



PARKS AND PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
February 28, 2023

The Parks and Public Works Committee met for Regular Committee Meeting at 10:00 a.m.
City Hall
102 Butler St., Saugatuck, MI 49453.

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Chair Baldwin at 10:00 a.m.

Attendance:

Present: Chair Baldwin, Committee members Charak, DeJong, Johnson, Kimble, & Roche.

Absent: None.

Others Present: City Manager Heise, Superintendent Herbert, DPW Asst. Supervisor Hardy, Director of Planning, Zoning, & Project Mgmt. Cummins, Deputy Clerk & DPW Asst. Williams.

Approval of Agenda:

Motion by Charak, second by Roche, to approve the agenda. Via voice vote, motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Minutes from 01/24/23 & 01/31/23:

Motion by Charak, second by DeJong, to approve the minutes from the January 24, 2023, and the January 31, 2023, meeting. Via voice vote, motion carried unanimously.

Public Comments (agenda items only): None.

Review/Discussion:

A. Department of Public Works and Administrative Updates:

DPW Assistant Supervisor Cody Hardy gave a brief update on the projects that DPW staff have been working on. They have been busy with lots of motor pool maintenance due to a few snow and ice events over the last couple of weeks. All the equipment must be cleaned of salt and relubricated. The aerial lift is finally back after having a new Altec Boom installed. Due to low hanging branches during the ice storm, they have some minor damage to repair on the Dump Truck. Oval Beach staff have been responding to applications for seasonal employees and will start interviewing candidates soon. At Village Square, they replaced an American flag, completed some irrigation maintenance, and installed new backboards for the basketball court. The staff also installed new aluminum park closing signs with vinyl lettering to ensure the public knows that the parks close at 10pm. They are continuing tree work and tree removal around the city.

B. Study Group Updates:

a. Village Square Playground:

City Manager Heise said that City staff collectively have some concerns regarding the safety of the playground equipment. They are planning on having an outside firm come in to do an analysis of the equipment and make some recommendations for some immediate repairs that will hopefully make the equipment safe for the 2023 season. He stated that he anticipates ordering new playground equipment for the 2024 season due to the timing with ordering new equipment and there are also grant opportunities that they could pursue.

Committee Member DeJong said that the committee met twice with their study group. She broke the park into 4 sections (by location: A, B, C, & D) and presented two different ideas that their group came up with for upgrading Village Square. The existing locations currently exist of:

- Section A: Current children's playground
- Section B: Current multi-sport courts
- Section C: Current restrooms & basketball court
- Section D: Current Veteran's Memorial

In Option 1, the children's playground would be moved to Section C which would be closer to the restrooms for safety purposes. A new multi-sport court would be created for Section A. In section B, a splash pad and sensory pathways would be installed. The Veterans Memorial would remain located in Section D.

In Option 2, DeJong said that the children's playground would be moved to Section C (same in both Options 1 & 2 for safety purposes). In Section B, they would create a new multi-sport court. An ice-skating rink would then be installed in Section A that could be used in the off season for a variety of other things. The Veteran's Memorial will remain in Section D (same as option 1).

Both Committee Member's Roche and DeJong stressed that they are just presenting ideas at this point. They still need to come up with a cost to see how viable their plans are, as this is just a conceptual plan. The plan is to try to repair the playground equipment for this year as it has significant safety issues. DPW Superintendent Herbert explained what that process looks like and said that if it can't be repaired, then worst case scenario is the park would be closed for this year. That gives the committee time to seek grant opportunities and plenty of time to order equipment to be installed in 2024.

b. Mt Baldhead Improvements:

Committee member Charak said that on February 3, 2023, he met with Committee Member Johnson, DPW Superintendent Scott Herbert, and Jon Moxey from Fleis & VandenBrink at Mt. Baldhead. They discussed the deteriorating stairs and the landing area that needs to be replaced, and moving some electrical lines so that dune movement nor the erosion won't impact them. They would like to use materials that can be used to improve longevity. The group also discussed installing some informational stations. The picnic pavilion will need a new roof soon, and needs gutters installed so that it doesn't erode the concrete foundation. They will be constructing a new building which will be located in the southwest corner of the parking lot and will house some AT&T equipment and new restrooms for the park. Once the new restrooms are in service, they will demolish the old bathroom facility. This will not increase parking there but would probably make it smoother and more cohesive.

Committee member Johnson stated that they would like to create a master plan to work from. It will be a phased plan because you can't do everything at once. Once they have a cohesive conceptual master plan, then they can work parallel with AT&T and anyone else working out there.

c. Park Street:

Committee member Johnson said that their group just had a meeting and will meet again on April 22. They are still working on the progress of making Park Street an area that is beautiful and safe, especially for walkers. They were given a study that was done in 2020 by Fleis & VandenBrink that had three different options. They are working to come up with an option that combines a little bit of everything that was in the report. She said that they are also working to create a park for the chain ferry to make that area a safer access point for visitors.

d. Airport Property:

Chair Baldwin said that they have already taken a tour of the Airport Property. She stated that a good starting point would be to legitimize some of the existing trails and get them open to the public. The land belongs to the citizens of Saugatuck, and most don't know that the property exists. She thinks it would be beneficial to start talking to the folks that could help to get the trails open for hiking. She said the group discussed the environmental assessment that is needed and would like to work with the ODC to talk about what that looks like.

