All were in favor.

FOX DEN GOLF COURSE PROJECT:

Mr. Vojtko stated since the last time we met in October, we received approval from Stow City Council to move forward with the improvement of Fox Den. He indicated that they lucked out with great weather in November. The project got started ahead of schedule. Mr. Vojtko passed pictures around for everyone. Number 5 green has the topsoil mix complete, the bunker was dugout. Most of the trees are out and we need to do some stump removal. July 1st was the goal and if the weather stays like this, we might get ahead of that. Right now we are playing Number 5 as a temporary up the hill, number 6 remains the same. Director Nahrstedt asked if folks were commenting on the changes. Mr. Vojtko stated every day. Of course, the Golf Course is open now due to the great weather. Mr. Vojtko stated they have a full, complete sheet of tee times tomorrow, if Mother Nature cooperates.

The Board commented that the new construction looks good. Mr. Vojtko stated this is the 50th anniversary of Fox Den and the logo came out very nice. Mario Fiocca stated it

looked regal. Sindi Harrison stated she likes the Fox Den Logo as it is. Mr. Vojtko stated he is getting new tee signs for the holes. They are getting newer pictures and getting rid of the granite signs and also trying to gain some advertising money from it. Sponsors would pay \$750 for three years.

Mr. Morgan wanted to know if this was coming out of profits. Mr. Vojtko stated it was. Last year they had a \$151,000 profit which was used to pay off equipment, which was \$65,000 or \$70,000. \$80,000 was put in capital for close to \$400,000 total in capital.

Mr. Vojtko stated that with four golf courses closing in the area, we are completely booked with leagues and outings from the other courses. Mr. Vojtko stated they had play last year until the first week of December.

Mr. Vojtko stated we had a record year with sales last year with \$1,150,000 gross. With that Mr. Vojtko stated the Fox Den rates need to be approved again and these are our 2017 rates, which he stated he had not touched. They will stay the same as 2016 because we don't know exactly when our hole will open. Folks are playing a temporary tee and feel it isn't necessary to bump up our rate yet. But with four golf course closings and getting busier and with the improvements, we might bump them up next year.

Director Nahrstedt stated when Mr. Vojtko was here in October, he mentioned at that time that the golf course was pretty full. So doing this improvement would then justify raising the rates after this improvement was done. Mr. Vojtko stated the course is less than what it was, right now. Sindi Harrison asked if the rates would stay the same all the way through this season. Mr. Vojtko stated yes. Mr. Vojtko asked everyone to look at the off-season rates, October 15 through April 15, to stay competitive you have to have off-season rates otherwise no one will show up at Fox Den. Right now we are at off-season rates and our regular season rates take effect April 16th.

Sindi Harrison wanted to know if the rates fluctuate. Mr. Vojtko stated everyone uses 'Golf Now' and the price of golf has gone down across the board because it is very competitive. If you are not on 'Golf Now,' then you are missing out. Mr. Vojtko stated anyone can hop on 'Golf Now' and get a golf tee time. Mario Fiocca stated it is very convenient, because he can pull out his phone and just sign up. Sindi Harrison stated she thought we had a conversation about the rates fluctuating on Golf Now and that people look at the going rate and make a gesture rate to get more bookings. Mr. Vojtko stated someone could be in the parking lot getting a tee time. He also indicated that all golf courses are trying to get the prices back up.

Mario Fiocca wondered about how in 2008, with the economy and the rates, if that affected the cost? Mr. Vojtko stated he believes the weekend rate was \$48 back in 2007 and it dropped to \$40 for 18 holes with cart, just to get people out there. We have slowly been going back up. We are not quite there in 2016; it's \$46, so hopefully in 2018 we will get it back to \$48. Director Nahrstedt stated that was a long time to bring it back.

Mr. Vojtko stated Hudson is one of our competitors with their rate being slightly higher than ours. Our main competitors are Ellsworth and Brookledge and Raccoon Hill now since the other courses were closed, and Roses Run. Mr. Vojtko stated it was sad to see those courses go, but will help others. Mr. Vojtko stated more and more will continue to close. Sindi Harrison stated she felt that was the way it was with most recreation sports. They have their ebb and flow. She stated she grew up skating and skating rinks closed constantly. There were so many more in this area and they closed six in the last four years. All sports like that have their ups and downs.

