



MEETING MINUTES
PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, AUGUST 7, 2018 – 6PM
ASSEMBLY CHAMBERS

I. Call to Order at 6:02 p.m. – C. Mertl, Chair

Present: J. Anderson, E. Carrillo, T. Gilmour, C. Mertl, E. Palmer, C. Prussing, T. Rutecki, K. Shelton

Absent: J. Gellings

Staff Present: George Schaaf, Director; Alix Pierce, Project Manager; Lauren Verrelli, Staff Liaison

II. Agenda Changes – None

III. Approval of Meeting Minutes from June 5, 2018 – T. Gilmour moves to approve minutes; no objection.
Minutes adopted.

IV. Public Participation on Non-Agenda Items –

Laurie Berg (911 Calhoun Ave): There are many people with inadequate wheelchairs from the ships that go through the island's gravel on the Sea Walk at Overstreet Park. If there is a way to press the gravel, it would be easier for them to get to the park to enjoy.

V. New Business –

A. Evergreen Cemetery Historic Landscape Preservation Plan

G. Schaaf: Corvus Design approached us in May with an offer to develop a Historic Landscape Preservation Plan for Evergreen Cemetery at no cost to CBJ. We accepted this offer, and staff worked on the project with Debbie Mattson, an intern at Corvus Design. She produced a plan that provides a framework to preserve and showcase the meaningful history that fills Evergreen Cemetery through the environment it occupies. The plan identifies a range of actions to enhance the cemetery, which can be accomplished as resources allow.

C. Mertl: I have a conflict of interest since Corvus prepared the plan pro-bono.

E. Palmer: It is important to include a section for the prominent Native Alaskans in the cemetery. It would be important to use native plants in the area instead of bringing in non-native plants. I make a motion to adopt the Evergreen Cemetery Historic Preservation Plan as written and ask for unanimous consent.

No objection; motion passes.

B. Douglas Cemeteries

G. Schaaf: The Lands Committee is considering a request by former Juneau Mayor Merrill Sanford to transfer ownership of the Eagles Cemetery in Douglas to CBJ. Mr. Sanford also asked the Lands Committee to recommend that the Assembly acquire all other cemeteries in Douglas. If acquired by the CBJ, Parks & Rec would be responsible for maintenance of the cemeteries. On the staff side, we are unable to absorb additional maintenance responsibilities within our existing resources. The cost estimates assume no future burials would take place in any of the cemeteries. If future burials are necessary, then maintenance costs would be significantly higher. The Department does not have a

recommendation regarding the acquisition of the Douglas cemeteries; we feel it's a decision for the PRAC and Assembly to make. However, if the PRAC supports the acquisition of the Douglas cemeteries, then the Department requests that the PRAC recommend to the Lands Committee the addition of one (1) 0.40 FTE position to the Department's staffing schedule and (2) an increment of \$35,981 to the Department's FY19 budget for personnel services, contractual services, and other expenses necessary for cemetery maintenance.

C. Merti: Cemeteries are cultural, open spaces. These cemeteries are slowly falling into disrepair, it does make sense the CBJ takes possession. It does concern me about the high maintenance and if Parks & Rec takes over, they need the appropriate funding to maintain them.

Mary-Kay Pusich (1407 1st St.): I am a member of the Douglas Advisory Board; we have been working on this with multiple Directors, Mayors and other city officials since 1983. There have been families who have tried to come find their loved ones and they cannot find because of the overgrowth.

Mike Monagle (3730 El Camino): I am the business manager for the Diocese of Juneau which owns the Catholic Cemetery. We were approached by the Douglas Advisory board a couple years ago to allow the city to take over maintenance as we currently struggle to maintain it. We found unmarked graves, broken headstones and it's a shame since it's a cultural and historic site. We're willing to transfer the property to the City and Borough of Juneau at no charge.

Brien Daugherty (418 7th St.): I really think our cemeteries have a deep significance for any community. To keep them up should be a priority. I hope the City will stand up and give a hand.

T. Gilmour: It will be a big task to take this on at the beginning. Does the .40 FTE request be your normal to maintain, or will you need additional support at the beginning?

G. Schaaf: The cost estimate includes initial funding for contract cost to get the parcels cleared; even with additional staff we do not have the man power to do that.

T. Gilmour: I make a motion the PRAC recommends to the Lands Committee the addition of one (1) 0.40 FTE position to the Department's staffing schedule and (2) an increment of \$35,981 to the Department's FY19 budget for personnel services, contractual services, and other expenses necessary for cemetery maintenance.

K. Shelton: These cemeteries house an important part of our community's history and it is the respectful thing to do. It also helps establish our community's identity as we move forward; we don't want to forget our community's history.

No objection; motion passes.

