

BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

January 16, 2020

CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the Cincinnati Board of Park Commissioners was held on this day at 950 Eden Park Drive. Commissioners present: President Brad Lindner, Vice President Jim Goetz, Commissioner Susan Castellini, Commissioner Kevin Flynn, and Commissioner Linda Lee Thomas. President Lindner called the meeting to order at 9:01 A.M.

Public Comments

President Lindner expressed interest in adding an agenda item regarding Stanbery Park.

There were two public comments:

Tom Brinkman presented updates regarding Stanbery Park, the Kyle Plush Pavilion, and potential available State funding.

Commissioner Flynn expressed concern regarding equitable geographic distribution of funds as well as regarding the lowest bid for this project coming in much higher than the estimate. Mr. Flynn expressed opposition for covering soft costs with Commissioners Fund dollars. Mr. Flynn expressed further concern regarding the late notice of this funding opportunity.

Vice President Goetz thanked Mr. Brinkman for his work and commented on the importance of building relationships with local representatives. He expressed concern regarding high project bids and the need for the Commissioners to be provided sufficient notice of project plans and community issues so they may be part of the solution.

Mr. Brinkman clarified the reasoning for the tight timeline and explained his efforts to identify additional state funding were done of his own volition after learning of the funding gap.

Vice President Goetz motioned to add an agenda item under New Business for discussion of funding for the Kyle Plush Pavilion at Stanbery Park. Commissioner Flynn seconded. Motion passed by vote.

Julie Rimer gave comments regarding plans for the Ault Park gardens.

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Flynn motioned for approval of the December 6, 2019 Special Meeting minutes. Commissioner Castellini seconded. Motion passed by vote.

Commissioner Flynn motioned for approval of the December 19, 2019 Regular Meeting minutes. Commissioner Castellini seconded. Motion passed by vote.

HATS OFF LUNCHEON 2020 UPDATE

Jennifer Spieser presented a 2019 Parks Foundation update, noting the impacts of successes in 24 neighborhood parks. She introduced 2020 Hats Off Luncheon Co-chairs, Lindsay Wilhelm and Pat Hinkley.

Ms. Wilhelm and Ms. Hinkley presented an update on the fundraising, planning progress, and theme of the 2020 Hats Off Luncheon event, which celebrates the diverse cultures and backgrounds of those who use the parks. They provided details on the Pop-up Boutique and After Party event and asked for the Commissioners advocacy in fundraising for the event.

Ms. Hinkley announced the Phyllis Smale Award will be presented posthumously to Don and Marian Spencer, who were instrumental to civil rights in Cincinnati.

Commissioner Thomas expressed her gratitude and excitement for the theme.

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

Larry Parker presented the core team of volunteers who have contributed greatly to invasives removal at Burnet Woods: Steve Slack, Lisa Haglund, Jim Mason, and Dave Gressley. He highlighted the professional experience and skills they bring to the program and the described the work they have done to remove invasives and create a plan for continued maintenance and clearing.

Vice President Goetz and President Lindner expressed their appreciation to the team.

NEW BUSINESS

Kyle Plush Pavilion Bids at Stanbery Park

Director Kish provided background on the construction bids and new opportunity for additional State grant dollars for the funding gap for the Kyle Plush Pavilion. Steve Schuckman discussed bids coming in over budget for the project and explained why value engineering would not accomplish significant savings.

Mr. Schuckman clarified soft costs have not been factored into the project cost.

Director Kish presented the staff recommendation to contribute \$117,000 of Commissioners Fund dollars to the funding gap and execute the contract for the lowest best bid, which could potentially be reimbursed if any additional State dollars are appropriated to the project.

Commissioner Flynn expressed concern regarding bids coming in notably higher than estimated project cost. Elements of the estimated total project cost and potential reasons for high bids were discussed.

Ms. Kish noted the last-minute notification to the Board on this item. She explained although the funding gap was noted in a report to the Board, a formal recommendation was not intended until staff had considered other funding and cost-reducing options. She furthered, the very recent notice of potential additional State funding influenced the decision to present the current recommendation at the present meeting.

