RECREATION COMMITTEE

JANUARY 14, 2016

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Chairman Rick Rettig. Committee members present were Jim Matuszak, Rick Rettig and Jonathan Smith. Also present were City Administrator Bridgette Kabat, Service Director Jon Eckel, and Planning and Zoning Administrator Brody Walters.

CITIZENS' CONCERNS

Kitty Gibson, 29639 Duxbury, asked when the City will be soliciting bids for the Riverside Park improvements and since the grant was not approved, where the additional funds will come from. Mr. Rettig said that both of those items are on the agenda.

Jim Hagen, Avenue Road, said that he does not believe that greenspace funds that come from developers should go into the general fund. Ms. Kabat said that those funds go into the 404 fund, park land acquisition. Mr. Hagen suggested that the City consider purchasing more parkland because there are no parks past I-475. Mr. Walters stated that the preliminary plat of Villages of Canterbury which will be considered at the February 4th Planning Commission meeting shows eleven acres of open space.

RIVERSIDE PARK – SPECIAL APPROVAL USE

Mr. Walters stated that the Special Approval Use for Riverside Park was the subject of a public hearing held before City Council on January 5, 2016. He reviewed the Staff Report that was given to Council members prior to the public hearing. He said that there are two sets of criteria to be considered for the Special Approval Use, the general criteria for all Special Approval Uses and the specific criteria for this use, a park. Mr. Walters stated that after a series of votes, the Planning Commission voted 3-2 with two members abstaining to approve the preliminary and final site plan and recommend approval of the Special Approval Use. Mr. Matuszak said that he discussed this vote with members of the Planning Commission and the first vote ended in a 3-3 tie with one abstention. The Mayor then made the same motion and the vote was 3-2 with two abstentions. Mr. Matuszak said he does not think the second vote was valid and he thinks the Mayor should have abstained since the City is the applicant. He said that he thinks it is significant that the two engineers on the Commission voted no on the first vote.

Mr. Smith expressed concerns about the retaining wall and with the safety of people crossing Front Street to get to the park. Rick Butera of the Edge Group provided some information regarding Redi Rock, the material that will be used on the retaining wall of Riverside Park. Mr. Smith said that one of the special approval use criteria is that there are adequate measures to provide ingress/egress. Ms. Kabat said that she's not sure that refers to pedestrian traffic. Mr. Walters said that all points of access remain unchanged so in his opinion this criteria is not applicable. Mr. Smith asked if a similar warning device like the one on Fort Meigs Road by McKinley Woods could be used on Front Street. Ms. Kabat said that since it is a state route, ODOT would have to approve it. Mr. Rettig said that he is having a hard time seeing the difference between this and Eckel Junction Road when there are soccer games at Rivercrest Park. He added that he does not think Riverside Park will be as heavily used as Rivercrest. Mr. Smith said that he would like this safety issue resolved before he votes on the special approval use.

The Committee agreed that this is a big enough issue that they would refer it to full City Council without a recommendation.

RIVERSIDE PARK – REVOLVING LOAN FUND WAIVER

Ms. Kabat reported that the Revolving Loan Fund Committee approved an application to utilize RLF funds for the ADA accessibility portion of the Riverside Park improvements. The cost of the ADA improvements is $306,000 and the committee approved funds up to $350,000. Ms. Kabat stated that this is an eligible activity for these funds, but it requires an extra step which is a waiver from City Council. Mr. Matuszak noted that the proposed resolution does not include a dollar amount. Ms. Kabat said that they will insert the amount which is $100,000. She said this still leaves a shortfall for the project but that will be addressed in the budget amendment proposal. Mr. Matuszak said that he believes this issue should go through the Finance and Economic Development Committee because it involves the RLF fund. Ms. Kabat said that it is at this committee because it has overseen this project from its inception. Mr. Rettig stated that the resolution still requires a vote from full Council. Mr. Matuszak asked about the makeup of the RLF Committee and how each member voted. Glenn Grisdale, Economic Development Consultant, explained that five members were present at the meeting but he did a paper vote so he's not sure how each member voted, but the results were 3-2. Mr. Matuszak said that he thinks it is inappropriate that the Mayor voted as it gives him money for his own project. Mr. Rettig said he understands Mr. Matuszak's comments, but the Mayor drives the ship. Mr. Rettig suggested that the Committee make a recommendation since it has to do with Riverside Park, but because of the uniqueness of the use of the RLF funds, that the issue also go to the Finance Committee for a recommendation. Mr. Matuszak noted that this is not a loan, it is a grant and he does not believe RLF funds should be used for this purpose; he believes they should be used for economic development. Mr. Rettig stated that these improvements have the ability to enhance the riverfront and the downtown area. Mr. Matuszak said that the Administration is spending beyond its means and they want to borrow money for Hood Park improvements. He said they found another place to get money and he doesn't want to condone this. Mr. Smith said that he appreciates Mr. Matuszak's comments, but he believes this is different than the funding of Hood Park and he believes it is appropriate. The Committee agreed 2-1 to recommend approval of a resolution authorizing a waiver to use $100,000 in RLF funds to provide ADA accessibility at Riverside Park and to refer it to the Finance Committee for their consideration.

RIVERSIDE PARK – PERMISSION TO BID

The Committee discussed how approval of the previous issues regarding Riverside Park affect the appropriateness of asking for permission to go to bid. Mr. Walters said that if the Special Approval Use is approved and permission to go to bid is approved, it would still allow the timeline that would have this project completed in time for the City's Bicentennial celebration at the beginning of July. Ms. Kabat stated that the budget amendment could deal with the issue of the RLF funds. Mr. Matuszak noted that there is competition for available funds in the budget amendment, including a second fire station. Mr. Rettig agreed but said that going out to bid does not rubber stamp the entire project. Mr. Matuszak asked if this project could be phased as a two year project. Mr. Butera said that it is currently not set up to be done in phases and a significant redesign would have to be done. Mr. Rettig said that a larger concern to him is that we have one shot to get this right. He said we will always do gradual improvements, but he can't see doing a little here and a little there as a way to develop the riverfront. He said this project has gotten a lot of attention, and not getting funds from ODNR was a punch in the gut. Mr. Matuszak said that in order to do this right and to not use money we don't have, he would vote no on going out to bid. Mr. Rettig said that he would recommend approving go out to bid. Mr. Smith said that he doesn't think he can vote on this until the Special Approval Use issue is decided.

NAMING OF NEW SR65 PARK LAND CURRENTLY KNOWN AS THE DAVIS PROPERTY

Mr. Rettig stated that the park land that is west of Fort Meigs along SR65 is known as the Davis Property. Mr. Eckel said that the land was donated to the City by Mr. Davis as part of the development of Rivercrest subdivision. The City had previously not made any improvements to the park, but an opportunity came along to collaborate with Columbia Gas to put in a parking area. Mr. Eckel added that the area will be kept as a nature park, but they would like to have some type of a ribbon-cutting/open house with Columbia Gas. Mr. Rettig said that PRAC was asked to come up with suggestions for a name and they suggested Davis Overlook, Spafford Overlook, Spafford Landing, or a historical or Native American name. Jim Hagen suggested Perry's Point. The Committee agreed 3-0 to recommend naming the park Davis Overlook Park. Mr. Rettig stated that since the land was donated by Mr. Davis, this follows suit with how Hood Park was named.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rick Rettig, Chairman
Recreation Committee

Next regular meeting: Tuesday, February 9, 2016 at 6:00 p.m.