

W.W. JAMES PARK REFERENDUM COMMITTEE MINUTES

Minutes of the W.W. James Park Referendum Committee Meeting, appointed by the North Brevard Commission on Parks & Recreation, held Thursday, February 21, 2002, at 6 p.m., in the Brevard Room at the Brevard County Government Complex North in Titusville, Florida.

Members Present

Angela Sisson, Chairperson
Brian Blickley
Dan Lawrence, Vice Chairman
Joe LeBlanc

Members Absent

Howard Woernley III
Dr. Ron Bobay, NBCPR Liaison

A&E Present–Daniel Lee, Baskerville & Donovan

County Staff Present

Charles S. Nelson, Parks & Recreation Director
Chuck Mays, Construction Coordinator
Judy Inman, Administrative Secretary

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Sisson called the meeting to order at 6:12 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Dan Lawrence, seconded by Joe LeBlanc to approve the minutes of November 29, 2001.

AYE: Blickley, Lawrence, LeBlanc, Sisson

NAY: None

Carried 4-0

III. STAFF REPORT–None

IV. OLD BUSINESS

Dan Lee of Baskerville & Donovan started his presentation of the design by displaying a drawing showing an 80' easement for access to the new property.

The existing topographic survey shows encroachments of the softball field on NE corners.

New lights are proposed on all five fields, as well as new fencing. The only fencing being retained is the senior backstop. Moving all the fields back and extending one makes using the existing fencing difficult.

The caretaker trailer will be relocated, site to be determined. Security fencing is added, along with a gate, at the front.

There would be 80 paved spaces in parking areas west of the concession as well as in other locations. Grass parking will also be possible. Parking curbs will be around the parking area.

Fields are 200' except for the senior field at 320' and the SW field which is not 300', but can be 280' left and center, and 260' right. Mr. Lee is looking at connecting the roof of the pavilion to roof of concession. Retention area is in SW which will sheet off to the south.

The new field layouts include new digital scoreboards. Backstops will be 30' cantilevered, except softball which will be 20' cantilevered. Existing dugouts and bleachers will be used, except the softball dugouts will need to be replaced and chain link is being proposed.

The batting cage can be moved. It is shown in approximately the existing location. Dan Lawrence stated he has some ideas on using the existing structure but adding some fencing to cage it in. The league needs a secure place to store pitching machines out of the weather. Joe LeBlanc suggested keeping the building for storage which would be a cost saving. Dan Lawrence suggested pouring a concrete pad from each side and erecting a fence where the cage would have been.

Brian Blickley inquired if there had been any discussion about the acquired property. Mr. Nelson indicated he knew of no restrictions, but may be limited due to funding. Mr. Blickley inquired if there had been consideration of another ballfield and asked the cost per square foot for a ballfield. Mr. Lee indicated he doesn't generally have a dollar per square foot and the site hasn't been surveyed. Mr. Nelson stated if a new ballfield were to be built in the new area, it would be the highest cost because the area is not graded. Mr. Nelson also stated the original Referendum did not anticipate the fields would be moved to the new property.

Chairperson Sisson reported that at the last meeting, the committee decided to leave fields in the present location as opposed to going to the expense to relocate them to the new property. She also noted the new property is not level and drops to a low area. Mr. Nelson stated the new property was intended for more of a park setting, rather than athletics.

Mr. Nelson inquired of Mr. Blickley if it was his desire to see one or more fields built. Mr. Blickley responded that he desires the park to be redesigned and modernized like other parks in Brevard County with centralized concession stand with concrete area and bleachers, then fields. Parking would be on the outskirts and completely separate. He mentioned Cocoa as an example of where the parking lot is way out and there is a long walk to the diamonds which keeps foul balls away from the cars. Mr. Nelson responded those fields are too tight and he sees things that are not as desirable. Mr. Blickley spoke for a covered concession area and not covering seating for everyone. Mr. Nelson stated that the concept being presented is what the Little League suggested for the Referendum. The cost would probably double to build on the new property. Joe LeBlanc noted it would require clearing, grading and building the entire infrastructure which would not be an efficient use of the money. In response to Mr. Blickley's inquiry as to why the 40 acres were acquired, Mr. Lawrence reported Ron said it was for future use. Mr. Blickley stated the cost will never get any cheaper than right now.

