Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission

MINUTES OF MEETING

Date: March 12, 2024

Time: 2:00 p.m.

Location: Parks Administration Building, 2230 Platt Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48104

Members Present: Patricia Scribner, WCPARC President; Janis Bobrin WCPARC Vice President; Dan Ezekiel, WCPARC Secretary; Robert Joerg, Robert Marans, JoAnn McCollum, Brenda McKinney, Evan Pratt, Yousef Rabhi, and Katie Scott

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Coy Vaughn, Director; Meghan Bonfiglio, Deputy Director; Ginny Leikam, Superintendent of Planning and NAPP; Jason Brooks, Manager of Finance and Administration; Peter Sanderson, Parks Project Manager; and Kira Macyda, Parks Planner.

Others Present: None.

1. Call to Order

Ms. Scribner called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Approval of the Minutes

The minutes of the February 13, 2024 regular meeting were included with the packet materials.

Mr. Pratt mentioned that under item 9c, paragraph one of discussion, “Heller” should be changed to “Heydon.” There were no objections to the proposed change.

It was moved by Mr. Ezekiel, seconded by Ms. McCollum, to approve the minutes of the February 13, 2024 regular meeting, as amended. All ayes, the motion was approved.

4. Public Comment

None.

5. Communications, Projects & Activities

Mr. Vaughn provided an overview of the communications for the month of February.

Mr. Marans asked how the ESL Event was promoted. Ms. Leikam reported that Ms. Severance, Parks Naturalist, worked with the Literacy Coalition. Mr. Marans recommended outreach with Jewish Family Services for next year to help with promotion.

It was moved by Mr. Rabhi, seconded by Ms. Scott, to receive and file the Communications, Projects & Activities for the month of February 2024, as submitted. All ayes, the motion was approved.

6. Financial Reports – February 2024

A. Claims Report

Mr. Brooks reported on the financials and stated that the total for the claims for the month of February 2024 was $613,504.81. He highlighted the Phinney property purchase as an addition to the report and added that he was reaching out to the Treasurer's office to remedy the item.

It was moved by Mr. Marans, seconded by Ms. McKinney, to approve the claims for the month of February 2024 as submitted. Roll call vote, 10 ayes, 0 nays, 0 absent, the motion was approved.

B. Fund Balance Reports

Mr. Brooks provided an update on the fund balance reports through February and noted that these reports only contain a small amount of anticipated actual expenditure activity this early in the year. He added that the Phinney acquisition does show up twice in the NAPP Fund Balance Report and that it would likely be corrected through a Treasury entry for next month.

It was moved by Mr. Pratt, seconded by Ms. Bobrin, to receive and file the financial reports for February 2024 as submitted. All ayes, the motion was approved.

C. Revenue Reports

Mr. Brooks presented the Revenue Reports for the month of February 2024, highlighting year over year changes to revenue activity.

It was moved by Mr. Rabhi, seconded by Ms. McKinney, to receive and file the Revenue Reports for the month of February. All ayes, the motion was approved.

7. *Old Business*

A. Director's Comments

<u>Millage Update</u>
Mr. Vaughn distributed the millage history document and discussed the operating millage coming up for renewal in August 2024. He stated that the Board of Commissioners (BOC) Chair was entertaining the idea of putting the millage on in 2026. Mr. Rabhi stated that it was a surprise to see that recommendation made and that he and Ms. Scott are supportive of the millage being on the ballot in 2024. He added that he would recommend that WCPARC members reach out to their respective commissioner as formal action has not been taken by the BOC.

Mr. Joerg asked what has been done so far in the millage year. Mr. Vaughn reported that there is an active Friends of Washtenaw County Parks group that usually steps up to support the campaign and that work was getting underway.

<u>Eastside Recreation/Community Center Update</u>
Mr. Vaughn reported that the purchase offer has been sent to Ypsilanti Public Schools for the full 20-acre property for the planned site of the ERC and that negotiations on a final price continue. Mr.

Vaughn reported that County Facilities has awarded a demolition contract to take down the old school once ownership has been transferred.

Mr. Rabhi asked about the role Parks is playing. Mr. Vaughn reported that it is still being determined and that it is anticipated that Parks would be part of a steering committee on the project.

Ms. McCollum asked where information on the project could be found. Mr. Vaughn stated that due to lessons learned with prior attempts at similar projects, a more pragmatic approach is being taken and that staff is not making the details public until we secure the property, and it is certain that we are able to deliver on promises.

Ms. McKinney stated that people in the broader community are not supporting the project because they do not feel they are part of the project as it is not being marketed as an Eastern Washtenaw project. She recommended additional outreach to areas like Augusta Township to reach the broader audience.

Ms. Scott stated that much of this discussion is new information for the two County commissioners and she found that concerning. She added that she feels there needs to be a working group to decide on the use of this land. She added that it may be productive to have a discussion between Parks staff and the Parks Commission to decide what the Parks role looks like on this project.

Mr. Joerg stated that Meri Lou Murray runs a substantial deficit and added that the YMCA is substantially more expensive in their model to avoid such deficits. Mr. Marans asked if County Administration is aware of the work Parks has done with the YMCA. Mr. Vaughn responded that they are.

Mr. Rabhi asked what the plan is for the \$15M that came from the state and the \$3.5M committed by the Commission. Mr. Vaughn responded that the \$15M was to be used for building construction and that the initial plan was also for the \$3.5M to be used for construction but talks have occurred with the idea of scholarships or other long-term operational subsidies for the Parks contribution.

