

**PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD MEETING MINUTES**  
**August 1, 2023**

Heather Carmona, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm at 851 South Eton.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Heather Carmona  
Susan Collins  
Pam Graham  
Sarah Kupczyk  
Anne Lipp  
John Rusche  
Steve Sweeney

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Sarah Kupczyk

**STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT:** Archie Reynolds, Seaholm High School

**STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES ABSENT:** Katie Glasier, Seaholm High School

**ADMINISTRATION:** Scott Zielinski, Director of Public Services  
Carrie A. Laird, Parks and Recreation Manager  
Leah Blizinski, City Planner  
Brendan McGaughey, Parks & Forestry Foreman  
Connie J. Folk, Recreation Coordinator

**PRESENTERS:** Jane Dixon, McKenna

**GUESTS:** Jeff Boes, Nina Boes, Jack Burns,  
Jessica Einstein, Ross Kaplan,  
Andrea Lafontaine, Don Lawrence,  
Veronika Lawrence, Antonia Lawrence,  
Joan Ritter and Joe Wrobel

**ANNOUNCEMENTS, INTRODUCTIONS OF GUESTS & CHAIRPERSON COMMENTS:**

No announcements, introductions of guests & chairperson comments

**OPEN TO THE PUBLIC FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA:**

Joan Ritter asked the question about Japanese Knot weed which is an invasive weed and was located in several yards including her yard. Ritter coordinated a few years ago to hire a contractor to treat the invasive and it is coming back. Ritter inquired if the City of Birmingham would ever get involved with such a removal.

DPS Director Zielinski stated that normal order when it's brought up is not for a back and forth with the public. But that item in general please contact the Department of Public Services at a later time to have a discussion. DPS Director Zielinski recommended to reach out to Carrie specifically about this item.

Chairperson Carmona suggested that an email on this be sent to the Department of Public Services so that they can respond regarding your concern.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:**

It was moved by Graham, seconded by Rusche, to approve the minutes of the Tuesday, July 11, 2023, regular meeting as submitted.

**Ayes,**

Heather Carmona, Susan Collins, Pam Graham  
Sarah Kupczyk, Anne Lipp, John Rusche  
and Steve Sweeney

**Nays,**

None

**Absent,**

None

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

No unfinished business

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Parks and Recreation Master Plan-Evaluation of the Current Plan Goals and Objectives**

Jane Dixon from McKenna presented to the Parks and Recreation Board the progress of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan which is shown in exhibit A.

Dixon moved into the Goals and Objectives Exercise with the Parks and Recreation Board members. The Parks and Recreation Board members ranked their goals and objectives.

Carmona commented that none of these goals are really mutually exclusive. So by ranking or eliminating, it means there the board is trying to look at how to be most efficient and all encompassing. Eliminating anything doesn't necessarily mean that it's not going to be reflected in the plan elsewhere.

Dixon clarified that through the prioritization process and the discussion that is occurring with the Parks and Recreation Board, McKenna will review the feedback and synthesize that into the plan's goals. At the October Parks and Recreation Board meeting there will be further discussion on the revised goals for the plan.

Collins stated that she is hearing from young families about how there are not a lot of family restaurants and what we can do to bring more families back to Birmingham.

Burns stated that one of the Parks and Recreation Board primary goals should be to conserve and protect the city's precious park system. Do not give up a single square foot of green space in our park system. Secondly, to see a goal that says the Parks and Recreation Board will support the city and NEXT initiative with regard to a new senior Complex which adjoins St. James Park.

**No Action Needed**

**Trail Improvements Concept Plan**

PM Laird reviewed with the Parks and Recreation Board changes that have been made to the Trail Improvement Concept Plan. PM Laird stated that the plan has been reviewed by various applicable board reviews, including the Multi-Modal Transportation Board, Museum Board and the Martha Baldwin Park Board. PM Laird state that staff sustainability liaisons in addition to each of the city departments have examined this plan as well.

PM Laird stated the changes made to the Draft Concept Plan includes:

**Booth Park Section:**

Entry plaza: The addition of a rain garden in the swale area.

Addition of more sustainability features such as rain barrels, native plantings, utilizing chip stone, Pave Drain® block, and recycled or reclaimed products.

The addition of a Donor Bench and landscape bed. (We have a donor that would like to contribute a custom style bench, could serve as an art piece/destination selfie/photo opportunity).

**Museum Section:**

The addition of a boardwalk in the narrow section north of Willits street. The addition of a sidewalk along the south side of Willits street. An option for concrete pathway along Maple has been identified.

**Linden Section:**

The addition of a pedestrian bridge connection over the Rouge River, north of Maple, east of Baldwin. Widened 8' Sidewalk west of Baldwin, up to the Maple Rd pedestrian crosswalk.

PM Laird stated the Trail Improvements Cost Estimate totals \$2,967,990.82 , broken down into three sections: Booth Park Section: \$648,824.13, Museum Section: \$1,472,627.74, Linden Park Section: \$846,538.95. The previous cost estimate before the changes to the plan was \$2,095,531.62.

The City applied for a pre-development grant for trail improvements in the amount of \$25,000 (the maximum amount) through the Oakland County Parks and Recreation Grant Program, expected announcement early August. If awarded this will help to prepare construction drawings.

The City applied for round two of the MI Sparks Grant Program in the amount of \$350,000 for development of the Booth Park Section of the plan.

Ross Kaplan who previously was on the Parks and Recreation Board for sixteen (16) years and also the co-chair for Booth Park community built came up to the microphone and spoke.

