

VERMILION PARKS & RECREATION BOARD
Minutes of September 15, 2020 - 6:00pm | Zoom Meeting

Roll Call: T. Parker (Chairman), W. Warden, L. Elden, K. Repola. Not Present: J. Keck, B. Scholtz, D. Brudney

Also, Present: C. Kuhns, RECREATION DIRECTOR; Mark Weisenberger, PARKS SUPERVISOR; B. Holmes, COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE

Guests: Mayor Forthofer

Terry Parker, Chairman called the September 15, 2020 meeting to order.

B. Warden MOVED; L. Elden seconded to approve the meeting minutes of August 18, 2020. Roll Call Vote 4 YEAS.
MOTION CARRIED.

CORRESPONDENCE:

Chairman Parker acknowledged the board received three pieces of correspondence regarding a potential dog park.

The letters are as follows:

August 20, 2020

Vermilion Parks Department

Dear Members,

I would like to express my concern for the placement of a dog park within the boundaries of one of our parks. I would not like to see a dog park placed in any of our parks. I think the lakefront parks are our premier parks and should not be dedicated, in any portion, for the use of a dog park. Both Sherod and Showse should be reserved for people and event use. If a fenced area were provided for the dog park, it would eliminate parking and park area for public use. Our smaller pocket parks are well attended, enjoyed and necessary for families. Dogs are permitted on a leash in all parks.

Secondly, I would like to state that I believe with the help and promotional name of Dick Goddard/Fox 8 and their media reach, donations will pour in (as evidenced by the purchase of our police dog) and the group desiring a park can purchase a piece of land dedicated for a dog park.

I feel the parks land was purchased for public use, especially for the residents of the City.

Thank you for your consideration,
Anne Maiden

Dear Mr. Parker and Mr. Weisenberger:

Sorry for the late response but we just received your letter today. We live at [3279 Edgewater Dr.](#) just east of the proposed dog park at Showse park. (Our house is the one with the partial white roof shown on your map to the east of the park). Our house is less than 300 feet from the proposed dog park. We own and expect to put a home on our lot just adjacent to the east Showse parking lot

which would be about 100 feet from the proposed dog park. (We are presently working on design plans). Our major concern is that the prevailing winds from the west to east would bring significant odor directly into our home and the homes directly surrounding ours. We are also concerned with the noise from the dogs so close to our home. Even now we sometimes get odor from the trash or dog poop that has not been picked up by owners at the park.

Please take this into consideration when choosing the dog park location. Sherrod Park seems to have more wide-open space for such a park. It is not as close to a residential area.

How can we attend the Parks meeting this Tuesday? Please call or email to respond.

Yours truly,
Thomas and Beth Belter

Good day Terry,

I received your letter late and this is the first time I've been able to respond.

Sherod park portion does not come close to a neighborhood and Showse park ends up being no more than 50 yards away from Sunnyside Beach neighborhood.

If the dog park is put at Showse park, the neighborhood will always have the smell of dog feces in the air since the participants will not clean up after their dogs and the city won't be cleaning the area. The city has yet to lay out the wood chips for the walking trail at Showse park.

Will there be enforcement of the closed at dusk or will the city put up more lights to shine in neighborhood windows? Sherod doesn't have this issue because there are no neighborhoods in the immediate vicinity.

The Dick Goddard Dog Park would be better suited in a more centralized area such as West Breeze Park, Harborview Park, or even the old "Fulper" site as so people from out of town would be able to partake in the usage of a centralized location.

Thank you,

Robert D. Cantrell
3296 Elyria Drive
Vermillion, OH 44089

OPEN TO THE AUDIENCE:

Homer Taft of 3972 Edgewater Drive said the board changed their rules awhile back and having launched the business of the Parks Board, he wanted to suggest that the board consider changing the rules back because most of the actions of the Parks Board aren't publicized in advance and they don't appear on the agenda because of the nature of how things come up. He said subjects come up during the meeting that people might have input on. He said the Parks Board has always been good about considering folks opinions, but as an observation they might want to go back and model most of the other Boards and Commissions.

