



SOUTH AREA PARKS AND RECREATION

Wickham Park Advisory Committee

REGULAR MEETING
September 7, 2005

A regular meeting of the Parks and Recreation Department, Wickham Park Advisory Committee, was held on September 7, 2005, 6:30 p.m., at the site of Wickham Park, 2500 Parkway Drive, Melbourne, Florida.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Ken Baker, Chairman
Sally Richardson, Referendum Member
Eleanor Munton, Member
Karen Kilianek, Member
John Corelli, Member
Thomas Seaman, Referendum Member
Carol Mulligan, Referendum Member
Ralph Earrusso, Referendum Member
Greg England, Referendum Member
Bill Connor, Referendum Member
Greg Welsh, Member

MEMBERS ABSENT

Ollie Olson, Member
R.L. Jones, Member
Cheryl Palmer, Member
Lauren Milne, Referendum Member

STAFF PRESENT

Bill Ross, Senior Construction Coordinator
Jeff Whitehead, South Area Parks Operations Manager
Lisa Grizzle, South Area Recreation Superintendent
Josh Henderson, Parks Supervisor III, Wickham Park
Lisa Nicholas, South Area Administrative Secretary

PUBLIC

Ben Elliott

MEETING CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Baker called the regular meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Ms. Nicholas called the roll, and Mr. Baker noted that a quorum was present and that the meeting would be conducted.

Mr. Baker introduced Mr. England of the soccer homeowners' organization; Mr. Elliot, a participant from the public and avid biker; Mr. Welsh and Mr. Earrusso from the Vietnam Veterans; Ms. Munton, an original member of the Advisory Committee; and Ms. Kilianek, a new member representing The Terraces. Mr. Baker thanked the members for attending and noted that he was pleased with the turnout, as difficulty obtaining a quorum had been experienced in the past.

Mr. Whitehead introduced Mr. Ross, Senior Construction Coordinator for the Department of Parks and Recreation; Ms. Grizzle, Recreation Superintendent; and Josh Henderson, Parks Supervisor III, Wickham Park.

STAFF REPORTS

Ms. Grizzle and Mr. Henderson provided copies of photos illustrating the advancement of numerous projects at the park. Mr. Ross noted that some items were still ongoing from the last meeting but that the restrooms, youth area pavilions and the soccer area were all completed.

Restrooms

Mr. Ross commended the contractor and Jack Rood, Architect for Rood & Zwick, for their efforts. Mr. Ross noted that there were three showers on order, two for the campground and one for the youth area, which are the same size as the existing showers. Mr. Ross further stated that the buildings should be up and running by sometime in November.

The structures come prefabricated in two pieces on a semi-truck. They are then set into footers and are hooked-up and ready to go. It was noted that there were less showers in the youth area but that veterans utilize the overflow camping area. Mr. Ross indicated that there was one handicapped facility and two regular facilities for both men and women. Mr. Ross noted that three structures were purchased for the same price as one architecturally-designed building and that all of the buildings had good lighting and skylights. Three structures could be purchased for \$562,000, compared to one block building designed by the architect, which would run \$380,000.

Structures contain a concrete floor, with vulcanized material designed to be damp proof and odor proof. Construction will consist of a basic wood frame with horizontal siding and a metal roof. Mr. Baker inquired as to whether there would be sliding windows, and Mr. Ross responded that would be the case only in the laundry area. The present building is open, and having the sliding windows will help to decrease the risk of vandalism. Mr. Whitehead asked how the building would be finished on the inside, and Mr. Ross noted that there would be a fiberglass board floor, along with a rubber system. The structures are hurricane-resistant to withstand 130 mile-per-hour wind load.

Bandshell

Mr. Ross presented information on a meeting that he had with the Vietnam Veterans concerning a bandshell. The veterans were interested in having a bandshell/soundstage that resembles an amphitheatre, but such structures are extremely expensive. The veterans were willing to accept some sort of simple shelter over a stage but wanted to be able to install a light bar at the top of the structure.

Mr. Ross indicated that a structure would be able to be constructed, which is 15 feet at eave-height and resembles an amphitheatre but for the price of a pavilion, which is quite a bit less expensive than an actual bandshell. Mr. Baker indicated that he had a set of floor plans and that two sides of the structure would be enclosed, thereby giving the structure a bandshell feel. There would also be louvers to allow for ventilation, which would also provide for alternative uses for the structure.

Mr. Seaman inquired as to the acoustics of the structure, and Mr. Ross replied that the acoustics would not be greatly impacted, but that hosting a symphony orchestra could be problematic. Mr. Corelli inquired into the seating capacity, and Mr. Ross responded that the structure could seat 4,000, with additional standing-room-only space.

The electrical system would be upgraded, and 400 amp service would be increased to 600 amp service. There would also be a "front-of-house" soundboard on a concrete slab to provide for permanency. Mr. Corelli asked whether the cabling would be conduited, and it was noted that there would be a 6" PVC pipe but with no 90-degree angles, which would help to prevent flooding. Mr. Earrusso remarked that the veterans would be furnishing a ceiling fan.