Sindi Harrison stated she felt they have done a lot to get more kids out to the course also. She stated things like that are dying, because those people aren't doing it anymore and to get younger people interested in it, keeps it growing. Director Nahrstedt stated Mr. Vojtko's son is a fantastic player.

Sindi Harrison asked what happened to Maplecrest. Mr. Vojtko stated it closed and someone is looking to buy it. Mr. Vojtko stated Greenhills is about 2 miles from there and it was just shut down.

Sindi Harrison made a motion to approve the Fox Den rates. Mario Fiocca seconded the motion and all were in favor. Mr. Vojtko thanked the Board and left.

DEPARTMENT REPORT

Director Nahrstedt stated that in October 2016 she had supplemented the full time staff with three part-time staff members. They have been working out well. One person is dedicated to backing up Monica Dunton at the front office; one person is working on events and senior programs. The third person started as an intern. She was working towards her Masters at Kent State for Sports and Recreation. She just finished and is working on sports and nature programs for us.

Director Nahrstedt stated that the parks & recreation offices are being renovated. All department staff will be housed in one area, which is not the case at this time. We are decorating it in an earthy, industrial motif. We have a counter that is a slice of a huge tree. When the renovation is finished, we will have some type of open house. Finalization probably won't occur for another four to six weeks.

Along with Fox Den, Bow Wow Beach opened for the week due to nice weather. We had so many people visiting Silver Springs Park with their dogs, that we decided it was best to open and contain them to the dog park. We don't have running water yet, due to cold temperatures.

SKIP PLAYGROUND

Director Nahrstedt wanted to discuss Skip Playground, since at the last meeting the Board reviewed renderings that the administration had a consultant draw up. Since that time, we have entered into a partnership with the Stow-Munroe Falls Community Foundation wherein they may be a fundraising arm for us to get some pieces and parts

of that plan done. The Community Foundation has decided to hold a Community Summit, and sent invitations out to all community organizations in Stow to bring them all together to discuss a plan and see who was interested in moving forward with it. Sindi Harrison's question was—and she gets what they are doing-- was wanting to know if Director Nahrstedt had shared the design that was shared with the Parks Board. Director Nahrstedt stated yes and they would be sharing it as well.

A lot of what Ms. Harrison hears is that residents want some type of gathering place in the City Center. She feels it has been in the Comprehensive Plan for many years but nothing has moved forward. Now it seems that people want someplace like First and Main and downtown Kent. To her, Stow is not the place for that type of thing. She thinks what we looked at in the previous Parks meeting, was a better fit for the City. She felt that was the type of gathering place we need.

We moved to Stow because we love the parks and having places to go and things to do. I think that fits more with what the City is. Sindi Harrison felt that wasn't the voice of the whole City. Several groups are loud about what they want and she doesn't think it is necessarily what everybody wants. Sindi Harrison thinks there is a reason we don't have something like that. Sindi Harrison felt there is a difference in building something like that (First and Main) and building the park we are looking at, which are not on the same level.

Sindi Harrison felt the park plan would draw people from further away to check it out. She stated there are a lot of neat parks in northeast Ohio and people travel a long way to check them out. If we had something like that, it would bring in people from our community and other communities too.

Director Nahrstedt stated the Community Foundation is hoping for good participation. Sindi Harrison stated there was another Community meeting on the Comprehensive Plan in March, and she would share with the Planning Commission some of the things the Board has discussed. Sindi Harrison stated she was on the fence about certain areas of the Comprehensive Plan. She feels it is the wish list of everything we want. But to her, she is a realist, and she doesn't want to write the same Comprehensive Plan we wrote ten years ago and nothing has changed. She feels it is a longer term goal. But if that is the goal, then she feels there needs to be a plan on how to get there.

Sindi Harrison stated she is fine at looking big, but let's not just write it and set it on a shelf. If it's a plan and then we look at it again in ten years, there should be some progress. It seems like this City Center thing has been on there for a long time and there hasn't been much ground made. She stated with the economy and the City going Lean, it really put a damper on bigger planning. There needs to be something ongoing to drive the plan. She didn't think it should be a wish list of everything, but needs to be narrowed down to things that are doable over a span of time.

Director Nahrstedt stated the community has spoken that we do need a center of town and it is yet to be decided but hopefully, the plan will come. Sindi Harrison feels that

something that has outdoor space that can be a community gathering space for farmer's markets, for soccer events, for an outdoor movie theater, to her, that is more Stow than a shopping center.

