

**Minutes of the Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting
Held in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building, 36080 Chester Road,
at 7:00 P.M. on Thursday, February 11, 2016**

The Chairman, Tom Mitchell, called the meeting to order.

ROLL CALL:

Members in attendance were: John Weigman, School Board Representative; Mary Berges, Council Representative; Jim Schmitz; Else Rolland; Lee Belardo

ABSENT:

Cady Cianciolo

GUESTS:

Diane Corrao, Parks and Recreation Director; Gregory Greaney; Lucy Greaney; Tom Shamus; Ann Shamus; Tammy Holtzmeier, Council At Large; Nicole Hennesy, The Press; Jon Wysochanski, The Chronicle; Gail Peterson; Paul Burik; Lucy Greaney (mother – Ms. Greaney)

JANUARY 14, 2016 MINUTES:

A motion was made by Mr. Schmitz and seconded by Ms. Berges to approve the minutes of the January 14, 2016 meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission and the vote was unanimous in favor.

OLD BUSINESS:

BIKE PATH FOLLOW UP:

Ms. Corrao said there is a meeting scheduled with First Energy later in February and Mayor Jensen is fully supportive. City of Avon Consulting Engineer, Ryan Cummins, Chagrin Valley Engineering Ltd. has applied for a grant that could cover approximately 95% of a path. The path could be estimated 1.2 million dollars because a bridge would be included. Ms. Corrao did not know the timing of information regarding grant award or amount. She hoped to have more information in March.

Mr. Mitchell said there is a program offered by NOACA. They are not certain funding is available, but they may be able to help with planning. He was not sure whether that would be engineering, drawing, or if federal funds would be available for that type of work. Ms. Corrao suggested that Mr. Mitchell continue pursuing what he can with NOACA because her discussions are specific to one section and they want to plan for additional areas throughout the City.

Ms. Greaney brought to their attention a conference called Greater Cleveland Trails and Greenways Conference to be held Tuesday, June 2, in Brecksville, Ohio.

DOG PARK FOLLOW UP:

Mr. Mitchell recalled that in February of 2015, the idea of a dog park was presented to the group. They had discussions of the pros and cons and a copy of their discussion was provided at this meeting by Ms. Corrao. Mr. Mitchell said they agreed at that time that the Parks and Recreation Commission would not take action on this suggestion, due to other priorities. The decision was to revisit this again in 2016.

Mr. Burik stated that Lucy Greaney prepared a PowerPoint presentation for the Commission.

A motion was made to have the PowerPoint presented by Mr. Mitchell and seconded by Mr. Schmitz, and the vote was unanimous in favor.

Ms. Greaney, dog owner, narrated the PowerPoint, which was in favor of a dog park in Avon.

After the presentation, Mr. Mitchell asked about the number of dogs Ms. Greaney has seen at the Avon Lake park and she replied as many as two dozen. He asked about the size of the parks and Ms. Greaney speculated that Avon Lake's may be an acre, Sandusky's may be one and a half to two acres, Lakewood's is 200-feet long and 100-feet wide. Ms. Corrao said Avon Lake's dog park is 250 X 150 feet, which is about three quarters of an acre.

Mr. Mitchell said there are facts the Commission can gather. He asked if three quarters of an acre is adequate for dozens of dogs when it is crowded. Ms. Greaney said she been told that a larger area would be better so dogs to get a good run; a lot of people take their dogs out of the fenced area to run them. She added that if you have a dog that bites, you are not allowed to bring it after the second or third warning. Ms. Corrao asked who monitors that and Ms. Greaney did not know. The Avon Lake Service Department handles the clean-up and it is not a lot of work because people are pretty good about cleaning up after their dogs. Ms. Corrao understood that it is necessary to have separate areas for big and small dogs. Ms. Greaney said the smaller area is also used as a "time out" area. A water source is important, regardless of season, if possible. A shelter, or wind break, for dog owners to congregate and visit is also a good idea. Ms. Greaney offered to make calls and do research because she feels a dog park would be a good asset.

