

City of Ashland
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
Real Estate Subcommittee Meeting Minutes
September 7, 2017

ATTENDEES

Present: Commissioners Heller and Landt; Director Black; Interim Parks Superintendent McFarland; Park Tech III Minica

Absent: None

I. CALL TO ORDER

Director Black called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. at the APRC Administration Office, 340 S. Pioneer.

II. NEW BUSINESS

a. Grandview Trail

Black displayed a map of the Hald-Strawberry area and the Grandview Trail. For the Grandview area, he pointed out the delineation of the road, property lines, parking near the trailhead and the trail itself. He said the parking area was not owned by APRC. A citizen named Sherry Morgan had expressed concern about the new property owner's unwillingness to allow parking in the area near the Grandview Trail, as permitted by the prior owner. Black said the property owner might be interested in trading APRC land in that area for a piece of roadway. He said trading APRC land for a piece of roadway would be a commission decision, with Council weighing in. Black said he previously suggested to the property owner that APRC might be able to purchase a specific portion of the land and build a low concrete wall but the owner was not interested. It was noted that there was still pedestrian access for the trail but parking was not allowed. Black said APRC also offered to buy a parcel of her back property (approximately ½ acre) and the owner said she would consider it. Other areas were discussed for potential public parking, including one not adjacent to the walking trail. Black said the owner didn't want anyone near her land but she might be interested in cash for a portion of it. Commissioner Landt said there were other land projects for which the money could be used and the property under discussion was a low priority; however, if the existing parking area could be purchased it would be of value to APRC and the community. Minica said losing the existing parking in that area would pose a problem for vehicles and equipment staged for construction projects (excavators, dump trucks and trailers).

Black talked about other real estate projects in the pipeline: Briscoe School playground—1.8 acres; Ashland Pond; the Mace Property; five acres on lower Clay Street; North Mountain Avenue behind the City yard; and the Tuttle Property. Black said the current availability of Food & Beverage (F&B) Tax proceeds for land purchases was \$540,000. Black said the Tuttle Property was a high priority. \$1.75M was also at the Commissioners' disposal in BN 17-19 if they chose to bond, but bond payments would need to be accounted for out of F&B Taxes.

Discussion and Conclusion

Black discussed "condemnation" [in which a local, state or federal government seizes private property and compensates the owner. The power of the government to do this is called "eminent domain," which essentially means the government takes private property for public use] and said some members of the public had expressed that Grandview public parking access was a higher priority than the property owner's use of the land. If condemnation occurred for Grandview parking, Black said the owner would be compensated at fair market value. Black said he would be meeting with Public Works Director Paula Brown to discuss the parking area at the Grandview Trail. The dollar figure on the parking area could not exceed \$20,000 despite its appraised value. Black and Landt agreed that fair market value could be calculated so as not to have a condemnation.

b. Briscoe School

Black said each acre of Briscoe School land would cost \$400,000-450,000 and the acreage under consideration was 1.8, with a potential value of \$700,000. He again stated that current funds available for property purchases was \$540,000 but the commission could bond for additional purchases; however, a payment plan would need to be set up out of F&B Tax funds. Landt said the majority of the current property purchase allotment of \$540,000 would be spent on the Mace Property. McFarland talked about the Tuttle Property and the portion the owner was willing to sell to APRC.

Discussion and Conclusion

Black said an ad hoc City Hall Committee had considered whether to rebuild or relocate City Hall; Briscoe School was one of their options. The recommendation they developed was to rebuild City Hall at the current location. Black said he wasn't sure if the recommendation would hold as it did not address parking. Landt said they also didn't consider that City Hall was in a flood plain. He expressed the need to consider long-term flood planning. Black said Interim City Administrator Karns was taking the recommendation to Council and would bring up the additional points at that time. Black said the School District could decide to deed Briscoe over to APRC. Other options for Briscoe included condos, office space, multifamily attached dwellings using the existing school or constructing a new building. Black said he was looking at this in two different sections: the green section on the drawing was the park and the rest was zoned R2, which could become multifamily dwellings. Black suggested an appraisal of the entire property, with the public hopefully organizing an initiative. Landt said the property was currently under public ownership and transferring it to another public entity at full market value was not ideal. He questioned the strategic wisdom of discerning full market value through an appraisal. Black responded that before the property could be bought or sold an appraisal was required. Heller said he thought the property had to be offered up as surplus first. Black said he thought that it had to be offered up to the Federal Government but not to the City or APRC. Black said they could do two appraisals: one for the field and the other for the playground. Black felt that the front half was worth more than the back half because the front included the building. Black said he could tell the School District that APRC was going to appraise the back half and if the School District wanted an appraisal on the entire property then they would need to fund it themselves. Heller said he supported an appraisal of the park and playground but didn't feel they should be paying for the building appraisal. Black said some were suggesting that Briscoe School be made into a Recreation Center. He reported telling people that APRC didn't have the funds to purchase or maintain the building, which was why he was talking about a public initiative to keep it from developers / private owners and retained within public ownership. Landt said he hoped to see citizens coming forward with a fundraiser. Black said the District would be following the law if they offered the back half to APRC at a price they deemed fair, so long as both entities identified how the land would meet a public interest to justify its sale at a lower price. Black said the property had to be appraised before being sold unless the School District decided to deed it over for nothing. Landt asked about the likelihood of its transfer via deed, with in-kind maintenance agreement over the next 10 years. Black said APRC had already offered such maintenance and the School District said APRC could maintain it but the land wouldn't be deeded over. Black said he would be willing to try to obtain the property free of charge but the cost of APRC maintenance would not only be the Briscoe land but other parks as well. Black said if \$100,000 were offered, that would be equivalent to APRC maintaining one-half to three quarters of their fields for one year. He said the latest ASD/APRC annual maintenance contract was for \$150,000 for everything provided by APRC.

Commissioner Landt asked about the Lincoln School grounds, Black said he served on the School Bond Committee and at the first meeting they merged the Bond Committee with the Facilities Committee and voted to liquidate Briscoe and leave Lincoln as is for the present time. Landt asked about the maintenance of Lincoln and Black said APRC could potentially absorb that maintenance. Black said the water line was a key point in last year's budget. Black said he was nervous about the water issue considering how much was used at Briscoe – \$20,000 a year. Heller suggested watering in spring but, in drought years, not watering. Black said ASD would not be offering a lease for at least five years because they didn't yet know what they were doing with the property. Black said the

majority of people who spoke out in support of saving Briscoe and Lincoln were organized around support of Briscoe grounds. Landt expressed a desire to table the Lincoln appraisal for the time being.

Replacement of YMCA Park

On a different topic, Landt said there were many moving pieces to the lower Clay Street land adjacent to the YMCA fields, including a section of property that could be used as a neighborhood park. Landt said the park was fairly hidden and he preferred that parks be visible from major streets. Based on that point, another piece of land was under consideration: the Cooper Property, for which APRC was working on an appraisal. Landt said APRC had a two-year window in which to replace the YMCA Park with another public park. He said a piece of land behind Albertsons might be a good fit. Black said he would get in touch with the owners.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:30 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Dyssegard, Executive Assistant
Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission