



**Open Space & Visual Environment Commission
Tuesday, October 26, 2010, 5:00 p.m.
City Hall Conference Room #1
85 South Main Street, Oberlin, Ohio**

Members Present: Scott Medwid, Aaron Mucciolo, Wes Burgess, David Sonner
Members Late: David Sokoll
Members Absent: None
Others Present: Jeff Baumann, Staff Support; Sheri Runals, Staff Support; Kate Pilacky, Council Liaison
Others Absent: None

Chair Burgess called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m.

Welcome New Members

Burgess welcomed the new members to the commission; David Sonner and David Sokoll.

Approval of Minutes – September 28, 2010

Mucciolo moved to approve the September 28, 2010 minutes as presented. Medwid seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Proposal to Extend the Bikepath

Burgess stated that he has not had the chance to go out and look at locations for a possible extension to the bikepath. He added that someone in the community informed him that the Oberlin section of the bikepath may need some TLC. There were branches hanging over the path; it looked rather unsightly compared to parts maintained by the Metroparks. Signs and stenciling may need redone. He thought that maybe they could get a volunteer group to work on the bikepath. Baumann responded that it was probably too late this fall to do pavement markings but the signs could be updated. It would not be a good idea for volunteers to trim the branches because of the ditches. They may need special equipment to reach some of the branches. Crack filling and crack sealing along the bikepath should be starting soon. If there was interest, volunteers could do the stenciling. The bikepath is the single most used feature in the city's parks.

Burgess said that the bikepath should be looked at from a visual environment aspect. Maybe they could take the scarecrows from the scarecrow contest and place them at the entrances of the

bikepath. Medwid would like to see signage and have designated areas that could be taken care of by certain groups. He would also like to see a directory for attractions in Oberlin. People do not know what is going on in town. There is no signage on the east end. Businesses could advertise on the fence posts; this could be income for the City. Nothing has been done with the Recreation Department to promote businesses. Baumann responded that it would be a challenge for the City to promote individual businesses. There is a kiosk that is a partnership between the City and Lorain County Visitor's Bureau. There is a map in the kiosk detailing downtown. The City could not point out each individual store or restaurant on the map. Medwid stated that someone needs to speak with the Economic Development Officer about developing something to bring more business into town. He made a recommendation to discuss this in more detail at the next meeting to work on improving the link between the parks, the bikepath and the rest of the city to get more exposure to park visitors as to what is going on in town business-wise and attraction-wise. He will do some research for the November meeting. Pilacky stated that she will talk with the Economic Development Officer prior to the November meeting.

Oberlin City Parks Pamphlets

Burgess stated that he found a chart on the City's website showing the amenities at each park. This is a good place to start. We could use this chart as a blueprint for a pamphlet and we could look at it to see how we could improve each of the parks; to add to the visual appeal. He would like each member to print it out and look at each park and make notes on how we could make improvements to each park. Baumann asked who the target audience was for the pamphlets. Burgess said that he would like to see them in stores and restaurants. Medwid felt that it should go to all residents. The goal would be to get more people to visit the parks. Baumann replied that those were venues for getting the information out, but who was the audience. Medwid replied that it was the potential users of the parks and the goal was to get people in the parks. Mucciolo asked how we would know if we succeed in getting people in the parks. Sonner added that one sliver of the audience would be any prospective business or future resident of Oberlin. Baumann stated that by printing these pamphlets it does not mean that it will get to some target groups. It will most likely not get to kids who play video games after school; it is a good target audience but the brochure will not get to this group. Mucciolo suggested that the pamphlet focuses on the visual environment of the city, parks and historical buildings. This would benefit those that do not know what this town has to offer. Burgess suggested seasonal pamphlets. Medwid stated that he will head up a contest for users of the facilities to go out and take pictures. The pictures could be judged at the schools and Fava. If it does not work, we could hire someone. He said that by spring equinox there will be a group of winter photos for a contest. Burgess stated that we need to better define our audience and come up with a thesis statement for each park.

Sokoll arrived. Mucciolo left.

Sokoll stated that he will not be able to arrive to the meetings until 5:30 due to a conflict with his schedule. Medwid made a motion to move the meeting time to 5:30 p.m. starting with the November meeting. Seconded by Sonner. Motion carried unanimously.

Arbor Day Strategic Plan for Tree Plantings

Burgess stated that it is time to grow the theme of Arbor Day. We need to bring in the idea of climate change and make it an educational event. Sokoll added that there needs to be a lesson that trees take years to grow. We need to talk about trees and how they will eventually bear fruit that someone could harvest and sell. He asked how the sites were picked for the tree plantings. Sonner responded that the trees are planted on city property; it sets an example of reforestation.

Pilacky stated that the City is losing a lot of ash trees. This may be a good education topic; we can encourage residents to plant replacement trees. Burgess would like a long-term planting plan that

would show aesthetically pleasing places to plant trees. As they are planted we will keep a log as to where the tree is planted and the type of tree planted. Sonner volunteered to make a list of sources of support, information and funding. We need to plant more trees in Oberlin.

Medwid was concerned about ash trees; they are dying and dry. In 5 – 6 years this could be a fire hazard. Burgess asked if there was someone that could talk about ash tree eradication. He will email Alan Siewert from the Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources.

Sonner left.

Other Business

Burgess would like members to meet with Lorain County Metroparks. We need to keep up with what they are doing. Medwid added that the Metroparks worked with city council on the bikepath. Pilacky said that the Land Conservancy works constantly with the Metroparks. The Metroparks follow their strategic plan very close. They are good to the communities that vote for them. The Metroparks would probably listen to Oberlin if there was something we wanted to propose to them.

Burgess stated that he would like to see wildflowers planted at different locations throughout the city; this would reduce mowing. He asked the commission to come up with some ideas. Pilacky reminded the commission that wildflower areas still need to be maintained.


Burgess was upset that nothing was happening with the Green Acres building. He challenged the commission to come up with some ideas. They could have a nature playground that is educational and fun or a natural obstacle. Baumann stated that the County Commissioners were the hurdle.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the commission, the meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m. Motion by Medwid; seconded by Sonner.



Wesley Burgess, Chair
Open Space and Visual Environment Commission



Sheri Runals
Staff Support

Approved: 11, 23, 10