

WHITEHALL PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

JANUARY 21, 2016 – SPECIAL MEETING

The special meeting of the Whitehall Parks and Recreation Commission was called to order at 5:58 p.m. by Chairperson John Feters. In attendance: Tiffanie Charles, Feters, Katie Quincel, Greg Thurman, Zach Wright (arrived at 6:03 p.m.), Director Steve Carr and Shannon Werner. Guests: Council President Jim Graham, and twelve other citizens.

Carr reviewed the agenda with the group. He also explained that he had recently attended a meeting organized by the city's Community Affairs department. In attendance were representatives from WCS, the YMCA, the Whitehall library and various faith groups. He described the meeting as productive and the groups will try to collaborate and not duplicate youth programs for the summer. They plan to meet again at the end of March.

Participants went around the room and introduced themselves and said what groups (if any) they were representing.

Carr briefly recapped the last meeting for the new participants. He explained the concept design plans for the splash pad and the Activity Center and answered several questions relating to the Activity Center's design.

One citizen raised the need for Whitehall to attract new families. He believed that a brick and mortar building, centrally located, specifically for youth was necessary to do that.

Carr explained that the city did have plans for a new recreation center at/near John Bishop Park several years ago but the plans were put on hold indefinitely when funding fell through. Jim Graham explained that the city would not be in a position to bond such a project until the fire department's building was paid off in two years (and maybe still some time after that).

Carr stated that, in order to maintain the Activity Center as an asset, the time has come for its reinvestment.

Charles pointed out that there are, in fact, many recreational opportunities for teens available through the schools and youth sports. She feels that a "teen center" would only attract kids who are already engaged in positive activities and those kids who are not engaged simply won't be attracted to a supervised recreational center.

Graham agreed that there was a problem generating interest in youth activities and he cited youth sports' waning participation as an example.

Carr also reminded the group that suburban-style recreation centers follow a "pay-to-play" model because they are very expensive to operate and that would be another challenge in Whitehall.

Next, going around the tables, every participant listed the “top three” projects they would like to see for Parks and Recreation.

Responses as follows are in no particular order:

- Renovation of the Activity Center at WCP
- The department to embrace and welcome recovery groups
- Expansion of the disc golf course
- Improved access to the lower level of WCP
- Improved path system and connectivity
- Better lighting, signage and park security
- Creek/ kayak access to the Big Walnut at WCP
- A Youth Center and youth programming
- Crushed limestone paths at WCP
- Basketball court at JBP
- Expand programming for all ages
- Improve paths at north end of JBP
- Expand the Senior Clubhouse
- Financial assistance for youth sports participants
- Support for the Whitehall Historical Society
- A shuttle system in Whitehall
- A sledding hill at WCP
- Picnic shelters and/or a three-season shelter at WCP
- A tree donation program

[Weighing participants responses according to 1st, 2nd and 3rd choices, the most popular projects were: 1) Renovation of the Activity Center at WCP, 2) Better lighting, signage and park security, and 3) Improved access to the lower level of WCP.]

One citizen asked Carr and the Commission to address rumors that the city wants to sell Whitehall Community Park for development.

Carr said he was not aware of any plans to sell the park. He did note that the city leaders may consider selling a small portion of the Hamilton Rd. frontage one day if it was a mutually beneficial proposition for both the city and the park. He said the Commission is an advocate for the park and wouldn't support any plan that might be detrimental to the park.

There being no further business, Thurman moved, seconded by Charles, and the meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

To the best of my knowledge these minutes are true and correct.

Chairperson