Mr. Corelli inquired into the cost, and Mr. Ross stated that, when all was said and done, the cost would be \$100,000 to \$150,000, with only \$75,000 having been budgeted. Mr. Ross further noted that all projects were over budget due to escalating construction costs and the difficulties being experienced by contractors in finding subcontractors.

Mr. Ross remarked that Phases II and III were still being developed and that the firm of Post, Buckley, Schuh & Jernigan, Inc., was working on a memorial site.

Equestrian Area

Mr. Ross remarked that this portion of the project was very much over budget, partly because of difficulties experienced by Road and Bridge. For the purpose of constructing the barns, which are to be made of galvanized steel, the County contracted with I.C.E. in Titusville.

Because Road and Bridge has fallen so far behind, discussions on the project have ensued with two other contractors, who are also far behind. The contract with I.C.E. had been signed more than one year ago, and the company had set forth a change order in the amount of \$340,000. The County and I.C.E. are in negotiations in the hopes of reaching a number that is suitable to both entities, and it is hoped that a final solution can be reached the following week. A down payment had already been placed on the material for the barns, stalls and corrals. In order to reduce the cost of the change order, the County agreed to purchase all materials, thereby saving tax dollars.

All in all, it will cost \$1.3 million to construct the barns. Mr. Ross noted that last year's hurricanes had a huge impact on the cost of the project. A firm estimate on the cost of the wiring was not available. Mr. Ross reiterated the importance of reaching a solution in the near future and that construction on the barns could perhaps begin in late spring of 2006.

Mr. Corelli asked about the \$1.3 million estimate for construction of the barns, and Mr. Ross responded that the \$1.3 million amount was over and above what was already being paid to Road and Bridge. Mr. Corelli noted that the main factor in the delay was that everyone just became so far behind, and Mr. Ross further stated that the reason for the delay was a combination of things, including discrepancy on the labor costs that were part of the original change order brought forth by I.C.E. Ms. Munton noted that, along these lines, Hurricane Katrina will impact us for a long time to come. Mr. Ross concurred that the entire experience has been quite frustrating but that the project would indeed be completed.

Mr. Baker asked about pipe, and Mr. Ross responded that the six barns will be in a rectangle and will have drains and will be brought up in elevation.

Mr. Corelli asked what would happen if a compromise could not be reached with I.C.E., and Mr. Ross replied that reaching a solution will require a lot of hard work but that it will more than likely be better than starting elsewhere. Mr. Whitehead inquired as to whether the gap was close anywhere, and Mr. Ross responded that it really was not. Mr. Whitehead concurred with Mr. Ross that it would probably be more practical to stay with I.C.E. and continue moving forward, rather than starting with another firm. Mr. Ross assured members that, once a final number had been agreed upon, it would be shared with the Committee.

Mr. Whitehead inquired into the possibility of eliminating the gang restrooms and installing two units. Mr. Henderson responded that Wickham Park is on a well, and, in order to do that, it would have to be on city sewer.

Community Center

Discussion on the community center ensued, and Mr. Ross remarked that there was still some indecision on the facility, as Emergency Management is getting involved and wants to have all buildings hardened to 170 miles per hour, which has really put the structure behind insofar as the design. Mr. Ross mentioned that the community centers at Palm Bay Regional Park, Chain of Lakes and Viera Regional Park were all going out to bid later in September.

Mr. Corelli inquired as to whether there was a time frame for construction of the community center, and Mr. Ross replied that he was really not certain but that it would have a price tag of \$2.9 to \$3.3 million. Mr. Seaman asked if it would be possible to scale back the community center, and Mr. Ross said that it was a possibility.

Ms. Munton asked how the attendance in the park had been, and Ms. Grizzle responded that it had been very good, seeing as the weather had been quite hot. Mr. Grizzle further noted that the dog park had become very popular and that the new playground was drawing many individuals to the park.

Archery Area

Mr. Whitehead indicated that the archery area could become rather controversial and noted that if the Committee voted to construct the ponds, then the archery clubs would have to vacate Wickham Park. Currently, steps are being taken to relocate the archers, and various properties are being examined, including property off Route 192 and an area at Lake Washington. Mr. Whitehead further stated that archery really does not belong in a passive park. In addition, parking becomes an issue, and park patrons must walk through the archery range.

Ms. Kilianek asked whether the hours/days of operation of the archery area could be limited, and Mr. Whitehead responded that, because it is a public park, all areas must remain open all the time to all interested parties.

Mr. Corelli mentioned that the archers are a very organized group and make compelling arguments for staying at Wickham Park. Because it is not too far, Lake Washington would be okay, but Malabar/Palm Bay would be too great of a distance.

Mr. Whitehead noted that Lake Washington already has the necessary amenities but the surfacing would need to be calculated. The dirt at Palm Bay Regional Park is not useable, so it would be a good idea to pursue obtaining Lake Washington, which would also be ideal for a national archery tournament.