Mr. Rabhi stated that he does not think it is appropriate for the YMCA to be involved as this is public money and we are building a public facility. He stated that the BOC should fund the project and Parks should operate it. He added that he thinks there is a will of the BOC to put up an annual subsidy. Mr. Rabhi stated that a process needs to be set up to put taxpayers and their representatives at the table to make decisions.

Mr. Joerg stated that he appreciated the points made by Mr. Rabhi. He wondered if there should be an additional millage to cover the cost of subsidizing a facility like this one.

Ms. Bobrin stated that she respects the concern about the YMCA and added that prior discussions did not include Parks operating the facility. She added that getting a dedicated source of funding from the BOC in the future might be problematic in years in which budgets are tight. Ms. Scribner stated that the YMCA has large donors that have deep pockets that would donate to this project.

Mr. Pratt asked if the purchase offer is for Parks or the County to own the parcel. Mr. Vaughn stated that the County would own the parcel. Mr. Pratt stated that the other parts of the project can come up after the community center decisions are made.

Ms. Scott stated that involving the YMCA would require a lot of set criteria and monitoring and added that her top priority is providing opportunity that does not exist in the eastern part of the County. Mr. Joerg stated that it is an imbalance that we can offer competitive rates in a wealthy part of the County but not on the eastern side of the County.

Mr. Rabhi stated that he has concerns about the YMCA because he hears complaints from east side residents that there is not a presence in the County. He added that the County should hold itself to a different standard than outside organizations.

Master Plan Update
Ms. Bonfiglio provided an update on the Master Plan process and reported that meetings with community organizations are continuing. She added that a Parks program assessment is underway to collect and analyze the data regarding the specific services we deliver. She reported that updates will continue monthly.

Mr. Ezekiel stated that the discussion about the proposed Eastside Recreation Center should be coming into play with the consultants and that it would be great to hear about best practices.

B. Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Grant Resolution – Parker Mill County Park

Ms. Macyda and Mr. Sanderson provided details on the LWCF Grant Resolution.

Ms. Macyda reported that $500,000 is being requested, stating that the project will cost over $1M but that the grant covers 50% up to $500,000. Ms. Macyda reported that parking lot improvements, accessibility in the park, stormwater improvements and a boardwalk are part of the project. Mr. Sanderson presented a proposed site plan.

It was moved by Mr. Rabhi, seconded by Ms. Scott to authorize staff to submit a Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Grant application in the amount of $500,000. Roll call vote, 10 ayes, 0 nays, 0 absent, the motion was approved.

C. Other Old Business

None.

8. New Business

A. NAPP – DeForest Sales Contract

Ms. Leikam presented details on the DeForest conservation easement in Salem Township which includes purchasing a conservation easement on 114.5 acres. She reported that a USDA grant was received for 50% of the Agricultural Lands Preservation Committee (ALPAC) match. The City of Ann Arbor is a likely partner. A final budget will be brought back to the Commission once due diligence is complete and the City's contribution is confirmed.

It was moved by Ms. Bobrin, seconded by Mr. Ezekiel to authorize a sales contract for the purchase of a conservation easement on the DeForest property in the amount of $856,000 contingent upon completion of all necessary due diligence investigation and final approval of the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission. Roll call vote, 10 ayes, 0 nays, 0 absent, the motion was approved.

B. NAPP – Weidmayer Sales Contract

Ms. Leikam reported on the details of the Weidmayer Sales Contract and added that this is a farmland conservation easement totaling 63.5 acres. State funding has been awarded in the amount of $244,400 to cover a portion of the purchase price. Additional funds may be available from the state. Ms. Leikam presented maps included in the packet.

It was moved by Mr. Rabhi, seconded by Mr. Ezekiel to authorize a sales contract for the purchase of a conservation easement on the Keith Weidmayer property in the amount of $596,000 contingent upon completion of all necessary due diligence investigation and final approval of the Washtenaw County

Parks and Recreation Commission. Roll call vote, 10 ayes, 0 nays, 0 absent, the motion was approved.

C. NAPP – Walsh Partnership

Ms. Leikam reported on the Walsh property in Webster Township, which was nominated in 2020. It is a conservation easement totaling about 41 acres. The acquisition is led by Webster Township.

Mr. Rabhi stated that he would be supporting the item this time and added that he does not prefer outside management of conservation easements when the Commission is contributing the bulk of the funding.

It was moved by Ms. McKinney, seconded by Ms. McCollum to partner with Webster Township for the purchase of a conservation easement on the Walsh property in Webster Township and to contribute $131,400 (60%) of the purchase price of the conservation easement purchase, contingent upon attorney review of documents and execution of participation agreement and to contribute $7,500 to the stewardship special revenue fund to cover potential future costs associated with monitoring and enforcement of the conservation easement. Roll call vote, 10 ayes, 0 nays, 0 absent, the motion was approved.

D. Other New Business

None.

9. Commissioners Comments

Ms. McKinney stated that she is the WCPARC member on the Michigan Folk School Advisory Committee. She added that there is a potential to host a blacksmithing annual event this year.

Mr. Joerg asked how we are coming on the membership fee evaluation. Mr. Vaughn stated that work will continue on that item prior to the June deadline but that the millage discussion was a major focus over the last month.

Mr. Marans reported that there was a press conference held by Huron Clinton Metroparks Authority (HCMA). He reported that HCMA has launched a $2.5M fundraising campaign to expand swimming and science programs in underprivileged areas in the region. He stated that staff should be in contact with the Metroparks regarding this initiative and to possibly participate.

Ms. Scribner thanked the participants and staff for their contributions to the meeting.

11. Adjournment

It was moved by Mr. Marans, seconded by Ms. McKinney, to adjourn. All ayes, the motion was approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:59 p.m.