Sindi Harrison stated they have a planning meeting next week and a community meeting on a Tuesday in March.

DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES REPORT

Director Nahrstedt stated we are ramping up for our Spring/Summer season and are getting the Preview ready to print and online in the next two weeks. Most programs will be ready for registration by March 6th. Sindi Harrison asked if there were any new or big programs. Director Nahrstedt stated nothing new, but we are offering additional nature programs in partnership with Summit Metro Parks.

Our Youth basketball program is ongoing but is ramping down as is middle school and high school basketball. Our senior programs are still going strong also.

Since we last met, we had the Trick or Treat event at City Hall. It was a nice October day and we were able to have sidewalk chalk out front and all the activities through City Hall, along with costumed characters. Santa's mailbox was also a hit, which it is every year.

We are gearing up for the Fishing Derby on May 6th in partnership with the Sportsmen's Association, who always does a great job. Director Nahrstedt stated we are up and running with the parade, including seeking sponsors, and parade registration. The theme for 2017 is "Salute to our Veterans" and the Parade Committee is currently deciding on a Grand Marshal.

Houston Morgan came up with the name of Harold William, Class of '46. Mr. Morgan stated he is an old Stow boy and always arranges the class reunions, typical old farm boy that made good. He grew up in a log cabin in Munroe Falls.

Sindi Harrison asked if Director Nahrstedt was trying to shorten it this year. Director Nahrstedt stated it is always the goal. The committee instituted several rules in the past years to do such; limit of three vehicles for any one unit, and cutting off registration earlier.

Sunset Blast: Director Nahrstedt has formed an employee committee to formulate the event. The committee had a kick off meeting this morning. Director Nahrstedt proceeded to show the Board what she went through at today's meeting, with a power point presentation. The event is in its eleventh year.

In the beginning, the goal was to have a simple event with a home town feel that would be free. Our intention was to use local food businesses, but we have got away from that for many reasons and to offer local community groups the opportunity to fundraise.

Over the years it has been a one-day event, or a two-day event. It has always been free, always on Labor Day weekend at Silver Springs Park, and always had fireworks.

Our top concerns about the event are: set up, what it takes to put it together, soliciting sponsors, how to pay for the event, parking and traffic control, managing alcohol sales, vendors, safety and security with serving alcohol with having fireworks, staffing for all the things we want to do and how to make it happen with our small staff.

In the beginning we thought we would sustain the event using the proceeds from the event and beer sales, but that never happened. After a couple of years, we began soliciting sponsorships, and we were successful. We really don't make much money on our beer sales. Over time, the sponsorships have fallen off, and that is where we are at the moment.

On the revenue side, there are vendor booth fees, concession sales. And then of course, the City is providing police, fire, staff and labor for the event. Director Nahrstedt stated she would report the committee decisions back to the board. Sindi Harrison thought the movie night was really fun and well attended. She stated she didn't go last year, but watched the fireworks from the driving range. Everyone she talked to that went was disappointed over what it has been in the past. She felt it was presented that way, as scaled back, but it didn't click with people. They were used to what they were used to. She stated she understood there are costs. You have to decide where to put it.

CAMPGROUND

Director Nahrstedt stated that the Campground did phenomenal and that it was up 25.6% from the prior year with 3,084 site rentals. As you know from Ken, we had a number of specials celebrating the 40th anniversary with deals and prizes. We will get back to a normal year and see where the numbers fall. His assistant, Andy is not coming back and we are going through the process of looking for a person. We have someone we hope is going to get on board. Ken's article in the Stow Sentry was a great overview of the year (copy passed out to members).

SERVICE/PARKS MAINTENANCE UPDATE

Our Parks Maintenance Division is busy with the renovation of the parks & recreation offices; removing walls, painting, flooring. When the weather improves, they will be installing the new park signs. Sindi Harrison stated she was glad since the sign they had at their park, had fallen and rotted off. She has people in her neighborhood that would stain the fence. They have people in the neighborhood that will help. When they have mulch delivered, just tell them. She will have people help and do it and that it's no problem.

Sindi Harrison stated they use their neighborhood park. They do a neighborhood pumpkin carving in the fall, so the whole neighborhood gets together. One family brings donates all the pumpkins. The kids love it. They started an Easter Egg Hunt this year too. It's nice to have it right there. There are a lot more younger families moving in our neighborhood. So the park is getting a lot of use.

