

Recreation Committee Minutes

Honorable Council
City of Newark, Ohio
April 29, 2014

There was a meeting of the Recreation Committee in Council Chambers following the Finance Committee, on Monday April 28, 2014. These members were present:

Marc Guthrie, Chair
Jeff Rath
Dee Hall

Mr. Guthrie- we don't have any legislation tonight but I had requested Mr. Rhodes to come in and talk to us about the 2014 Park program and he has with him Mr. Hotchkiss and I think they might talk about the Cemetery too. I want to thank you in advance for your willingness to come before the Committee and talk to us Dave and give us your insight to everyone that is here tonight.

Director Rhodes- first off I would like to thank Council because for the last three years you have been gracious enough to give us \$50,000.00 out of the Community Development Grant dollars. That \$50,000.00 is spent each year and it goes to the enhancement of the City parks. I would like to thank Barbara Gilkes she works very hard to find us additional grants for our projects. One of them is the Hollander Pool which I have print outs on that shows pictures but that project would not be possible without Barbara. I would like to thank Jeff Hotchkiss, if you don't know Jeff he is our Cemetery and Parks Director. Jeff and I probably talk 4-6 times a day, every time we talk we have a different project and we are running a different way. Jeff and his guys work and I mean they work; from cutting the cemetery to cutting all the parks to special projects or guardrail clean up. To start off tonight I would like to thank them.

Director Rhodes- the first picture that you are going to see tonight is the Cedar Hill Cemetery; we kind of view that as a park. A lot of different activities go on there and a lot of people walk through there. Residents of Newark and non-residents of Newark have entrusted the City to care and maintain a cemetery and I think that is a real duty and we have to do it well and I think that we have to live up to their expectations.

Jeff Hotchkiss- the cemetery was established in 1850 that was our first burial. It is basically about 102 acres that we maintain. We have a cemetery walk every year. We walk and discuss the famous people that are buried there from Newark, Ohio. This is done in conjunction with the Licking County Historical Society. There were pictures of trees, the pond which was put in in 1888, and new signage for the Cemetery shown. The Chapel was put in 1881 which also has a holding vault. The cremation garden was shown and the future site for a cremation garden because all of

the lots have been sold at the current garden. 40% of their burials right now are cremations and it has been growing every year for the last 15 years. A picture of the Veteran's section which they started 12 years ago was shown. The County buys the graves and the spaces are free for the Veterans. We are getting ready to head back to the County to see if they want to buy more spaces then we will expand that area. The new mausoleum was shown. There are 72 spaces in there and 31 have been sold. In a few years I may be coming back to talk about an expansion because once you get at 50% you should start looking down the road to expand. The old mausoleum was shown that has 270 spaces inside. There was an old lift shown that is approximately 100 years old that I am thinking about asking The Works if they want as a donation because of the historical value. There are about 20 acres at the back part of the cemetery for expansion. We will be in business for another 400, 500, 600 years.

Mr. Guthrie- with the expansion areas all total what percentage of all the ground is currently in use?

Jeff Hotchkiss- I would say about 75%. The burial rate and death rate has slowed down that is why it is lasting longer than it did 50-60 years ago.

Mr. Guthrie- if folks are cremated and they have a cemetery plot they can be....

Jeff Hotchkiss- we will put two cremates in one grave space.

Director Rhodes- if anybody wants a tour of the cemetery just call myself or Jeff and we will be happy to take you a tour of it.

Jeff Hotchkiss- pictures of the new Dive Quarry were shown. We started on this about 5 years ago it used to be more of a junk yard. We have hauled everything out and condensed our junk yards into one and that has even gotten a lot smaller.

Director Rhodes- in the quarry we sunk a few selected items that the divers have an opportunity to look at. We have a local company Discover Diving they do some of their tests there for certification and it is open to the public to dive in for a small fee.

Jeff Hotchkiss- pictures of the new signage was shown. Richardson Electric who decided to donate between materials and labor about \$7500.00 worth of work for us this spring. They are wiring in the whole area so we will be able to have lights for security, electric into our dressing rooms so you can actually see to change into your wetsuits. Electric will be available to some of the shelters we have. Divers come there and stay all day, they cook there and now we will have electricity there to take care of all their needs. It will be a revenue source for us because we charge \$10.00 for every day they come out to go diving. We have a website too so people know where they can go to do some open water diving. Discover Diving will start using our park now for their certification instead of going all the way up to Circleville.