C. Chicken Yard Park

G. Schaaf: We have a safety problem and park maintenance problem at Chicken Yard Park. It has our oldest playground equipment in Juneau, it was installed in 1988. It should have been replaced on our normal replacement schedule, every 10-15 years. Today, it is unsafe and needs to be removed and replaced. We currently have around \$90,000 from the temporary 1% sales tax; we are ready to move forward with the public process to design and construct park improvements with that funding and also leverage that funding with additional money. The park is currently being used by motorized vehicles to access private property adjacent to the park which is a safety problem that is preventing us from moving forward with installation of a new playground. National standards that we have to comply with when we build and maintain playgrounds, show that a playground that size and a driveway can't work here because the lot is too small. In 1980, the Parks & Rec dept. went to the Assembly about closing the park to vehicle accesses; there was a lot of discussion but it ended up getting tabled. In 1988, the playground you see today was installed. For a long time, there has been an ordinance in the city that prohibits motorized vehicles in parks and there is no exception in

Chicken Yard Park. We have allowed vehicles to drive through the park and access the property for many years, which is contrary to our responsibility to build and maintain safe playgrounds. Just to clarify, there is no easement on the park. What we're challenged with is how we can replace the playground and also accommodate a driveway. The question we're asking the PRAC tonight is whether Chicken Yard Park should be retained as a park or whether it should be removed from management by the Parks & Rec department and be used for some other purpose. Our recommendation is to be retained as a park.

T. Rutecki: We need to schedule a work session with Starr Hill residents, Parks & Rec staff and the Risk Dept.

C. Mertl: Mr. Schaaf, can you confirm that this is just a starting point and that we are not looking to make a recommendation tonight? Has Law made an official recommendation to you?

G. Schaaf: The reason we're looking for a recommendation from the RPAC before we spend substantial resources on developing, designing and constructing a new park and playground, we need to make sure that's what the community wants. Our concern is that we cannot construct a playground where vehicles are present. The Assembly has appropriated the funds for the park and we would like to construct the playground next summer; the current playground is a safety hazard and it needs to be removed. Law has confirmed that no easement exists or has been requested.

J. Anderson: Do you have a timeline for demolishing the playground?

G. Schaaf: It needs to be taken out this year.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Odin Brudie (512 6th St.): Chicken Yard Park is a gathering and playing spot. I have always been an advocate for downtown open space. I look forward to developing a new and improved Chicken Yard.

Vicki Van Fleet (626 5th St.): My husband and I are the owners of the house in question. We love our house, we love chicken yard and we love our neighbors. We have always respected our responsibility with our access through chicken yard. We don't allow our own friends to drive through to park to get to our house. If they city cannot give an exception to this ordinance or come up with a creative solution for both our legal access and Chicken Yard Park then we may be forced into litigation with the city to establish our legal title of our easement. This is not what we desire; we want the park as much as everyone.

C. Mertl: What I'm reading in the packet of comments, people want to keep Chicken Yard Park as a neighborhood park. Would you be willing to not have direct access all the way through the park, would partial access meet your needs?

Vicki Van Fleet: Yes, we would be willing to talk about that but we would need our attorney present.

Brock Tabor (434 7th St.): I am an active user of the park with my son Chance. I'm a good neighbor and recognize that access needs to happen. I would like to see numbers for the cost of all the scenarios. There are lots of options but not having a place for little ones is not an option.

Sandy Harbanuke (604 Fourth St.): If we don't have a park, the kids are going to play in the street instead. I don't like the idea of making the park smaller; chicken yard has been a place where kids have been able to do all kinds of things.

Paige McGuan (517 5th St.): I played in Chicken Yard as a child and I now have 3 young children who use it frequently. It's a place where I feel comfortable letting them go on their own. The area needs to stay as a playground; we love our neighbors and agree there needs to be access to the property. Juneau is full of creative people that can come up with a better solution.

Judy Crondell (800 F St.): It seems to me the presentation says that Chicken Yard Park is unsafe for two reasons 1) the residents of the home use the park for access to their residence and 2) the

playground equipment has become unsafe. Speaking as a former resident of the property at question for 36 years, my husband and I felt that we were never putting the children at risk by driving through the park. Without Chicken Yard Park, the children would be playing in the streets. Even today, when kids access the park, there is no sidewalk on the chicken yard side or a crosswalk to get to the park. There seems to be overwhelming support to maintain access and a playground. No one is getting hurt, what problem is the CBJ attempting to solve?

Jack McGee (445 Nelson): I am an attorney; there is a lot of confusion of the easement. The legal definition prescriptive easement included the concept of fairness. It is an easement upon another's real property acquired by continued use without permission of the owner for more than 10 years.

Sarah Sjostedit (501 Kennedy St.): I have lived on Starr Hill for almost 10 years. Children need access to green space and to eliminate this park would be public health issue. The community needs to work with the city to allow a needs survey to see what the community wants to do with the park. I do not think vehicle access equates access to your home.

