

**PARK BOARD MINUTES
Foster Community Center
January 12, 2022**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Zoe Ahlstrom; Kimberly Whitfield; Nate Scramlin; Mike Dombrowski, Brian Daniels, Rick Kibbey (6:40 p.m.), Kristi James (6:38 p.m.)

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Brett Kaschinske, Parks and Recreation Director; Kellie Brown, Board Secretary; Dave Goodman, Jeff Potter, Anne Clayton, Nancy Mahlow, Ryan Kost, Cecelia Terraza

CALL TO ORDER: 6:33 p.m.

ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA: Correspondence from Nancy Mahlow regarding lights at Bancroft and Regent Parks was added to new business

BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Scramlin approved the December minutes as submitted; Daniels seconded. 5 yeas; 0 nay

NEW BUSINESS:

Correspondence – Nancy Mahlow

Correspondence was presented from Nancy Mahlow regarding the removal of lights from Bancroft and Regent Park, her concerns about safety and the response from Mayor.

Kaschinske reviewed the PowerPoint print out of Regent and Bankcroft Parks with light locations, overhead tree canopy view and county drain project at Bancroft. In 2016 prior to the drain project there was a meeting with the Friends of Bancroft, at that time the southern loop had vehicle traffic, cars parking at the playground and dumping. Although there was resistance from the neighbors, the loop was closed off which reduced dumping, eliminated people driving through the wooded area and provided safety near the playground. The northern loop was paved as a non-motorized pathway. There is power and lights at the building and lights at the parking lot. There are lights at the playground at Regent Park. The lights removed were further back in the park and the majority were not working.

Dombrowski inquired if there was park infrastructure further back in Regent Park; Kaschinske stated there was not. Kibbey added there is a non-paved walking path.

Kaschinske advised there are lights around buildings, parking lots and the River Trail downtown. At these two parks most of the lights were not working. BWL policy for power lines in wooded areas or above trees is the “blue sky rule”, which means no coverage above the lights and to trim or remove to only see blue sky above. Moores Park and Fenner near Evergreen Cemetery the trees have been removed to clear the lines.

Regent Park has had dumping and there was also a homeless encampment. Several parks have encampments, and the department works with Human Relations and Community Services.

Kaschinske stated there were several rumors regarding this matter which included lights were being removed from all parks and parks were being sold; neither are true. The concern is that the decision to remove the lights was not brought to the board or neighbors first, but it was not believed to be an issue prior to removing the lights.

James confirmed the area in Regent is to become a natural area and are there options until it is all natural and matured.

Kaschinske stated there are two options; one is solar or to run power, which is cheaper.

Daniels stated he lives in the Bancroft neighborhood and feels it is feasible to do solar or set up panels to run power to lights.

Kaschinske said the question is can there be enough sunlight to charge the panels.

Ahlstrom inquired if the ice rink is no longer at Bancroft, what recreational activities would take place to require lights.

Daniels stated people use the park to walk dogs and walk the trail.

Kaschinske stated it would take an ordinance change to keep the parks open after dusk.

Kaschinske reminded everyone that BWL tree trimming is different than parks; BWL is service oriented to supply power and ensure safety to do so. Parks is nature oriented.

Ahlstrom explained the lights were originally for the motorized trail, which is now non-motorized and BWL would perform all blue-sky trimming.

Kibbey said he heard the poles were cut down; Kaschinske stated that is correct.

Kaschinske stated this matter is going to the Public Safety committee next week.

Kibbey expressed his disappointment this was done without consulting the board or neighborhoods.

Whitfield spoke on behalf of the Director's integrity and to provide him the opportunity to offer solutions.

Daniels stated the Director was protecting the trees in both parks because BWL was ready to do blue sky trimming.

Dombrowski stated the park had amenities and now it does not, which defeats the mission of the department to get people out in parks.

Statements of Citizens

Ryan Kost clarified MDOT moved the encampment out of Regent Park in 2019, which left behind trash and debris. Without lights in the park, it is inviting unwanted action. Bancroft Park had newer LED lights that were removed. No one communicated with the neighbors. He has painted benches, fixed the gate at the park and fixed playground equipment. He referred to a 1985 list of parks with the amenities. The goal is to have a relationship with the public and parks working together. Decisions should not be made by one person.

