

## WHITEHALL PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

May 13, 2020

The online/virtual meeting of the Whitehall Parks and Recreation Commission was called to order at 6:09 PM by Chairman John Fetters.

On a roll call, in attendance: Chris Bolich, Tiffanie Charles, Fetters, Mike McQuate, Katie Quincel, Mark Schieber, Director Shannon Sorrell, and Shannon Werner. Absent: Mike Adkins. Guests: Matt Golden.

Charles moved, seconded by Fetters, to excuse the absent member and the motion carried 6 – 0.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by those in attendance.

Quincel moved, seconded by McQuate, to approve the meeting minutes for March 4, 2020 and April 25, 2020 and the motion carried 6 – 0.

The Commission reviewed the following items: Invoices for March and April 2020, Trust Fund and income for March 2020, and budget for April 2020.

Sorrell noted that the part-time staff was paid for approximately 24 hours per week through May 8<sup>th</sup>, per the City's directive. The rangers ceased work the last weekend of March. The department also received an incentive check from AEP for the YMCA build, and it was deposited in the Trust Fund in May.

Director's Report:

At this time, programs and events are still canceled through June. Tournaments are canceled for May, and will continue to re-evaluate June dates in accordance with state guidelines. WYAA is concerned about their ability to recruit volunteers to work tournaments when there is no league play this year. The Senior Center will probably be one of the last things to re-open. Matt Golden has been busy de-winterizing facilities. Vortex's work to turn on the Splashpad has been pushed back to June 15. If the facility reopens to the public this season, staffing needs will be re-assessed at that time.

City Hall reopened on Monday May 11th. Everyone, including visitors, must wear a mask. The Parks and Recreation office will remain closed to the public. Shannon Werner is spending several days in the office each week now and also working from home.

The City's meal distribution program will run through May 29. Maintenance staff is working in pairs, doing three 12-hour shifts and rotating Sunday coverage. This new schedule allows the parks to be covered 7 days per week, including evenings and the staff split will prevent the need for all staff to quarantine at once, should one member get sick. WCP gates are to stay closed and picnic tables are still under lock and key. Staff has pared down online content for social media after the loss of Cory. Staff is working to offer some online courses with FSWCD.

Summer camps are canceled, and the department is not able to offer the schools' TANF summer program much support either. USSSA has asked for additional dates, which the department has declined. PPE is covered, and we have taken steps to protect staff. It is difficult to predict what events and programs will look like long-term, but the department will be ready to respond quickly.

Sorrell met with the YMCA on Tuesday; they are still exploring options for the summer. The YMCA of Central Ohio is looking at a \$14M loss for 2020, and they have dramatically ramped up their shelter locations and operations, and emergency childcare options. They are hopeful they will be able to run some sort of summer camp – and Whitehall may be one of their chosen sites. An emergency meeting may be necessary, depending on the governor's directives, to explore the Y's needs and potential asks of the park to operate a summer camp.

McQuate asked if future tournament dates could be "penciled in" for August. Sorrell is concerned that additional layoffs and/or additional restrictions will render the department unable to accommodate a tournament when the time comes.

July 4<sup>th</sup> fireworks have been canceled in most central Ohio communities, including Whitehall. We also are unsure how to facilitate park parties (still on the books for July) where people don't touch things and practice social distancing. Maintenance staff is still addressing drainage issues in JBP with previously encumbered funds and it is looking good.

Sorrell and Golden are meeting at the YMCA again with Corna to look at some lingering issues – particularly with water in the basement and parking lot lights. Screening of the rooftop HVAC may get pushed to 2021. A community planting of the YMCA landscape still needs to be completed.

Regarding the recent Big Walnut Creek restoration project (COCF Round 12), the new plantings got taken out in the spring flood. It appears this will be classified as an "act of God" and therefore not covered by warranty. Parks and Rec. will need to cover the cost of new plantings which will be approximately \$7-10K. The department is still moving forward with the Big Walnut Access project (COCF Round 13), although the state could still potentially pull the funding.

Staff will wait to install the new fitness equipment at JBP until restrictions are lifted. The electric service was updated in the baseball concession stand so they should not have any more problems blowing breakers. The department will be replacing 6 -12 trees on Etna Rd.

Budget update – The department is returning approximately \$250,000 to the General Fund from staffing cuts. With additional savings on portajohns, dumpsters, and other projects, the department will be able to return \$400,000 to \$450,000 in total to the General Fund. To return more than this, will require a serious conversation about the department's priorities. Plans to build the portajohn shelter in WCP are still moving forward as designs are already in the pipeline and funds have already been encumbered.

Approximately \$1.4M in project money from service projects are also to be returned. At this time, there are no new updated figures from the Auditor's Office.

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City and several staff members are being sued for disallowing an individual to hold a jazz concert series in the park. The claim is that we are discriminating on the basis of race – and he should be allowed to use any public space. Bivens is not concerned the case has merit and staff is fully cooperating.

Trainings and conferences have been canceled for 2020. OPRA mini sessions have been canceled. Sorrell is still submitting her presentation for APWA.

Fettters asked for an update of turf maintenance certifications for the staff. Sorrell said that 2 staff still need to re-test, and that this may be a good year for that.

Bolich asked that, if funds were to free up, would re-hiring Cory Ollie be a priority? Sorrell said that while she would love to re-hire lost staff, that bringing back a programmer before programs and events are allowed may be a hard sell.

There being no further business, Bolich moved, seconded by Schieber, and the meeting adjourned at 7:03 PM.

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

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Chairman John Fettters

Prepared by:

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Shannon Werner