A picture was shown of a shelter house that they put a new roof on and replaced some joists on. He stated that the shelter houses get a lot of use and we get a lot of rental income off of them.

Director Rhodes- stated that they had quotes to have this work done and they got together and decided that we could do the work ourselves and save a significant amount of money. We actually got two roofs on for what it would have cost for one to be contracted. We bought the material and our Park's guys did it.

Jeff Hotchkiss- discussed how they were going to build a channel at TJ Evans Park because the pond on the left side is stagnating. We are going to dig a canal from the left to the right that way the water can circulate some. Armstrong Steele on South 4th St was going to donate the I beams and we are going to build a walk bridge over the canal. You will still be able to walk around and the water will be able to flow through and hopefully correct some of the stagnate problem with the pond on the left. We will probably start that this summer towards the end of the summer and probably get the Street Department's help on that. He showed pictures of a group from Denison that helped cut brush and clear that debris away and a group with Developmental Disabilities that helped with the clean-up. We had a picnic for them and made it a special day which was very rewarding for us. Tom Argyle has church groups that he brings in and they do whatever we need that weekend.

Then there was a group from the Granville Christian Academy shown. Jeff stated he could say enough about them and that there would be pictures through out of them. They cleared brush, painted, mulched the square, worked at Horns Hill and the Hollander Pool. They took a day off of school and did a heck of a job everywhere they went. This is their third year that I have worked with them.

He also showed a picture of Paddle Fish which are kind of a prehistoric fish that is in danger. We hooked up with Big Fish Farms out of Kentucky. They need a place to place all of these Paddle fish. We have about a thousand of them stocked in our ponds. They are endangered so you can't catch them or keep them. They are more of a feeder which means that they eat the different plankton as it goes through the water. They grow to be somewhere between 5-8 feet long and weigh somewhere between 80 -100 lbs. In about 8-10 years the Big Fish Farms will come back out and harvest what is there. They are going for the eggs and the meat. If we have a number of them left we should make somewhere between \$30,000.00-40,000.00 as a payback for actually doing the aqua farming. This is their second year in there and they are growing.

Our biggest nuisance is the geese. It is an ongoing situation. We tell people to quit feeding them but I guess they are a fact when you have water. We aren't the only community with the problem. They make a mess.

Town Commons was shown and discussed. Town Commons in on East Main St, you make a left before the bridge and it runs along the river there. Playground equipment was installed and a walking path around the whole park. We received the equipment through a grant; the City just had to install it.

Director Rhodes- a lot of these things would not happen if we didn't have a good grant writer.

A picture at Levin Park was shown where Park's employees were installing a play set that was donated by a family who suffered a loss of a little boy who once played on the set. The aunt called and asked if the City would come and get the play set and accept it as a gift. The City took care of it the next day. A plaque was installed.

Jeff Hotchkiss- Florence Coble park on Ohio St down near Babe Ruth. We had a swing set that looked bad shape but we had some paint so I had the guys bring it in to the maintenance building and paint it up. Then we decided to install it at this park. We are waiting for a part to come in to put the swings back on.

Director Rhodes- discussed Babe Ruth, if you haven't been out to a ball game you should get out there. We have a nice partnership with the YMCA and we continually work to make upgrades to this park. It is a gem down in Little Texas. I think that the City was right when we did the bed tax. I think Council was right when they voted for us and I think we were right when we voted to buy the ball park because if not this park could have turned a different direction which would not have been healthy for the area.

We spent some money on the top part of the fences covering them so players wouldn't get stuck going up for a fly ball and we excavated and regarding in there last fall because some of the balls that would go out of the infield would skip up and hit a player in the chin.

Jeff Hotchkiss- steel poles have been installed to place netting up to protect people going over to the concession stand from foul balls.

Director Rhodes- we also crack sealed all of the asphalt and we purchased the tar to reseal it but we are waiting on the weather to cooperate.

Jeff Hotchkiss- discussed major renovations to the ball fields at Everett Park. One of the major renovations was installing back drops, laying out the base lines and bases which have never been done before. These fields are ours.

Director Rhodes-The outfield fences were donated from NASA Soccer and part of the funds were donated from the Advocate, "Make a Difference Day". The Advocate donated \$5,000.00. I am currently talking to Mike Shear to see if we can get a donation for Make a Difference Day this year for this park.

Jeff Hotchkiss- these 3 fields are reserved all five days of the week by little league baseball and softball teams using them for practice.