Nancy Mahlow said she started this with a letter, and it was not intended to disregard Brett and she apologized for the inappropriate comments that were made on Facebook. The lights have been there for years and there is a lot of activity. She did not understand the rush, especially now when people need to be outside. The park closure ordinance has not been enforced for years and it is not possible to keep people out of parks without fencing off entire parks.

Jeff Potter stated he is a non-resident but does program activities such as biking, tours and skiing in the winter in the Lansing parks. Skiing in the former ice rink area at Bancroft Park takes place a lot. In the winter it is dark by 5 p.m.

Cecelia Terraza stated in the Nordic regions they have longer winters, yet they are the happiest because they are out in the winter exercising.

Dave Goodman stated he walks his dogs through Bancroft Park and he would like to see it open 24/7. No lights make a different quality to the park and he does not see the need for lights.

Evan Goodman favors lights, an open process and access to the information. Lighting allows accessibility to the park by a broader set of people. Prevention is primary and secondary is tertiary.

Anne Clayton stated she lives in the Moores Park area. She knows the parks are used after dark and have lights even though the parks are not to be used after dark. It is not the neighbors using the parks after dark that is the issue, but the unfavorable activities from people outside the neighborhood.

Kaschinske stated he would be at the Public Safety Committee meeting next week regarding this issue.

Dombrowski inquired if the board should write a letter in favor of use of the parks in the evening hours.

Ahlstrom would not like to do so yet and would like more community input and add to next months agenda.

Kaschinske stated Lansing Police is the enforcement mechanism for the ordinance and they will use their discretion.

Kaschinske said he would research NRPA for options and could list specific activities that would be permitted in the parks after dusk.

Dombrowski would like to see programming done in the parks in the evenings.

Resident Tree Program

Ahlstrom provided information received from Portland Oregon on their tree program.

Kibbey inquired if LBWL will continue to contribute to tree programs; Kaschinske stated as far as he knows they will.

Kaschinske reviewed the draft program documents and explained the process.

Daniels inquired when the trees arrive and the life expectancy of the potted trees if they cannot be planted right away. Kaschinske stated trees arrive in the spring and not planting is not an option.

Ahlstrom would does not want to charge a deposit as proposed. Kaschinske stated that could be an option for the first year and determine how it goes for future years.

Kibbey recommended utilizing the MSU Forestry Department to assist with the program.

Ahlstrom inquired about a timeline for the program; Kaschinske stated maybe fall.

CIP FY2023

Kaschinske stated this needs to be voted on next month, February.

Ahlstrom advised members Dombrowski will put this in a Google Docx to send to board members and would like members to complete before the next meeting.

Scramlin asked for clarification on the ARPA (America Rescue Plan Act) projects. Kaschinske said not to plan on ARPA dollars, but the projects may be put on the list. He will try to get a date when we may know if we receive any funds.

The CIP list was reviewed, projects were explained and questions were answered.

Equity Matrix

Kaschinske stated on the city web page there is a Diversity and Equity Dashboard that breaks out the employees by department and he encourages board members to view.

OLD BUSINESS

Annual Report

Dombrowski submitted the 2021 Park Board Annual report to the members for review. Kibbey made motion to present the report to administration; Scramlin seconded. 7 yeas; 0 nays to submit to Mayor and Council.

Park Ordinance

Kaschinske reviewed ordinance 812.04 for Zone A (Downtown) and what is not allowed on the sidewalks as an example of what to not allow on the River Trail. He asked the board to provide language of what motor vehicles they would like to see prohibited on the trail.

ARPA PowerPoint

Ahlstrom reviewed the projects proposed for ARPA funds.

UPDATES

Kaschinske stated we have ordered 300 trees to be purchased and planted this spring. These are not part of the resident tree program.

Bancroft and Regent lights have already been discussed under new business.

No information available currently for a Ward 3 board member.

Meeting adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted: Kellie Brown, Park Board Secretary
Approved February 9, 2022