Sindi Harrison asked if there were any other major repairs on the agenda for the parks. Director Nahrstedt stated there was nothing major; just a lot of minor items such as playground equipment, will be repaired when the weather is conducive.

Mario Fiocca asked about additional Board members to replace the ones lost. How is that process going to work? Director Nahrstedt stated Mayor Drew is addressing it and is contacting the school board administration because one of the appointments is theirs and the other one is a Ward 3 member.

PLANNING COMMISSION

Member Sindi Harrison stated she had a couple items from the Planning Commission. There was rezoning to change where assisted living facilities were allowed. Another item is a developer seeking approvals to put a new condo development in on Gilbert Road called Quails Creek. Some residents weren't super happy about it. The boundary lines of how it's going to be developed are really far away from where those houses are. On the other side, Cuyahoga Falls is industrial. Cuyahoga Falls won't let a road go through if it's going into residential. The only access is in Stow from Gilbert Road. There will be a clubhouse. An emergency exit on the street is proposed, that will be gated. Mudbrook goes right through there, so they propose to build a bridge over it. The fact that a developer wants to undertake that versus the easier route, going industrial and going right through the Falls, she thinks is better for the neighborhood.

On Seasons Road, Fogg Development, is going to build a third building and it's going to sit sideways. Building will start in the Spring. They have all the space rented in those first two buildings, 26,000 square feet. Member Fiocca stated one of them is Carroll Tire which he sees while on the bike trail.

Member Harrison stated there are companies secured that are going to take a large space in the second building. They also have a plan to develop west of Seasons Road and create that into some plots and different areas. That area also gets into the Mudbrook area and nature preserve. Some residents from the Wyoga Lake neighborhood had a concern, because that backs up to their houses. But in reality with the natural barriers, there is going to be a large area they are working with the Army Corps of Engineers and the developer that will be set aside as wetlands and restricted.

Member Harrison stated on the other side, there is going to be retention. Currently, there is no man-made retention - it is all nature - so having created manmade retention helps too. She thinks it will be good and with the natural effects of the area, there is going to be way more of a setback then if it were developed up to the property line. The developer is very open to setting aside an area as a nature preserve.

She thinks they are very open to it because they realize it's not going to be buildable and would be a nice buffer between the other areas. She thinks its roughly 20 acres that would be between the development and the houses back there. So they are going to have good protection from whatever is back there.

Planning Commission will be wrapping up what the Comprehensive Plan is and again she is not against it being big but if this is what we are going to do, she'd like to see action. These are the most high priority items and having some type of focus group on how do we get somewhere with it.

Member Harrison states she doesn't feel people hear enough about it. She thought the people from the community that do come have a better understanding of the City and that the City can't say where businesses go.

Member Harrison stated plans change, business plans change. People are wondering if Meijer is still planning to come. She feels there needs to be some type of incentive program for people to update places we already have. We have large places open and would be nice to see people go into those instead of building new. We have the Tops store. She stated maybe creating an incentive for people to invest in those types of properties. Member Harrison stated Norton Road also has a lot of vacant spaces.

Mario Fiocca stated they might have to do something about the bike trail in the area of the Fogg Development. It is getting to the point where you are worried someone is going to get hit with so increased traffic. Sindi Harrison stated they have talked about it as the area continues to develop and would do a traffic study in the near future.

Houston Morgan wanted to know if Director Nahrstedt would have a report of the cell phone tower funds. Director Nahrstedt stated that right now some of the expenditures are for the office renovation and to replace chairs at the Senior Center.

Houston Morgan stated he has a letter at home from the Mayor about the campground. Sindi Harrison stated most of the people enjoy the campground the way it is. Director Nahrstedt stated there is no plan to be other than an a primitive campground. Director Nahrstedt stated that one-third of City residents came to the campground and two-thirds were non-residents this past season.

Sindi Harrison felt the prices were good for a small campground like this one and she feels that people that travel want to see something primitive and natural.

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Member Sindi Harrison at 7:42 p.m. and seconded by Houston Morgan. All were in favor.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 13, 2017 at 6:00 p.m.

Sindi Harrison, Chairperson
Parks and Recreation Board

Monica Dunton, Secretary to the Board