With regards to the Dog Park, he supports the idea. He said when one of his dogs was young, he loved to chase balls and he does feel that people need those kinds of opportunities. Putting a dog park in Showse Park when you've required three acres and it's an 8-acre park in total would be a poor use of the city's lakefront. He really thinks the board needs to polish the lakefront and make lake and beach access one of its key missions because they must build the economy on

what they have – and that’s water first and foremost. He stated he would make some section of some beach park available for those residents to have an area that is dog friendly as they do in many tourist’s communities. Lots of dogs are water dogs and they like to get to the water, so there could be some section that could be a consideration. He said an area of three or more acres somewhere that was open for dog use that was not close to the neighbors that is set apart would be a good idea. He said Sherod Park has 24 acres and maybe an area could be identified that would not be troublesome to folks. If not, there are other areas where land could be acquired relatively cheaply. He said West Breeze has been mentioned, but it’s close to neighbors. However, there is land to the west of West Breeze. Perhaps, maybe people would donate enough to buy land. He recalled at a Council meeting that the Lions Club was maybe interested in getting rid of their park/land at the east end of town. He said there are opportunities available that would great for the dogs and for all folks in Vermilion.

T. Parker said as far as the agenda, anything they know about a week ahead of time goes on the agenda. Things tend to come in at the last minute or come up during the meeting, but they will try to be sensitive to that.

Community Use Group Permits:

T. Parker said that Pam Reese contacted him when they applied for the Light Up Vermilion event as she did not specifically mention East Exchange Park - only Exchange Park, so she was concerned it may be a problem. However, he felt the board could acknowledge this administratively to include East Exchange Park since they already approved the permit. The board favorably agreed to include East Exchange Park.

RECREATION DIRECTOR’S REPORT:

C. Kuhns reported they started football practice, and everything is going smoothly. T. Parker asked if some of the football leagues will be played in the spring. C. Kuhns said this was correct as they have two leagues that will now play in the spring. The 6th grade team found a league they can play with in the fall. He said the first game is on track to start at the end of September. T. Parker asked how many kids will be playing and C. Kuhns said 23.

PARK’S SUPERVISOR REPORT:

M. Weisenberger said they interviewed a couple BGSU students for the internship and the committee picked Kaitlyn Hamlin who is originally from Berlin Heights. She is in her last set of classes and will be completing her Master’s in Public Administration. She seemed to have the most knowledge and networking around Bowling Green that would be the most helpful. The finance department has her paperwork to get the payroll process moving.

He addressed a Parks & Recreation Needs Assessment Master Plan that was completed in 1998 and 1999 and the goal is to take this document with the help of the intern to update the plan. Along with this, the intern’s initial project is to create and build a community survey. He said D. Brudney had mentioned to him that if anyone has questions, topics, programs, and areas they want the intern to build into the survey, to let him know. He said everyone could email those to Dennis.

He said the person helping them with the Sherod Park Master Plan has an initial draft completed and he would like some feedback on this. He will email it to the board members.

Mayor Forthofer said there have been some complaints about activities around the old Wakefield Mansion, which is the former Inland Seas Museum. He said in its current state of inactivity, people become active and there is more than one neighbor complaining about this. Therefore, he spoke with the police department and between dawn and dusk they

have created an hourly patrol, which has resulted in a few immediate arrests and it has really subdued the activities. However, there is still traffic coming in and out and they have discussed putting poles in the ground on Huron Street at the entrance to the upper parking lot to the museum and putting a chain across there at dusk when the park is officially closed. He said the police department could open and close the park, but there is a wrinkle as the wait staff at Chez Francois parks their cars there so they don't take up the easy parking spaces. In talking with Matt Mars at Chez he said he would be willing to do the closing of the gate after his staff leaves. He feels the neighbors have a persistent complaint that is worthy of addressing, and the police department may not be able to be there all the time, so the simple solution would be to put up some sort of gate and negotiate with Mr. Mars what to do about his staff's cars. T. Parker said he looked up in their policy from 2013 – Park Hours, the closing time for all public beaches and parks in the city is established at 11 p.m. with the exception of Nokomis Beach, West Breeze Park, and Hanover Square Park which close at dusk. He said they could alter the policy if they wanted to say the parking is off limits after an earlier hour. Mayor Forthofer said the restaurant staff leaves anywhere from midnight to 1 a.m. T. Parker said this may not help the neighbors a whole lot. Mayor Forthofer said there is no way they can close Main Street beach as the road is open, but the upper parking lot does seem to be a separate matter as part of an inactive piece of city property. T. Parker asked if he was suggesting they establish different closing hours for just this parking lot. Mayor Forthofer said his suggestion would be to close it at dusk. B. Warden asked what the point is of keeping it open. K. Repola agreed. B. Holmes said he knows the activity that goes on there and suggested they just close off the parking lot. He knows the staff relies on this parking, but it's not the city's responsibility to hold parking for Matt's employees. He loves Chez, but if it's an issue and it's causing problems for the residents, then close it off completely. Mayor Forthofer said that after the summer season there is no good reason for anyone to need this parking space. B. Warden said there is no reason for allowing it to remain open during the day. K. Repola asked if the beach goers use the parking lot. Mayor Forthofer said during the summer when there is overflow it's used. B. Warden said chains and poles probably wouldn't really do it if someone is interested in getting back there after hours as they would probably ride across the grass, but he thinks with cooperation from the sandstone company they could probably provide some large chunks of sandstone that could be strategically placed, which wouldn't be an eyesore but would prevent a car from going through the grass. He said it would need to be maintained with weed whacking, but they could be installed which would completely deter somebody from getting on that section of the property without any expense. He thought the sandstone company may donate some material from their scrapyard. Mayor Forthofer said they could try things in stages by first starting with a chain. B. Holmes said until they decide what is going to happen with this property, they need to control what is coming in and out of there, especially now that the city owns this building. They need to limit the access to this building.