Mr. Baker noted that the groups are still meeting at the park and continuing to use the park. Mr. Whitehead reiterated that finding a new location will be pursued and that the archers have been great tenants and an all-around good group with no injuries. Mr. Baker noted that there have been more problems with the dog park, and Ms. Grizzle indicated that there were a few bites at first but that the situation has improved because there is increased staff available.

Mr. Seaman recommended that the archers be able to stay, as there is not a conflict at present.

Fishing

Ms. Kilianek inquired as to whether there were plans to stock the ponds with fish, and Mr. Whitehead indicated that the Florida Wildlife Commission would stock the ponds for free.

Mr. Whitehead noted that difficulties were being experienced with regard to locating a mowing contractor.

Northeast Corner

Ms. Kilianek raised concerns with regard to bicyclists in the northeast corner of the park and questioned as to whether there was liability for riding, walking or all-terrain-vehicles.

Mr. Seaman noted that a small group of individuals had been putting in numerous hours in order to keep the trails clear. Mr. Seaman further noted that a trail system with signage was becoming increasingly necessary because of the escalating number of groups that have been utilizing the park and the diversity of these groups (e.g., mountain bikers, birdwatchers, running groups). Mr. Baker inquired as to whether a trail map would be beneficial.

Mr. Seaman referenced a project completed at an EEL's property that used a variety of symbols and arrows to provide directional information. Mr. Seaman further noted that directional signage is important to incorporate because of potential liability issues. Furthermore, the horse riders are still using the park, and it is just becoming exceedingly crowded.

Ms. Kilianek recommended that the Committee actually hike the area in order to obtain visual insight into what is actually occurring on the property. Ms. Kilianek also noted that, if a signage system were to be implemented, assistance could be attained from the Boy Scouts as part of various Eagle Projects and the like but that everyone on the Committee must see the area in order to be able to discuss it judiciously.

Mr. Seaman noted that former Park Supervisor Todd Babione previously worked directly with individuals maintaining the trails, and Ms. Grizzle remarked that, after last year's hurricanes, most of the trail maintenance was performed by bikers.

Mr. Earrusso suggested that Mr. Henderson, Ms. Grizzle and Mr. Seaman work in conjunction to produce some sort of a signage system and/or map, and Mr. Corelli expressed agreement with this recommendation.

Mr. Baker noted that there was an increase in the number of young people that were entering the reunion area at night, and Ms. Grizzle noted that a large portion of the chain-link fence had been removed.

Mr. Seaman offered some background information on the area, stating that Mr. Babione permitted the bikers to maintain the trails using basic rules. When Ms. Grizzle assumed supervision of the park, no chainsaws or other heavy equipment was used; branches were cut so that people could get by, and a good trail system was established. Mr. Seaman suggested taking a look at some state parks and EEL's property in Brevard County.

Ms. Grizzle informed the Committee that funds had not been allocated for park staff to clear the trails and that, because of other necessary staff functions, clearing trails could not be a priority. Mr. Baker noted that the situation will have to be addressed in the future, and Mr. Whitehead remarked that any trails that would be created would have to be inspected. Mr. Corelli stated that, in the interim, Mr. Seaman's group could continue to maintain the trails. Mr. Seaman remarked that his group would be happy to examine some other state park facilities and subsequently install signage if deemed appropriate to do so. Mr. Seaman further noted that he had a lot of labor at his disposal that was very willing to do whatever was necessary. Mr. Elliot reiterated that Wickham Park is a great place to be and that the bike path provides a safer venue than the open road.

Miscellaneous

Mr. Corelli inquired as to whether ashtrays were available at the playgrounds because there are cigarette butts all over the area. Ms. Grizzle responded that smoking is not desired in the playground area, and that

is why there are no ashtrays but further noted that, because people will continue to smoke, additional ashtrays could be placed in the main pavilion.

Mr. Seaman noted that the one door in the new back lake men's restroom slams very hard and that someone may get injured, and staff replied that it will be looked into.

Feral Cat Colony

Discussion of ongoing problems with feral cats ensued. It was noted that an overabundance of food was being placed in the area of the feral cats and that raccoons ended up eating it, thereby posing an increased risk of human and wild animal contact. It was also mentioned that skunks and opossums were being seen in the feral cat area. Furthermore, it was noted that the Space Coast Feline Network posted an article on its website stating that feral cats were welcome at Wickham Park. Ms. Grizzle noted that she would get in touch with the contact person at the Space Coast Feline Network and discuss the situation.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

PUBLIC INPUT

Mr. Elliott stated that he is a lifelong resident of Brevard County and that he appreciated the efforts of the Advisory Committee on behalf of Wickham Park. Mr. Seaman noted that Mr. Elliott would be a good addition to the Committee if a vacancy were to arise.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Earrusso made a **MOTION** to adjourn, and Mr. England seconded. **UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED.** Mr. Baker adjourned the September 7 meeting of the Wickham Park Advisory Committee at 8:13 p.m.