Vice President Goetz expressed concern regarding sufficient and timely notice to the Board on issues and project developments. He requested improved communication and consistency with the representation of project costs and estimates.

President Lindner asked about any delays if the Board did not take action at the meeting. Mr. Schuckman described potential project delays as well as funding and cost concerns. There was further discussion regarding the reality of possible cost increase if the project is delayed or rebid.

Commissioner Thomas expressed concerns and reiterated the need to address improved communication and processes for providing notice to the Board.

Vice President Goetz expressed his concern that the Board feels inclined to react and commit Park Board dollars with short notice, despite strong desire to see this project completed. Mr. Goetz asked which fund within the Commissioner's Fund would be used. Craig Sherman clarified it would be the Meyer Fund. There was further discussion regarding possible remedies for avoiding similar future situations, as well as potential to and reasoning for postponing Board action.

Commissioner Flynn motioned to direct staff to approach the City Manager's Office and Innovation Lab to address concerns regarding bids coming in over budget, City-wide. President Lindner seconded the motion. The motion passed by vote.

Vice President Goetz motioned to accept the bid for Schweitzer Construction for the Kyle Plush Pavilion and commit \$117,000 from the Commissioner's Fund for the funding gap, with the understanding that if additional funds are raised by third parties for the project, the Commissioner's Fund is reimbursed. Commissioner Thomas seconded. The motion passed by vote.

Commissioner Thomas clarified approaching the Innovation Lab does not address all expressed concerns and the Board is committed to addressing the expressed communication issues between Board and staff.

There was further discussion regarding details of the bid process. Commissioner Castellini expressed the desire to have contracted architects present at Board meetings.

Appointment of Parks Director

President Lindner presented the three main components of Parks Director position offer. He announced the intent to start Ms. Kish at an annual salary of \$155,000. He also suggested a four-week vacation package and ten sick days. Vice President Goetz clarified the vacation and sick time would be vested, not annual. Commissioner Flynn asked if this amount was comparable to other Department Heads and Mr. Lindner confirmed it was. Mr. Flynn asked Christine Zimmer, City Law, if the Director would sign a contract, and she clarified Ms. Kish would be at-will. Mr. Goetz furthered, an offer letter would be presented and signed, but it is at-will. Commissioner Castellini asked for clarification on the accrual of vacation and sick time. Ms. Zimmer explained City policy. Commissioner Thomas asked for clarification on the vested vacation and sick time,

and Mr. Goetz explained the offered time is provided up front in addition to the City's vacation and sick time. City policy for paid time off was further discussed.

Vice President Goetz motioned to offer Kara Kish the permanent position of Director of Parks and compensation package as described effective January 16, 2020. Commissioner Castellini seconded. The motion passed by vote.

Grant Application Requests

Craig Sherman presented the request to apply for Foundation grants, totaling \$111,951 to fund Krohn programs and events, including the Kids Connection Program, the Butterfly Show, and reimbursement of Fund 332 for the Holiday Show.

Commissioner Flynn motioned to approve the staff recommendation. Commissioner Castellini seconded. The motion passed by vote.

Larry Parker presented background on restoration work needed on the grounds of Walnut Woods High School and the opportunity to partner with Groundwork Ohio River Valley (GORV) on a grant for work Parks and GORV are performing in the same area. The potential award amount, how funding would be distributed among partners, and details of the project work were discussed.

Commissioner Castellini motioned to approve staff engage with Groundwork Ohio River Valley on the National Fish and Wildlife Five Star Urban Waters Restoration Grant. Commissioner Thomas seconded. Motion passed by vote.

Commissioner Flynn asked about discussing internal processes for grant applications. Director Kish confirmed she intends to engage in this discussion with staff, the Board, and the Foundation regarding identifying, pursuing, and administrating grants. Commissioner Flynn noted the need for a formal process.

Jennifer Spieser spoke to the current role the Foundation plays in the grant application process.

Re-Appointment of the Urban Forestry Advisory Board Members

Crystal Courtney presented the staff recommendation to recommend reappointment of six members of the Urban Forestry Advisory Board, whose terms are expiring, to the City Manager.