Mr. Mitchell asked Commission members to discuss potential sites. He speculated that the Mills Road wetlands area may be a good location. Ms. Corrao said it is not a large area and would be difficult to fence. Ms. Greaney suggested the field behind the old Avon Village School. Mr. Weigman said it is school property and is already being utilized. Ms. Greaney wondered about someone who would donate land. Ms. Corrao said the MetroParks put one in Oberlin by the Splash Zone. Ms. Greaney heard you have to be a member of that park; you have to prove your dog has its shots; the animal has to have a certain type of collar, etc. Ms. Corrao said you would have to prove your dog's vaccines are current in any dog park. In Oberlin, membership is \$10.00 for a year. Ms. Corrao said all dogs have to be licensed as well. She pointed out that Amherst is putting a dog park in behind an animal hospital on Cooper/Foster Park Road. No City has completely funded their dog park, ie: Lakewood has Friends of the Dog Park. Sandusky had a lot of donations; veterinarians in Amherst own the land and they are cooperating with other groups to donate a lot of items; the MetroParks collaborated with WOBL and WDLW radio stations and Partners with Paws of Lorain County. Ms. Greaney said Petco also donates and they suggested she contact Petco Foundation. The park in Sandusky has a sign that acknowledges donors, including pet owners who want their animals to be memorialized there.

Ms. Corrao said she found that one of the requirements is a group, or groups, that will participate fully in the establishment and maintenance of the dog parks. Another concern people have is the noise generated by a dog park. Ms. Graney said people expect mayhem; barking and growling, but there really is not. There could be a short burst, but people get involved. Even odor is not a problem that she is aware of in Avon Lake. Ms. Corrao said they also have to take into consideration an additional acre for parking.

Mr. Weigman suggested the property where the YMCA is located. That location is not in a residential neighborhood and may be better received. Ms. Corrao agreed and said you have to get water there. There was discussion of hours of operation, including lighted evening hours. The east side of Recreation Lane is a possible location. Ms. Graney wondered about having to drive to the dog park versus the benefits of walking to one. Someone speculated that the "Creekside" location may be a possibility. Having the MetroParks/Miller Reservation involved was discussed. The possibility of Willoway donating property was brought up.

Mr. Schmitz thought the property off Recreation Lane would be perfect, due to the fly ash and the difficulty of building anything else there. Mr. Burik suggested the property near the pool, which is centrally located. He felt that would bring people into the downtown area, where they could stop for food or shop. Mr. Weigman asked how many acres in that location are not already planned. Ms. Corrao said there are plans for all of it and they do not want to take down the old trees. Mr. Belardo said another option for property would be an unknown donor. Mr. Schmitz referred to Sandy Ridge Wetlands Park and said that may be a possibility. Regarding financing, he said if someone would get the funding started, the City might be willing to be more involved. They discussed cost and Ms. Corrao said there was a dog park in Danville that cost \$116,000 and they were adding a small park for \$60,000 after a large dog killed a small dog. Mr. Mitchell brought up insurance and said that needed to be explored. Ms. Corrao said the Friends of the Lakewood Dog Park nonprofit group put \$15,000 toward the Lakewood park itself and then made another substantial donation for resurfacing. Ms. Greaney said it would be easier to approach people for specific items, such as a fence, for a planned location, rather than to just ask for money for a proposed dog park.

Mr. Mitchell asked if they decided to pursue this further, did those present feel there would be enough interest within the community to establish a nonprofit group, such as Friends of the Avon Dog Park. The answer was yes and Ms. Corrao wondered if that nonprofit group would also participate in the maintenance. Mr. Mitchell said someone would have to solicit donations. Ms. Greaney said she would be willing to start something like this.

Mr. Mitchell restated the following:

Mills Road Wetlands – not viable

Ridgeland Drive – not viable

French Creek/Recreation Lane – possibility

Miller Reserve – possibility

Near the pool – not viable?