B. Warden MOVED, L. Elden seconded to immediately close the upper parking lot at the mansion due to an ongoing pattern of safety issues and neighborhood disturbance. The manner in how it will be closed will be determined by the Service Director/Parks Supervisor. Discussion: H. Taft said the city does not have an obligation to provide private entities with parking, but it is a great economy activity that brings tax money into the city. With respect to the problems they are having there, is it from dusk or only late at night. Mayor Forthofer said there are only about four cars from Chez that are parking there. H. Taft asked when the bad behavior starts. Mayor Forthofer said it's frequent when school is out and more frequent at night. L. Elden asked if it was feasible to give Matt access to park his four/five employees at 4:00 p.m. and then put the chain up with the access to get themselves out at the end of their shift and lock it back up. Mayor Forthofer said this was Matt's suggestion in giving him the ability to let his people in and out. He doesn't want them taking up space that can be used for his patrons. B. Warden said they would only be talking about employee parking as opposed to patron parking. T. Parker asked if this is doable – do the employees all arrive and leave at the same time. Mayor Forthofer was uncertain. C. Kuhns suggested they possibly park in the Library. M. Weisenberger asked if it would make sense to chain the parking lot off at midnight when the employees are done to see if it takes care of the problem. H. Taft said if they put posts up a chain is not always observable, which could lead to problems or accidents for even people on bicycles. He suggested they consider two posts that have a sleeve on the outside that have a pipe type bar that would swing open and shut. B. Warden said they had these at Showse, but they eventually

took them out because somebody must maintain them. To fabricate something like this for the site may cost around \$2,000. L. Elden suggested a nylon line that's bright yellow. B. Holmes suggested adding a reflector to the chain, so people see it. T. Parker said the activity is happening around the back. Mayor Forthofer said there is people speeding in and out. T. Parker suggested putting up a sign that says, "Area Closed". Mayor Forthofer said he will talk to Mr. Mars about ways to accommodate his employees because as a prominent business they want to help him, so if there is a solution for him he would like to work it out, but not at the expense of the neighbors. T. Parker asked if the parking is an issue in the wintertime, because his staff could park further down on Main Street. Mayor Forthofer said he would ask Matt Mars. K. Repola said with the motion they are not closing the door on possibly helping Chez Francois and their staff. T. Parker agreed this discussion would be between the administration and the restaurant. B. Holmes wanted the public to be aware the reason they are closing this parking lot is due to bad behavior and a safety issue, which needs to be curtailed. T. Parker said it is due to an ongoing pattern of safety issues and neighborhood disturbance.

Budget/Finance Subcommittee Report: No report.

Community Relations/Publicity: No report.

Erosion:

B. Warden said that he along with Marc and Tony met with Justin Miller at Showse Park today to go over the proposal and to see if it was applicable for the condition that exists today. There was some discussion that it is worse than it was and how are they going to adapt this for access for the public to get out to the pier. He is talking about combining the previous discussion they had several years ago where he was going to repair the access point and combine it with the reinforcement of the area that was washed out behind the revetment, and try to keep it within the budgets for the two projects the board previously approved. He said J. Miller will work on it and will take it into consideration. He said in his opinion the projects could be done within the same amount of money they have allotted. He said J. Miller will compare some cost figures, but he is open to this. He said they have never been charged for the blocks that are sitting there but they would be used to help form up an access point, so the people could transition onto the pier without having to climb over rocks. He said this is pending depending on J. Miller's schedule of when he can get to the project. M. Weisenberger said it may be November until he can get to it. Therefore, they can get some updated numbers to the board for the October meeting. T. Parker said a couple years back they encumbered \$21,000 for the initial repair which generated those blocks that have been sitting there. He said for the benefit of the newest members of the board, he wanted to advise them that they encumbered \$36,000 for the repair they were going to do this year, so this money has been set aside.

