

Kent Park and Recreation Commission
April 1, 2019 Parks Master Plan Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

Present: Bruce Adams, Blythe Everett, John Grant, Abigail Smith Hanby, Fran Goodsell

Public & Invited Guests: None

The subcommittee meeting was called to order at 6:30pm.

Ms. Smith Hanby reviewed the origins of the subcommittee for the benefit of Mr. Adams and Ms. Goodsell.

Mr. Adams praised Mr. Grant's work in the parks but mentioned it has been very challenging over many years to get people to use the parks. Mr. Adams was the chair of the Park and Recreation Commission 20 years ago when the existing Emery Park pool was renovated. Emery Park has long been tied to the camp that is held there in the summertime. Mr. Adams feels that the subcommittee should consider adding a chlorinated pool in the Kent Commons Park and possibly moving the camp there. The Kent Commons park offers better/safer access, parking, additional facilities (tennis courts and pavilion), a more centralized location, better sun, and a chlorinated pool would offer consistently better water quality than the Emery Park pool. Also, Park and Rec spends \$25K a year for lifeguards who have little to do throughout most of the summer. Mr. Adams feels that getting buy-in from the town on a second renovation of the Emery Park pool will be a tough sell.

Mr. Adams confirmed that there is \$200K has been allotted in the town's capital plan over the next few years for replacement of the playgrounds at both parks. We may be able to move some of these funds forward. The question was raised about how much money it would cost to remove the playground(s) and/or the Emery Park pool if that is the way we decide to go.

Ms. Smith Hanby stipulated that we should look at a 3-month planning period for this study. We would need to hire a landscape architect or firm with master planning experience. Ideally, this might be someone who may have had experience at a large firm but who will not charge a large fee. We will have to advertise for this opportunity via paid ads in various local/regional papers and perhaps some magazines – ideas can be submitted to Ms. Hanby Smith. Print ads would point candidates to our website where more information would be available. Ms. Hanby Smith said she will check with Ms. Ferris about our advertising budget and ask that this discussion be part of the agenda at the next Commission meeting.

The planner would help to come up with various scenarios about how to treat or change the existing parks – would we keep the pool, replace it with a water feature, return Emery Park to nature and create more trails. etc. The planner would have the vision to either come up with their own ideas or to flesh out ones we may suggest. He/she would then produce illustrated plans for both parks showing the different ways the parks could be used over the course of a calendar year, provide cost estimates, and assist the Park and Recreation Commission with a roll-out of the plan to the town.

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Ms. Goodsell asked whether the Emery Park land had been donated to the town and wondered if there were any stipulations about its specific use. Mr. Adams said he believed the land had been donated for the specific purpose of being used as a park for recreational purposes. It cannot be sold to a developer.

Ms. Smith Hanby said that our subcommittee needs to identify strategic objectives for the project – are we trying to build community? Change perception of the town or the park space? Draw in new groups to use the parks? These need to be included in our RFP/RFQ.

Subcommittee members agreed that we would like to be able to tell the master planner the process we want them to follow and the deliverables we are seeking, rather than them telling us. We want to develop and offer some general scenarios without being too prescriptive: here is our situation, here is our space, what do you think? The planner needs to be aware of our challenges, including history of park use and the town's changing demographics, so that they can come at the project with fresh eyes and make informed decisions while thinking outside the box. One role of the subcommittee is to gather all information pertinent to the master planning study and to have it in one place. More work needs to be done to determine the role of this subcommittee. We believe it is to oversee the master planning process by proposing a scope of work; seeking, contacting and interviewing candidates and making recommendations to the Park and Recreation Commission; and to facilitate discussion and information dissemination between the town committees and town residents.

The next meeting of the Parks Master Plan Subcommittee is April 15, 2019 at 6:30pm. Agenda will include reviewing and drafting language for the scope of the subcommittee's work, charge and role; discussing advertising/budget; outlining ideas for scenarios to explore.

Mr. Grant made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:45pm.

Blythe Everett
Subcommittee Secretary