Director Rhodes- we also have plans for disc golf course on the other side of where the Civil Air Patrol is at. We are in the process of finishing up a relationship with another private sector group, Forever Park, who are going to do some significant community gardens there. It looks like we raised the money privately for the fencing around those gardens. I haven't seen the checks yet but I have gotten commitments on that. When we have it we will erect some fences for community gardens. We think that this area has been under served and the park has not been enhanced like it could have been over the years. We are working on making it one of our gem parks and we are working that way but it doesn't come without help from our private sector.

Mr. Guthrie- have those lights been repaired yet

Director Rhodes- part of them have Marc. We did an insurance claim on that as you know. Council was kind of enough to re-appropriate those dollars. Part of them has and we are waiting on the parts for the remainder.

The Outdoor Fitness Park, this is something that we haven't talked about a lot. The administration worked with a private donor to come up with a concept of outdoor fitness. The cost of this was around \$52,000.00-53,000.00. It currently sits to the right of Rotary Park we are going to have a ribbon cutting ceremony coming up; we are going to do it in conjunction with some activities that go on at that park. It was something that the administration coordinated with Ohio State, the Y, Licking County Foundations and COTC because everybody kind of has their hand in the bike path and the land. It took a lot of coordination. This is something that could be duplicated around the City if it is

successful. We have a handle on the costs. Council didn't see any of this money because it didn't come into the General Fund and it didn't come out of the General Fund because it was raised privately.

Mr. Guthrie- I think that this is a great thing. Is there a wheelchair accessible path up to the pad?

Director Rhodes- it is there, they can get on it very easily and one of the things that we like about this park is that it is all handicaps accessible for people with disabilities.

Mr. Guthrie- even a small lip is very difficult for someone in a wheelchair without assistance

Jeff Hotchkiss- there is a small lip on the right side at the other end and I talked Mr. Prince at the Street Department and they are going to come out and pour the other apron.

Wells Park was shown. The restroom building at this park was in pretty deplorable shape and we renovated this spring.

Director Rhodes- our guys, our City employees did the work on this. We save an incredible amount of money doing these things ourselves.

Mr. Rath- I noticed at the fitness park in the picture the residences for COTC/OSU Newark were in the background, have you seen many of students utilizing it?

Director Rhodes- there is activity over there but I don't know if they are students or not.

Mr. Guthrie- do parks like this have any lighting at night at all?

Jeff Hotchkiss- just street lighting there aren't lights inside the park

Director Rhodes- Hollander Pool, as many of you knows we did extensive improvements to Hollander Pool last year. With the help of Barbara Gilkes we have a couple of grants that are being used now and we are going to be putting in a spray pad for kids to the right of the shelter house. If you go out there now you can see where some concrete is being poured for ingress and egress on the parking lots which was paid for with grant dollars and a small match. We hope to have a big grand opening on June 5th and a special guest SpongeBob Square Pants. This would not happen without the help from Barbara and these grants. When we are finished we are going to have a very nice community pool that serves all of the citizens of Newark. One of the other things that Jeff and the guys did, down at the deep end there used to be two slides. We were always a little confused why the smaller slides where the younger children would go in were at the deepest end of the pool. We were always a little uneasy about that and with a wise recommendation we moved the slides so they come off in a little more shallow area then we bought a big slide.

Director Rhodes- we are very pleased with the way that the YMCA runs the pool and Don Edwards Park for us; they are a good community partner.

Jeff Hotchkiss- this is a pet peeve of mine, I don't like to see weeds and trees growing up through the fences along the highway and bike paths because these areas are the entrance ways to Newark so whenever I have extra workers through the Court system or Job and Family Services we go out and work on this.

Mr. Guthrie- you know a lot of us in the City who voted for the County Parks Levy did so hoping that we were going to get some support for our bike paths. Are we seeing anything materialize?

Director Rhodes- not at this point, they are discussions we are having

Mr. Guthrie- maybe if they can't give us some of that they can give us some of our casino money that they got 2 million of.

Jeff Hotchkiss- we got these a lot of these areas cleaned up before they got green but there are more areas we are going to do.

Director Rhodes- to pay somebody to do this would have been very expensive and again we are using our guys to do it. As you come in to downtown and get off on the downtown exit to the right there is a concrete wall where we had a lot of brush hanging over. I had a quote to remove that at \$1500.00 so I thought there was no reason to pay that when our guys can do it so they did.

Jeff Hotchkiss- showed pictures of and discussed how Granville Christian Academy help spread mulch all down around the Square. This is the second spring they have done this and it has saved us a lot of time and money.

Mr. Guthrie- Jeff how much staff do you have?

Jeff Hotchkiss- I have three full time employees. I have summer help and I get people who need to work off hours.

Mr. Guthrie- generally how many extra folks do you get in the summer?

Jeff Hotchkiss- 3 to 4.

Director Rhodes- one of the things that we did at the beginning of last year is we got the sprinkler system working around the Courthouse Square. We got with the company and found out where the leaks and we got it running. If we get a real hot summer the Courthouse Square won't burn out like it did

Jeff Hotchkiss- Horns Hill Park, he showed a shelter house that was built back in the 1935 by the CCC which I think stands for Civil Conservation Core. It was one of FDR's programs to get people back to work during the great depression. We have had some vandalism on the back wall. Someone kicked it out. I am meeting with a mason up there on Saturday about donating some of his time to rebuild that wall. I am going to see if I can talk him into rebuilding that wall going up into the park. There was a monument from back in the time of the Hopewell Indians at the park that was restored and rededicated. Flory Park, two years ago you couldn't see anything because the ice storm knocked down so many trees and the area was overgrown.

Director Rhodes- we got some private dollars from foundations to help with the cost of clean-up. Once we got it cleaned up we sat down with our friends from the YMCA because we didn't think we had a good plan for this park. We entered into an agreement with the YMCA to manage the park, they also cut the park. We got the lights back on the flag, we got the building cleaned up and the YMCA is currently using that. We are currently working with the YMCA for further development plans of this park. I don't have anything to announce tonight but I can tell you that the conversation is ongoing. They are working plans subject to change. Over time Flory Park will be a wonderful park for people to use. Everything costs money and we don't cut into the City's General Fund for these dollars we go to our private sector friends.

Rhonda Loomis- Director Rhodes you didn't give too much time to Horns Hill Park, did you give up the ludicrous idea of selling it haven't you?

Director Rhodes- we don't have plans at this point

Mr. Guthrie- thank you Rhonda that was nice, I caught that

Mr. Rath- there is a Frisbee golf course up there is it being used

Director Rhodes- there is and it is used and that is one of the reasons we want to do a Frisbee course at Everett Park is because it is a little flatter. At Horns Hill if you let loose of a Frisbee it can go half way downhill.

Mr. Guthrie- I wasn't going to bring up my ludicrous idea but I will say even though I know I am a voice in the wilderness on this I still believe that it should be an option on the table. You and I have discussed that in the past. I also want to make it clear as I have said in the past any part of that park that needs to be retained should be retained and that any assets that would be sold every dime of it should go to upgrading all of our other community parks. I know that it will never happen but I am not ashamed of suggesting it because I think that it would have lifted up the rest of our community parks. Considering the fact that we have very few resources you folks are doing a pretty darn nice job. I wanted to point out Hollander Pool, just super what you have done there and it is even going to get better this year. The one thing that I think needs to be a long term goal for all of us is to get programming back into our parks. Try to identify resources in the future to get a couple of teachers in our parks so we have some youth programming so we can help keep kids busy during the summer months. I go clear back to when I worked in the Heath Park Department years ago. I know that both Newark and Heath had summer programming in our parks and it kept a lot of kids busy and I think that it should be a long term goal for us to see that happen again someday.

Director Rhodes- two areas that we didn't really touch on; Levin Park and the Ice Arena. Tim Weisert helped work the arrangement with North Newark on the Levin fields which were empty softball fields and now over 500 families use those fields. That was an example of a good private public partnership. We didn't show anything of the Ice Arena, the arena is strong. It is a beautiful place and we should be proud that we are a part of that. It is run by a very good board. They are not dependent on the General Fund in any way shape or form and they put dollars back into the ice arena every year. The last thing that I will leave you with is the Courthouse fountain. That was a successful project and an example of good private public partnership. Some of you sitting in the room donated to that and we appreciate that. It is a good fountain and it wouldn't have happened without the private sector. We are continually working and trying to think of out of box ways to raise dollars to fund our parks and make them nicer. We feel that the parks are a very important part of the community and they should be treated that way. They help make life in Newark a little better.

Ms. Hall- I just wanted to say thank you for all the hard work I didn't realize that there was so much going on.

Mr. Rath- is Reddington Road Park a city park?

Director Rhodes- yes, we will get to that one next year.

Marc Guthrie, Chair