Main Street Beach Revitalization Project: No report.

Sherod Playground: No report.

Recreation and School Relations: No report.

Vermilion Community Pool:

Marc Weisenberger said they spoke with various pool companies/consultants to get opinions and ideas on the cost and what it might take to renovate the pool. He provided a packet of information to the board members as they move forward in making decisions on which direction they want to go on the pool. They are trying to do their homework and get as much information as possible so they can make a good educated decision on where they want to go with the pool. He also provided a summary of his notes. He also received some ideas and concept drawings on things they could

potentially do with the pool. He said another option could be splash pads, so he provided information to the board from a seminar he attended.

Financial Reports:

T. Parker said the most recent financial reports are from July and they are financially stable in both funds.

New Business:

Dog Park – Marilou Suszko said they had a meeting where they talked about the possibilities of locations. She said the next step as far as the Advisory Board is concerned is the site. T. Parker said he met with Sandy Coe, Marilou Suszko, and Marc Weisenberger to look at some open areas that were either in parks or on old school property, and the only two of the three they visited that seemed feasible as far as what they were hoping for was either Sherod Park or Showse Park. They came up with a courtesy letter to the immediate neighbors of both sites and Marilou created an aerial overview of each site and the only response they received is the three letters that were read into the record. M. Suszko said all the letters had valid concerns and questions, which are also concerns of the Advisory Board. They want this to be successful in Vermilion and for an enhancement for the neighborhood, but not a problem for the neighborhood. She said they did have a meeting in September and there were a dozen people in attendance. She said the board is made up of her along with Sandy Coe, Marc Weisenberger, Terry Parker, Kristy Thomas (Owner of K-9 Sports), Dr. Wolfe from Harbor Town Animal Clinic, Joanne Coggos and Amy Bowman-Moore of the Erie County Metro Parks who were involved in creating the Erie County Metro Park facility, Monica Cook who is a resident who has three dogs and takes them to small dog parks, Shawn Kipp who is representing Pat O'Brien and Mr. O'Brien is connected to a lot of dog causes and training, Staicey Scholtz (K-9 Companions) who is familiar with dog behavior and training, Dana Corogin, landscaping/plant expert, Greg Wiley of Friendship APL, and Missy Price who is with Safe Harbor Animal Rescue. The goal was to help develop a vision for what this park will look like that will be in honor of Dick Goddard (local celebrity and dedicated animal rights activist). She said they worked on the basics for what they need at a Dog Park (water, electricity, shelter, shade, fencing, double-gated entry). They looked at Sherod and Showse and felt fortunate to have two good sites that are possibilities. The area they need for a dog park would not exceed any more than three acres which would accommodate both small and large dogs. She said Sherod Park is a little bigger and it has the area to accommodate three acres. She said they have somebody on board that will help them do a rendering based on all of the basics to jumpstart fundraising because this is in honor of Mr. Goddard and Woollybear Sunday seems like the perfect time to kick off fundraising opportunities. They are waiting on a determination on what site they can use, so they can move the architect forward in rendering.

B. Holmes asked why West Breeze was not looked at. M. Weisenberger said there are four or five homes that back up to this park and they are closer than what is at Showse. T. Parker said the park is only about three acres, so it would consume most of the land. B. Holmes said Lions Club is looking for a new home and they own about eight acres, and he did not know if they were willing to sell or donate their property. The property is behind the Lucy Idol on Nicholson. He said there is no residential and understands it is not a good road. He said there is a building, electric, water, bathrooms, parking, a huge field, and no houses. He said they would need to approach the Lions Club to see if they were interested in donating or selling. M. Suszko said typically dog parks are part of public parks in communities. She said private property would become a business and she does not know how they can sustain it with staffing, record keeping, etc. She felt this area would be too hidden to become a dog park. What she likes about Showse Park is that they would add an enhancement to this neighborhood and there is plenty of parking there. It's a densely populated

neighborhood and people would be able to walk to the park, so it becomes a destination for a neighborhood that is under served.