Kaplan is concerned about the location the restroom which is front and center of the park and it will be a feature from not only the street, but also as an entrance to the park and there is a lot of underground and having it hidden with planters will reduce the path from 10ft. to 4ft.

PM Laird stated there is an option noted in the cost estimate to move the restroom into the Booth Park, further south.

Lipp thought the changes to the plan was very well done.

It was moved by Lipp, seconded by Graham, to support the Trail Improvement Concept Plan and recommending that the plan be presented to the City Commission for acceptance.

**Ayes,** Heather Carmona, Susan Collins, Pam Graham  
Sarah Kupczyk, Anne Lipp, John Rusche  
and Steve Sweeney

**Nays,** None  
**Absent,** None

**Crestview Pickleball Courts-Sound Mitigation**

PM Laird stated due to residential complaints associated with Pickleball, the City Manager requested the Department of Public Services review sound mitigation practices and requests the Parks and Recreation Board review potential sound mitigation options provided by staff, and recommend appropriate prioritization and implementation of such avenues.

PM Laird stated that her and Brendan McGaughey, Parks & Forestry Foreman visited Grosse Pointe Shores where "Acoustifence®" is currently in use around one side of the single pickleball court, where they also require the use of "quieter" pickleball paddles and balls. A noise reduction was noticeable outside of the Acoustifence®. Difficulty of enforcement was also noted of the required equipment.

PM Laird stated unofficial decibel readings with a smartphone app were taken outside of the Crestview Park pickleball courts, and the highest achieved decibel level was 75 dB during some singular hits to the ball. Note that noise levels are not consistently at 75 decibels, other studies have shown an average of 70 dB over the course of a pickleball match.

If "Acoustifence®" alone was in place, this should reduce the noise by approximately 10 dB, to 65 dB (which is about as loud as an electric shaver) or 60 dB average over the course of a match (about as loud as a normal conversation). See the attached chart published by Yale University for more examples.

PM Laird stated the potential options are:

**Option #1:** Install "Acoustifence" (1/8" Paneling) Along Southern Fence  
Estimated Cost: \$924 per 6' curtain/panel, 146' total: \$25,000-\$30,000 (with installation)

Pros: Timely, approximate 10-12dB reduction outside of the noise restricted area, green  
Cons: Will restrict airflow and visibility, not aesthetically pleasing, moderate cost

**Option #2:** Require Sound Muffling Paddles

Estimated Cost: \$100-\$149 each

Pros: Timely, low cost

Cons: Still creates high-pitched sound, additional maintenance to restock City supplied paddles (if any), unable to constantly monitor

**Option #3:** Require Sound Restricting Balls \*(ex. ONIX Fuse G2, not foam)

Estimated Cost: \$3/each

Pros: Timely, low cost

Cons: Still creates high-pitched sound, additional maintenance to restock City supplied balls (if any), unable to constantly monitor \*Still plastic balls, foam balls are the least noisy but not recommended for use outdoors

**Option #4:** Install Berm and Landscaping

Estimated Cost: \$7,500-\$15,000

Pros: Green solution, pleasing aesthetics, long-term noise reduction

Cons: Ineffective on its own, not irrigated, additional maintenance for DPS staff

**Option #5:** Completely enclose the pickleball courts with additional 12' fencing and a lockable gate, along with noise reduction paneling, require key FOB for membership/entry

Estimated Cost: \$125,000+ and annual administration costs of selling memberships, etc.

Pros: Highest achievable noise abatement Cons: Expensive, low visibility, permanent electrical and fencing modifications required, courts would need to close during construction, additional maintenance and labor for membership sales required

Sweeney asked do we have to, are we as a board required to do some form of change? It's clear the pickleball courts are overwhelmingly popular for the city, it's popular everywhere. And the requested changes are for 5% of the residents nearby.

Sweeney stated that option #1 with landscaping would be acceptable. Kupczyk suggested option #2 and #3 would be low cost and for option #1 could arborvitaes on the south side or a mural on a fencing.

Graham suggested that option #1 makes sense and installing it on the south side and berms and landscaping should be investigated for future installations.

DPS Director Zielinski stated that complaints have been coming in on hours, noise, drivers turning around in driveways.

Kaplan stated that option #4 could be used as a test.

Nolan Thomas stated he plays at Crestview Pickleball courts. He stated it's a constant noise no different than a train going by. Thomas stated putting the entrance on the opposite side and rack holder might be a better location. Thomas stated requiring different paddles will not work. The safety of the children, cars and location of the entrance would be cheaper than what the options that were given.

It was moved by Sweeney, seconded by Graham that the City of Birmingham will continue to monitor the noise levels and to evaluate options for the future. But at this time the Parks and Recreation Board will not be moving forward with any of the recommendations.

**Ayes,**

Heather Carmona, Susan Collins, Pam Graham  
Sarah Kupczyk, John Rusche and  
Steve Sweeney

**Nays,  
Absent,**

Anne Lipp  
None

DPS Director Zielinski stated the complaints regarding pickleball will be provided at the September Parks and Recreation Board meeting.

~~DPS Director Zielinski stated that the Parks and Recreation Board information will be provided to the city manager's office.~~

**MISCELLANEOUS COMMUNICATIONS:**

No miscellaneous communications

**REPORTS FROM STAFF:**

No reports from staff

**ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING:**

No items for next meeting

Carmona stated the next regular meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 12, 2023 at 6:30 pm, at 851 South Eton.

Chair Carmona adjourned the meeting at 8:42 pm

Connie J. Folk, Recreation Coordinator