Donor – possibility

Creekside - ? premature

Land between the Cleveland Clinic and Henkel was brought up as a possibility for donation.

Mr. Mitchell will contact the Assistant Director of the Lorain County MetroParks, Jennifer Bracken, to find out about the Miller Nature Preserve as a possible location. Ms. Berges will speak with City Engineer, Ryan Cummins, regarding viability of the French Creek/Recreation Lane possibility. Everyone present will solicit property donation.

Mr. Mitchell said the survey eight years ago showed some interest in an “off leash dog park.” The pool was of the highest interest at the time. The results for the dog park were “16% - very important; 29.7% - important; 54.6% unimportant.” Almost half had some interest, so it was high on the list.

POOL UPDATE:

Ms. Corrao distributed information and stated that there were 14,801 daily passes sold in the 2015 short season, totaling \$70,225.00. Membership sales totaled 1,047, but that equates to 2,774 actual memberships. One of these memberships would have been equal to a 5 person daily pass. That number totals just over \$100,000.00 in sales. There were over 29,000 visits to the pool, which is outstanding given the fact that it was such a short season. Mr. Schmitz said the slide was not up yet. Ms. Corrao said it had been so much fun without the slides, their addition just adds to the fun. She said the figures she supplied do not include about five additional days that the pool was kept open due to good weather.

Mr. Weigman asked how that stood up to the operating costs and Ms. Corrao said she didn't have that information, but would let him know. He asked if operating costs were figured into the fees for the upcoming 2016 season and Ms. Corrao said everyone who purchased season passes last year was guaranteed half off the cost of the 2016 season passes. You'll really want to look at that in 2017. Mr. Weigman asked if the plan is to break even. Ms. Corrao said yes, this is considered a service/amenity for the City. The closer the City gets to breaking even, the better, but this is not intended to generate revenue. Ms. Berges said Council looked at neighboring communities and tried to make this affordable for Avon's residents. Mr. Mitchell said that the fees offset the cost but do not have to cover everything and Ms. Corrao and Ms. Berges concurred. Mr. Mitchell said he was surprised at how much the daily pass sales generated.

REPORTS:

PARKS:

Ms. Corrao said she is going to be hiring summer help for the parks. It will be close to full-time and is hard work. There are a couple of new pieces of equipment at the playground at Northgate. Mr. Weigman asked if the piece of equipment that disappeared from the skate park had been replaced and Ms. Corrao said yes, the City got two new pieces.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

1. Survey review and plans for the next survey – Mr. Weigman may have the previous survey in an electronic format. Mr. Mitchell has the comments in Excel.
2. Review Commission members' contact information
3. March re-visit the prospect of a Dog Park...

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS:

Mr. Schmitz suggested they agree to keep moving forward with investigating the possibility of a dog park. Mr. Weigman suggested that during the March meeting they develop a list of questions to ask other communities with dog parks so members are all asking the same questions.

Mr. Weigman cautioned against putting too much on their next agenda and Ms. Corrao said the current bike path issue is at a point where the Commission really cannot move forward with anything. She can provide them with updates as it moves forward.

Ms. Berges said she would report to Council regarding the interest in a dog park.

Mrs. Rolland said she heard the barn on the Schwarz Road Park property is being taken down and asked if construction of the second entrance will start this year. Ms. Corrao said yes and they are hoping to rebuild the barn with the materials that are still usable.

Mr. Schmitz said the deconstruction of the barn had come to a standstill and Ms. Corrao said they had to get permission from the Landmark Preservation Commission to continue. They are numbering and keeping track of every piece that comes out of the structure. Mr. Schmitz thought the public participation at this meeting was good.

ADJOURN

A motion was made by Mr. Weigman and seconded by Mr. Belardo to adjourn the February 11, 2016 meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission, and the vote was unanimous in favor.

Mr. Mitchell declared the motion passed.