Shawna McMahon (531 Park St.): Chicken Yard has been invaluable to me and my 8 year old. With very little green space in the area, it's a place to get the kids off the street to play. This is a historic park and this is not an either or situation, we can come up with a creative solution.

John Greely (529 East St.): My property is right below the park. Chicken Yard provides an open space for the neighborhood. Are there ways to have hours of operations that would allow for them to leave and come back to their home?

Marla Berg (529 East St.): Safety of the kids is a top priority. We have all raised our kids there and no one got hurt. What are the plans? They need to be shared with the community.

Brien Daugherty (418 7th St.): Yes, cars have always come and gone through the park. When I grew up, it was loaded with kids and all we had was a basketball hoop. I can't say enough how much I want it to remain a park. We need to establish it as a community space that would allow multi-use.

Sally Donaldson (530 Park St.): I bring my grandchildren to the park, I work out there, and we have had a giant neighborhood garage sale there.

Gail Horetski (604 5th St.): I live below the park and have lived there for 35 years. I have watched so many kids play there and there has never been a problem with the cars and the kids playing.

Mac Metcalfe (624 6th St.): This was badly handled in the beginning, disrespectful to the neighborhood. We were invited in after the fact and told there is only one way and that needs to be changed. On a positive note, you mentioned how important safety is for children. My 5 year old cousin was killed on Kennedy Street by a car backing up in the early 50's. Your concern for safety for kids is absolutely right.

Tiyvette Soutiere (634 6th St.): This Park is the neighborhood, a safe park. It is different than Capital Park, there are always people watching at Chicken Yard.

David Thomas (520 Nelson St.): I use the park for green space since I don't have any on my property. It is the yard for the neighborhood. Even as just a grassy area, it would be utilized a lot.

Donna Peel (N/A): 52 year resident of Starr Hill. Big mistake to change what is going on that has been going on well for many years. I would like my neighbors to still get to their property and still have a playground.

Rick Trostel (430 Hermit St.): Raised my daughter near Chicken Yard. Is there any consideration to possibly giving them access via 5th St. (sledding hill) to their property?

Frankie Philaphant (512 6th St.): Longtime resident of Juneau and have enjoyed Chicken Yard very much. You need to educate us more on the national standards.

Paul Korchin (634 6th St.): Newcomers to Juneau and Starr Hill, there's a sense of public trust in the

neighborhood. I'm grateful to hear that everyone wants to keep the park. The challenge is how we can balance keeping the park and playground. I look forward to the conversation.

END OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

C. Mertl: We will work with Mr. Schaaf to make sure this is an open process that includes the neighborhood.

G. Schaaf: We heard overwhelming support to maintaining the parcel as a park, I suggest the committee entertain the idea of having a motion to retain the Chicken Yard Park as a park and direct staff to develop a process to explore options and report back to the committee.

E. Palmer: I'm hearing there hasn't been enough public process. Is there a way to move this forward and have a committee of the neighborhood and staff to work on this together?

T. Gilmour: I would like to find a way to create more neighborhood conversation and come up with solutions.

C. Mertl: Disposal is not an option we want to pursue.

K. Shelton: I would like to know more on the perspective easement and get more guidance from the City legal team.

J. Anderson: We need to figure out the property access part first so we can move forward.

T. Gilmour: I move that PRAC instructs the Parks & Rec Department to hold a neighborhood meeting and explain the legal aspects so they can start a discussion reporting back to us in November.

Unanimous consent; motion passes.

VI. Unfinished Business – None.

VII. Department Information Items

A. Project Playground

A. Pierce: We are in need of volunteers for the Project Playground Community Build portion, we only have about half. Leather & Associates team has been on site getting prepped before the community build. The Community Build kicks off tomorrow at 7am, the community is obligated to complete a certain portion of the playground.

B. Parks & Rec Master Plan

A. Pierce: The Plan is done and is currently being reviewed by staff. Chicken Yard is number two on the list for priority parks, only behind Capital Park which also has a failing retaining wall. The plan has recommendations that can be implemented the next ten years.

VIII. Committee, Liaison, and Board Member Reports

A. Chair Report— None.

B. Liaison to the Assembly Report— None.

C. Liaison Reports—

YAB – T. Rutecki: Will present to the HRC with the annual report.

Aquatics – T. Rutecki: Had a retreat in July.

Jensen-Olson Arboretum—T. Gilmour: None.

Lands – C. Mertl: Deckhand Dave approached Lands to buy Gunakadeit Park.

1% for Art— J. Anderson: None.

Treadwell Arena Board – VACANT

JNU Urban Forestry – C. Mertl: None.

Eaglecrest – E. Palmer: Season passes staying the same, day rates increased \$1.

TrailMix— K. Shelton: None.

Park Foundation— C. Mertl: None.

Other Member Business – None.

Adjournment – 9:02 p.m. *Having no other business before the board.*

Respectfully submitted by Lauren Verrelli, P&R Administrative Assistant II, 10/7/2018