Mr. Nelson noted that what Mr. Blickley described is there—a central concession with four fields wrapped around. Mr. Blickley was concerned about the shape. Mr. Nelson indicated he will be talking to the adjacent property owner about a property exchange to give the ability to extend the SW field to approximately 300'. He suggested enlarging the senior field to 350'. If more concrete is wanted in the core area, that can be considered. There isn't enough money to rebuild

the concession building which is only about five years old. In response to Mr. Blickley's inquiry regarding the cost to replace the building, Mr. Nelson stated it was never part of the discussion so a cost estimate wasn't done.

Dan Lawrence noted that trails will also come from Wuesthoff Park and from the Enchanted Forest into the new property. Mr. Nelson stated some of the parking could be put on the new property, beyond the outfield.

Chairperson Sisson reviewed discussion from last meeting. Mr. Nelson indicated the fields will basically be totally redone and will look new. Some irrigation may be retained.

Mr. Blickley suggested several plans should be looked at and stated that if the softball and t-ball fields were moved to the 40 acres, plus a new field built, there would be more room for parking. Joe LeBlanc & Dan Lawrence suggested it would be too expensive. Dollars available were discussed. It was determined the total available from the Referendum was \$1,190,000 which includes the land acquisition and closing costs, improvements to fields, and engineering fees.

Chairperson Sisson indicated the committee wanted to not relocate the ballfields so trees wouldn't need to be removed. Mr. Blickley stated the parking will have to be increased. Mr. Nelson suggested that a land exchange would make double-sided parking possible. Mrs. Sisson agreed double-sided parking would be a good idea.

The cantilevered backstops and foul balls were discussed. Mr. Nelson stated the need to discuss the philosophy of the program if everyone is to be protected from foul balls. He noted there is a certain amount of risk at a ballpark. Mr. Nelson stated covered bleachers are being looked at to protect from foul balls, as well as greater canopies over concession areas, but not full-blown netting which is a maintenance nightmare and doesn't look good. He stated everyone can't be protected from the minute they step on the site.

Mr. Blickley inquired how many proposals are expected. Mr. Nelson responded at this point staff hadn't been asked to do any others and the drawings presented are along the guidelines of the committee. Mr. Blickley again stated he thinks there should be more than one proposal.

Dan Lawrence stated it had been suggested getting a general dollar amount for each type of improvement, i.e. lights, fencing, new dugouts, parking area, paved road, a sixth field—small t-ball, resurfacing one of the fields, a covered concession/pavilion area to allow mixing and matching.

Mr. Blickley inquired about bids. Mr. Nelson explained the committee decides on the layout, then the engineer estimates costs and if it is within budget, the project goes forward. If it isn't within budget, it would come back to the committee. Mr. Nelson further detailed that after the committee approves the concept with tweaks, the A&E does engineering work to get the estimates, then sealed bids are received. Staff then reviews the bids to see that they meet specifications and it is a quality contractor, and only then is the real number known. Mr. Nelson noted that right now bids are coming in good, so the sooner the project is on the street, the better.

Mr. Blickley again asked if this was the only idea proposed. Mr. Nelson commented it is a renovation project, not a total redesign. If it was to go in another direction, staff didn't know that. Mr. Lawrence stated the design of the fields isn't that bad. There is a concession in the middle with four fields around it which is what Mr. Blickley talked about. Mr. Nelson noted Port St. John Little League's t-ball field is outside the four-field quad so it is even further away.

Mr. Nelson indicated it is a hard layout to do, but it works out well because it pulls the one field as closely as possible. Mr. Blickley noted there is no room for parking by the softball field. Mr. Nelson observed it is the same at other locations, but parking is increased significantly on the west side and there is some ability to park near the major field. Mr. Blickley noted the long walk from parking to the softball field. Mr. Lee stated if more parking were put in another location, additional storm water systems would be required.

Mr. Blickley stated if anything were to be scratched, he would scratch paving. Mr. Lawrence stated paving is part of what Mrs. Sisson wants to see because of the problems with people doing donuts in the dirt road and parking near her house. Current access to the fields from the dirt road was discussed. Mr. Nelson noted the encroachment.