City Manager Heise said that around the year 2012, the City of Saugatuck engaged planners Williams and Work to do a land use study. He will send a copy out to the Committee. The scope of work is to conduct a site assessment and create a natural area management plan. This would entail mapping where the invasive species are, map the trees of significance, and then propose a plan later down the road for managing the land and getting rid of invasives and protecting the environment. They would then facilitate a land use planning process for the site. He just wanted to set the expectations that these aren't going to be super detailed, engineered plans that they develop but it is pretty high level stuff and that is all we need at this point.

Committee member Charak proposed that they explore the possibility of putting a conservation easement on the property so that it can never be sold by future Council members. Chair Baldwin stated that she didn't think it would negate the possibility of opening the trails at this point. Committee member Charak said that it wouldn't negate anything but the selling of the property. Chair Baldwin said that it would be a real shame if the property were to ever be sold. She thinks that they could make this something valuable to the citizens by opening it to them. Currently, it's cordoned off and not accessible to the public. Once they can open that up and show the public that it exists, she thinks that there would be some relatively easy next steps to legitimize the trails and get them open to the public.

Committee Member Charak asked what they plan to do with the building on the property. City Manager Heise said that Williams and Work reviewed the building in 2000 and the building was in good condition and would come into play at some point.

Chair Baldwin stated that the next steps would be to get something before Council to approve site assessment and environmental studies.

e. Blue Star Multimodal Path:

City Manager Heise said that they already have some initial concerns with the aesthetic components of the multimodal path. There were concerns about the view scape on the bridge with the separators between vehicles and pedestrians/bikes being too big and bold. They want

to make sure to protect the view but also put a Saugatuck spin on them creatively with some type of decorative art piece type stitch. Another very sensitive issue would be how they would get the path around the Pallet sign. That is just a few examples of what they will be working on with the C2A. He said that the Committee can count on a lot of people showing up to the meetings, which is a good thing. He thinks they should start preparing for several surveys that they can send out to get some community input on these very sensitive park scenarios.

The Friends of the Blue Star Trail are willing to assist as they did in phase 1 with design work, and assist with some contribution, and the City will need to kick in some of the funds. City Manager Heise said that the TAP grant that they were approved for is a federal grant that comes from the State of Michigan and will help with some of the costs. Committee member Kimble stated that the grant does not cover the engineering design, but they still have the DNR Trust Fund grant and the Friends group that can help cover that. They have already had initial conversations with Council and they have set aside funds to help with the design process. He also mentioned that Saugatuck Township still needs \$300K for their part as their grant application was denied. Heise also suggested that they invite that group to their meetings so there is some continuity with themes for the multimodal path because they are connected.

f. Invasive Species:

Update was given during closing comments.

C. Professional Service Proposals: No discussion.

Review Next Steps: Chair Baldwin said that the big thing would be to get the environmental study and site assessment on an agenda for City Council. City Manager Heise added that they will be presenting several proposals to the Council to facilitate all projects.

Public Comments: None.

Member Closing Comments:

Committee Member Johnson: Committee member Johnson thinks the groups have done a brilliant job and said that it is wonderful to be a part of. She hopes that they are heard.

Committee Member Charak: Committee member Charak said that he is working on a list for invasive species. He is going to come up with a list of websites that local residents can use to gather information and attack the invasive species on their own property. He hopes to have the list ready by the next meeting and would like to put something on the city website. City Manager Heise recommended that Committee Member Charak reach out to Allegan County conservation District as they are a much better resource now than they were a few years ago.

Committee Member Roche: Committee member Roche spoke about how they can work better as a Tri-Community because they are working on different projects and working on things that could potentially have some efficiencies and be more integrated. She has been speaking with Jim Searing, Ken Butler, and Anna Greg regarding the Parks Commission through Saugatuck Township, the Douglas Parks Project through an independent fundraiser, and their PPW committee through the City of Saugatuck to discuss how they could do more with their parks. She spoke about getting the three groups together so that they could all share the kinds of

projects that they are working on so that they are not all working on the same thing in the same space.

Committee Member DeJong: Committee member DeJong agreed with Committee member Roche and thinks that they should definitely look into combining the groups together.

Committee Member Kimble: Committee member Kimble applauded everyone on the committee's efforts. She thinks they have done a great job. She is attending a meeting for the Saugatuck Parks Commission so that she can learn a little more about how they are working. She can update the Committee at the next meeting on what she learns.

Chair Baldwin: Chair Baldwin said that the Committee has a lot of enthusiasm for their individual projects, and she wants to keep the momentum going. She thanked everyone for their hard work.

Adjournment:

Motion by Charak, second by Johnson, to approve adjournment of the meeting. Via voice vote, motion carried unanimously. Chairwoman Baldwin adjourned at 11:22 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sara Williams, City Deputy Clerk & DPW Administrative Assistant