H. Taft said he supports the idea of a dog park and lives in VOL but is adamantly opposed to it being at Showse. He said it is a completely inappropriate use for Showse Park. There is land that is available, such as the metro parks, and there are other options rather than two lakefront parks. M. Suszko asked him if his concerns are specifically related to lakefront location. H. Taft said yes. B. Warden said a good fraction of Showse Park is also taken up with a fenced in ballpark and the basketball and tennis courts, plus you cannot buy anymore lakefront property. He said there has been concerns addressed from the neighbors as well. M. Suszko agrees and feels it is important to address these concerns, however, they are talking about two neighbors right now as opposed to what is happening within the entire neighborhood. Are they hearing anything from anyone else? B. Warden said he lives in the neighborhood and he is not crazy about it. C. Kuhns said he has coached baseball there for three or four years and if there is two games going on at the same time there is no parking – people are parking over in front of the lake, so if they add another attraction there may be a problem in the summertime. M. Suszko asked what the overall feeling is of the Parks board as she is feeling that Showse is not an ideal location. B. Warden said it would be ideal if it wasn't for the lakefront and location.

M. Suszko asked how they felt about Sherod Park. T. Parker said the area in Sherod Park could be inside of the walking trails. He said the smaller dog park could be in an area almost by itself as there is currently two exercise pieces that could be moved, and then the larger dog park could be towards the eastern end. It is not near the lakefront part of the park and there is no longer a ballfield there. L. Elden thought it was an underutilized section of the park. C. Kuhns said that area isn't by residents and it would be a good location. M. Suszko said it's not right where the ballfield is, and she agrees it shouldn't be right on the lake. Dog parks are not for dogs – they're for people who bring their dogs and want to come together as they have common interest – yes, they do exercise their dogs, but every dog comes with a person. She does not see that use of lakefront property and she personally would not want that area used. She said the area is further of the road and it is not utilized for anything except for a walking path. She said there is a wooded area there too and if this is something they would like to consider, then she would like to ask those neighbors one more time before they would even move forward with this as a consideration. K. Repola asked if letters were already sent to the residents in this area. T. Parker said they sent letters to the properties across the street and the property immediately to the east. K. Repola asked if they sent letters to the people in the trailer park. T. Parker said no because it's removed topographically as they are in the township.

L. Elden said she is a dog lover but has never been to a dog park. Somebody who has visited them in other cities had mentioned that they turn into toxic waste sites because people do not pick up after their dogs. Therefore, did the folks at Erie County or anyone else on the board have input on how they police this. M. Suszko said the general comment that Amy made is that dog people truly are self-policing and they do pick up after themselves and they remind others to do the same. Does this mean something doesn't get missed – of course not, but not anymore than what you're seeing at either park. It better the chance of it always being cleaned up if you have enough waste cans there and that they are emptied on a weekly or a more frequent basis. M. Weisenberger said the trash at the parks get picked up two or three times per week during certain times of the year. M. Suszko said it would be on that schedule and they would have bags available too. She said part of the fundraising it to make sure there is a surplus of funds that help provide for these amenities. L. Elden said with the water feature with the stream is there a runoff consideration with dog waste going into the creek and then into the lake as this is a known problem in ordinary circumstances. M. Weisenberger said a filter strip (taller natural grasses) would help catch this before it would get to the stream. This is something they would look at if they are looking at this location.

K. Repola said there is a master plan drawn up for this park, so how does this fit in with this plan. Was there another idea to use this area? M. Weisenberger said with the plan they could work around the dog park with the trails. There was talk about possibly doing a disc type nine-hole golf course in this area. He said they also discussed a nice three-season type building that offers a beautiful view of the lake. They want to make sure that everything would work well together. He asked if it would be possible to look at some of the other sites before they make a final determination. M. Suszko said absolutely and said the idea of the dog park is for the people, not just for dogs. It helps create activity in parks, so it gives them another opportunity for people to use the parks.

T. Parker sensed from the board that Showse Park is off the table for a potential site. L. Elden and K. Repola agreed with this. T. Parker said the Advisory Board will look at some other potential sites along with Sherod as it could still be a possibility. M. Suszko asked if there were any suggestions for other locations. M. Weisenberger said there is room behind the tree line at West Breeze as there is farmland, but it is not city property. K. Repola said maybe they should contact the Lions Club to see if the land could be donated.

ADJOURNMENT:

B. Warden MOVED, K. Repola seconded to adjourn the meeting. Vote 4 YEAS. **MOTION CARRIED.**

NEXT MEETING:

Tuesday – October 20, 2020 @ **6:00 pm**
at the Vermilion Municipal Complex, 687 Decatur Street, Vermilion, Ohio

*~Gwen Fisher, Certified Municipal Clerk
Vermilion City Council/Boards and Commissions*