Mr. Blickley inquired if there was any talk about acquiring the property along the back for an easement. Mr. Nelson indicated the encroachment wasn't known until recently. Mr. Blickley inquired how long the encroachment had been there and if anyone discussed the encroachment with the owner. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Nelson noted that at SCCSC there is a significant walk to get to the fields and that each site will be different. Mr. Blickley suggested putting the softball/t-ball field on the new property would provide more parking. Mr. Lee stated there isn't enough money to do that. In response to an inquiry from Chairperson Sisson, Mr. Lee stated it is close to the budgeted figure of \$579,000. Mr. Nelson reported the acquisition was about \$350,000. Discussion ensued relating to the budget which Mr. Nelson noted must also include a contingency. Mr. Nelson reported the connection of the roofs isn't part of the budget, nor is the demolition of the concrete pads.

Mr. Nelson inquired if the committee wants Mr. Lee to do a separate design, tell what it costs and come back in another month. Mr. Nelson noted Mr. Lee would have to be paid an additional amount because it isn't part of his contract. Mr. Blickley responded he wouldn't want to do that. Mr. Nelson stated the cost estimating is an educated guess.

Chairperson Sisson inquired if anything is to be done with the storage building. Mr. Blickley inquired if the \$580,000 is inclusive of the paved parking and asked if there were any numbers. Mr. Lee stated his scope was to do five field improvements, site improvements, paved parking. Mr. Blickley asked if there were any numbers on the guesstimate for the paved parking which Mr. Lee estimated at \$50,000. Mr. LeBlanc spoke against getting rid of the paved parking because of Mrs. Sisson's request. Chairperson Sisson stated she thinks the fields are beautiful but the lack of paving keeps the park from looking professional and attracts undesirable activities. Mrs. Sisson reported her husband is a professional ball player and he thinks these are the best fields he has ever seen and she complimented the maintenance staff on the nice job they do. She stated this plan will make it professional and it will look like the league takes pride in it. Paving also helps the handicapped. Mr. Blickley suggested looking at what is the objective of

the park itself. Chairperson Sisson stated baseball. Mr. Blickley stated he would steer his interest to baseball and not parking. Mr. Nelson noted the irony of his suggestion to relocate fields for parking. Mr. Blickley agreed but relocating the fields enables more parking. Discussion ensued of parking at the Marlins and at W.W. James Park.

Mr. Nelson asked Mr. Blickley how many parking spaces he wants. Mr. Blickley stated that obviously the number of kids playing ball has decreased considerably while the number available has increased considerably. If the objective of this is to be a County park for ball activities, then there should be enough room to support x number of kids. He asked if anyone has the number of kids available to the park within the LL boundary lines.

Joe LeBlanc suggested looking at what the committee wanted to do. He observed it looks like most of the committee is going with the plan. It is an efficient use of the money, and unless the majority of the committee wants to go a new direction, he suggested going forward with it. Mr. Blickley stated the objective of the facility is to play ball. Mr. LeBlanc stated he thinks it meets the objective. Chairperson Sisson asked if Mr. LeBlanc is with the LL. He responded he is the safety officer. She also asked Mr. Blickley and he responded affirmatively.

Motion by Joe LeBlanc seconded by Dan Lawrence for the committee to decide if this is the direction they want to go.

AYE: Lawrence, LeBlanc, Sisson

NAY: Blickley

Carried 3-1

Discussion prior to the vote included the following:

- Chairman Sisson noted that Cheryl Page explained the property was purchased for future plans, it was available at a good price, is good for family activities, and the trails will be coming in.
- Dan Lawrence stated he was thinking the same thing as Mr. Blickley at the last meeting and soon saw that was impossible financially.
- In response to Mr. Blickley's inquiry about the priorities, Mr. Lawrence read the list from the newsletter: Land acquisition, five fields upgrades and lighting, batting cage, parking and site improvements.
- Mr. Blickley inquired about site improvements which Mr. Lee indicated was drainage and security lighting.
- In response to an inquiry from Mr. Blickley regarding the size of the water main related to low water pressure, Mr. Nelson stated a booster pump in the line would correct that. Mr. Blickley agreed that would work.
- Mr. Blickley inquired if the cost of parking is \$50,000, what is the cost of improvement to the t-ball/softball field as opposed to relocating it.
- Mr. LeBlanc pointed out there was a motion on the floor regarding continuing with what was proposed and what the committee envisioned, otherwise there needs to be a motion to change.
- Mr. Blickley stated he was discussing cost of improving that field on that proposal. Mr. Lee stated it wasn't broken down separately and he hesitated to take a guess, but noted the lighting is a major cost.
- In response to Mr. Nelson's inquiry as to the point, Mr. Blickley stated the point is getting at what the guesstimated cost is for parking and for the improvements in order to move the field and hold off on the cost of the paved parking so field could be put on the new property

- Mr. LeBlanc asked Mr. Lee if in his professional opinion, could the savings from the parking lot give enough money to grade and clear the land on the 40 acres to move that field. Mr. Lee indicated it wouldn't with cost of infrastructure, etc. Discussion ensued.
- Mr. Nelson stated he would want the board of directors of the Little League to confirm going in a new direction, if talking about major relocation. Mr. LeBlanc and Chairperson Sisson agreed and the motion carried as reflected above.