Commissioner Flynn motioned to approve the staff recommendation as presented. Commissioner Castellini seconded. The motion passed by vote.

State of the Urban Forest

Crystal Courtney presented the State of the Urban Forest, which included definition of the urban forest, the structure of Parks' Natural Resource Management Section, successes and challenges of 2019, goals for 2020, and Urban Forestry assessment for 2021.

Commissioner Castellini asked for clarification on soil cells for street trees, and Ms. Courtney described their design and use. There was further discussion regarding the impact of street trees on sidewalks. Commissioner Flynn commended Ms. Courtney's efforts to combat this issue.

Details of the Urban Forestry Assessment Budget were discussed, and Commissioner Flynn raised concern regarding staff being fully funded from this budget when they have duties outside of the street tree program. Craig Sherman mentioned intent to identify staff time devoted to duties outside of Urban Forestry and to reimburse Urban Forestry dollars. Commissioner Flynn requested staff ensure staff time is being paid for out of the proper funds and Parks is complying with State law. Ms. Kish ensured him compliance is a priority. Mr. Flynn also suggested seeking TIF dollars for the Street Tree Program.

Solutions for sidewalk improvement were discussed.

Mr. Lindner asked if trees were being planted at a rate that would combat the loss of trees due to disease. Ms. Courtney confirmed every tree that is removed is replaced, however, often with smaller, younger trees, so the canopy will change. Ideas for engaging the community in tree plantings were discussed.

OLD BUSINESS

Ault Park Rose Garden

Larry Parker presented an update on plans for the gardens at Ault Park. He explained staff's response as questions and concerns arose from the community regarding proposed work on the perennial/pollinator garden. He presented the plan which resulted from meetings with staff, concerned community members, and the Foundation representing the donor. He described the history of the gardens and planned enhancements to the existing perennial/pollinator beds and new rose plantings in beds on the east and west ends of the garden. Mrs. Spieser confirmed the donor is happy with the plan. Mr. Parker presented the staff recommendation to approve the plan as proposed.

Community members in the audience expressed gratitude for being involved in the process and staff's willingness to consider community concerns.

Vice President Goetz motioned to approve the staff recommendation. Commissioner Castellini seconded. The motion passed by vote.

President Lindner commended the success of this planning process.

Urban Wilderness Center Discussion

Director Kish presented a draft overview of the Urban Wilderness Center Project components and process and asked for a consensus and directive from the Board on how staff should proceed.

Vice President Goetz provided background on the development of the project and current discussions with stakeholders and Camping & Education Foundation.

There was discussion regarding expectations for the partnership, projected costs, opportunities for fundraising, and distribution of duties. President Lindner expressed the importance of defining each organization's responsibilities and Mr. Goetz confirmed the intent is to present a clearer vision to the Board in March. There was further discussion regarding the Director's time commitment on the project and work to take place before the March presentation.

DIRECTOR'S REPORTS/COMMENTS

Director Kish announced staff will be attending the Ohio Parks and Recreation Association conference in February and will be presenting as well as accepting an award.

Ms. Kish reported a 33% increase in revenue after digitizing Burnet Woods parking pass purchases.

She announced the Bloom & Grow spring show at Krohn, which runs until March 8. She mentioned the updated point of sale system being installed at Krohn, which will increase efficiency.

Ms. Kish announced the registration for Explore Nature! Summer Camps will open January 25.

President Lindner asked if attendance at Krohn was still trending upward. Mr. Sherman clarified revenue increased, but attendance slightly decreased. He mentioned this trend was anticipated, but high attendance is expected for the 25th anniversary Butterfly Show. Other opportunities for increased revenue at Krohn were discussed.

Director Kish thanked the Board and expressed excitement for continuing to work to enhance the Parks system.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

President Lindner motioned to enter into Executive Session pursuant to Ohio Revised Code Section 121.22(G) to consider the employment of public employees. The motion passed by roll call vote.

COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS

There were no additional Commissioner's Comments.

ADJOURNMENT

President Lindner announced return to open meeting.

Vice President Goetz motioned to adjourn. President Lindner seconded. Meeting adjourned at 12:25 P.M.

ATTEST:



PRESIDENT



DIRECTOR