Mr. Nelson then addressed tweaking.

- The committee agreed they want to proceed with extension of the senior field to 350' at center field and 320' down the lines.
- Mr. Nelson's staff will investigate a property swap to make parking at entrance double-sided and to allow the junior field to be as close to 300' as possible.
- Batting cage can be decided at a later date.

Motion by Joe LeBlanc seconded by Dan Lawrence to approve the current configuration with the modifications just discussed.

AYE: Lawrence, LeBlanc, Sisson

NAY: Blickley

Carried 3-1

Mr. Nelson stated Mr. Lee will go back to finalize the numbers. The project will proceed in that direction, and unless there is a money issue, staff will proceed with bid, and if there are no problems there, it will go on to construction.

Dan Lawrence stated he would like to see turf block in the western parking lot, except in handicap spaces. It was noted turf block saves drainage costs.

Mr. Lawrence inquired about the appearance of the roof at the concession and pavilion. Mrs. Sisson asked that the protrusions in the concrete area be removed. Mr. Blickley inquired about the runoff from the higher roof. Messrs. Lee and Nelson stated that is in the next phase of design.

Mr. Lawrence stated he would like to see the concrete near the concession stand removed and the old pavilion replaced with a similar roof type as the concession. Mr. Lee stated that cost may be prohibitive, and stated the roofs would be matched.

Mr. Nelson stated it would come back to the committee only if there is a budget problem or design issue.

Mr. LeBlanc inquired if there can be another meeting to look at the design since it isn't known if the field can be 300'. Mr. Nelson stated it would come back to the committee if it can't be done. Mr. Lee noted it is expensive to re-engineer after the 30% stage. When Mr. LeBlanc stated he would just like to see the final design, Mr. Nelson stated it can be mailed to the committee and asked Chuck Mays to make a note of it.

Mr. Blickley inquired if the drive around to the softball field will be eliminated with redesign of the field. Mr. LeBlanc stated the drive doesn't exist because it is on the other property. Mr. Blickley asked if the property owner is going to be informed the field is encroaching. Discussion

ensued. Mr. Blickley stated he didn't think it is a good idea not to inform the property owner of the encroachment. Mr. Nelson disagreed because it has obviously been that way and at such time he doesn't allow it to happen, an easement can be discussed with him. Mrs. Sisson pointed out the property owner allowed a logging company to come in and remove all the trees and left half of them on the ground. Mr. LeBlanc suggested not bringing it up now since he has allowed it to happen for over 30 years. If the property owner decides to fence it off, it can be addressed at that time. Mr. Nelson stated he doesn't know the advantage of trying to resolve the issue at this point in time.

Mr. Lawrence inquired if the land acquisition was part of the plan for the field when the Referendum was drafted to be voted on by the public. Mr. Nelson reported it was originally discussed with the league and the advisory board. The parks advisory board reduced the North Area projects from \$30 million to \$15 million so some things fell out, such as construction of pavilions on the new property. They felt it was important enough to include it for the future, but didn't want to add the extra dollars for construction at this point because of other project needs. Mr. Blickley inquired whose job it was to approve the land acquisition as the first order of business. It was noted it was part of the Referendum which stated 40 acres land acquisition.

Chairperson Sisson inquired about the caretaker location. Mr. Nelson stated he doesn't know at this point. He indicated he needs to find out about the property swap and then find a location where it won't detract from the park, but will still provide security. Mr. Nelson stated that where the caretaker is now and where was proposed may not be the best locations. The County will work with the caretaker and set up the infrastructure as was just done at Parrish Park–Scottsmoor. The poor condition of the security trailer was discussed. Mr. Blickley suggested a 6' privacy fence.

V. NEW BUSINESS–None

VI. PUBLIC INPUT–None

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:33 p.m. at the motion by Dan Lawrence, seconded by Joe LeBlanc, and carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Angela Sisson, Chairperson

jbi