



**Open Space & Visual Environment Commission
Tuesday, August 23, 2011, 5:30 p.m.
City Hall Conference Room #2
85 South Main Street, Oberlin, Ohio**

- Members Present:** Wes Burgess (Chair), Carol Spiros (Vice-Chair), Eddie Miller, David Sonner
- Members Absent:** Aaron Mucciolo
- Others Present:** Jeff Baumann, Staff Support; Kate Pilacky, Council Liaison; David Ashenhurst; Scott Schell
- Others Absent:** Sheri Runals, Staff Support

Chair Burgess called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Approval of Minutes – July 26, 2011

Baumann stated that commission members are encouraged to attend the Sept. 6th city council meeting if they would like to give their opinion on the proposed change to reduce the number of Design Review Subcommittee members from 7 to 3. Council did not receive the recommendation from the OSVEC that was made at the last meeting. Pilacky stated that she will ask the city clerk to include the recommendation in the next city council packet. Ashenhurst added that at the last Planning Commission meeting Boyle mentioned that Open Space forwarded a recommendation calling for 5 members to the Design Review Subcommittee.

Motion by Spiros to approve the July 26, 2011 minutes as presented. Miller seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

Formation of a Cemetery Sub-Committee

Burgess asked if there were any further thoughts of forming a sub-committee and proposing a resolution to council. Baumann clarified that, procedurally, if the OSVEC wants to form a sub-committee they can appoint members internally. As for a joint commission or task force made up of representatives from other commissions, a recommendation would need to be made to council. Staff is already working with the Ohio Cemetery Foundation trying to fine tune a planning process with them to consider a variety of issues. This may include the formation of a permanent board or commission specific to cemetery operations. What the OSVEC is proposing may be premature but the commission is welcome to propose it. The city has been working the scope of a consulting services proposal with the Ohio Cemetery Foundation to look at a variety of issues. Some of the issues would be operations, best management practices, historic preservation, economics and fees.

The cemetery operations are currently paid for out of the general fund. It appears that the cemetery is currently taking in 40 – 50% of its own operating income. He was not sure how this compares to other cemeteries. Ashenhurst asked if the Ohio Cemetery Foundation told us what the ownership formats of cemeteries in Ohio are. He asked if they are mostly owned by cities and political subdivisions or are they owned by associations, churches or non-profits. Baumann replied that they probably have that information but we have not inquired. The goal is to see what it costs to run the cemetery. Secondly we would like to look at the creation of a perpetual care fund and a surcharge on burials and other services and donations that would go into that fund. People enjoy the cemetery and occasionally we do get donations for its enhancement.

Burgess stated that at past meetings the commission discussed issues that the OSVEC could tackle and others were out of the commission's purview. He found it interesting that Westwood Cemetery is much like a park. It is fascinating that we have a cemetery/city park. Pilacky added that there is a nice cemetery in Milan that has a nature preserve component to it.

Oberlin Main St. Director Introduction

Scott Schell was present to provide his vision for Oberlin in terms of visual environment and aesthetics of downtown. Schell introduced himself and stated that he became the Main St./Chamber Director this past December. It did not take him long to see how dedicated the locals are to this community. So far, working in this community has been rewarding.

There are four active committees with Main St. The four committees are Design, Promotion, Economic Restructuring, and Organization. The most active is the Design Committee; they deal with the aesthetics of the area. One of the early projects was the autumn leaf murals that got installed on the side of the Aladdin building in April. This project was started long before he got here. The vision was created by Robert Kothran of Kendal and turned over to the high school art department to transform his 11" x 17" sheet of paper into a 10' and a 17' section. Main St. and the chamber have worked with the hanging basket program. They share the cost with the City. There are some areas in which he hopes their organization and the OSVEC can work together to come up with some other projects. Dick Dunn has taken on a project to try to clean up and beautify the backs of the buildings that now face the new Kohl building. He met with the architect of the Kohl building to discuss what they would like to accomplish. Funds would need to be located to help with this project. People in downtown take a lot of pride in their properties and in presenting a proper image for people coming into the community from the outside.

Burgess asked Schell if he has talked to business owners to get their opinions on how to improve the downtown. He replied that he has not brought that specific question up to the merchants. They try to enhance the visitor's experience as well as the experience for the people that live here. Sonner stated that the high school art classes have been very important to visual environment. He asked if he foresaw any changes to this since the retirement of the art teacher. Schell replied that he would like to see this continue with the new art teacher and the students.

Spiros asked a few questions about the structure of Main Street/Chamber.

Burgess thanked Schell for attending the meeting.

No Spray Buffer Zone between Westwood and Golf Course

The commission is concerned about the condition of the pond at Westwood Cemetery. Burgess asked what would need to be done to see a change; whether it is by ordinance or by cooperation by the golf course. They would like to see some changes to the back section of the golf course on the down side of the slope. The algae in the pond are either from spray or fertilizers that the golf course or the cemetery is using. Burgess suggested taking water samples. Baumann asked what the

commission is trying determine. Burgess replied that they would like to see the pond cleaned up at the back of the cemetery. Baumann stated the area of the golf course that they are talking about is on the other side of the creek. It would go into Plum Creek but not into the pond. Burgess said that there is buffer zone that is exempt from spraying any chemicals so it does not run out into the pond, does not grow algae, and does not attract mosquitoes. Miller added that algae could block out the light for other water organisms. Baumann stated that by virtue of grade, the golf course is not interacting with the pond at Westwood. It is going to flow to the creek which is not good either. Burgess asked how we could clean up that area to make it more of an ecosystem and more inviting. Baumann stated that the cemetery staff is in charge of the maintenance of the pond and there are fish living in it. He was not sure of the comment of trying to create an ecosystem. Sometimes what people commonly refer to as algae is often duck weed. There are wood ducks and a lot of turtles there. When he has looked at the pond, it is not being overwhelmed by phosphorous or nitrogen based fertilizers. It is what you would naturally expect in a shaded pond area. Burgess stated that this alleviates his concerns.

Burgess would like the commission members to walk around the city and look at open spaces. Pilacky suggested that we have a Friends of Oberlin Parks. They could maintain the trails, maintain invasive species, build more duck boxes, etc.

Deer in Relation to Open Spaces and Residential Areas

Burgess stated that his brother recently moved to the east side of town and one night they saw herds of deer going down College St. Pilacky added that she sees them on 511 in that area and other areas around the city. There are just too many deer in this area. Burgess has heard that patrons of the library are concerned that the deer are overtaking Oberlin. He asked if there were any humane ways to lure them out of the city or to direct them into a certain area away from residential homes. Pilacky stated that there are too many deer and they are just looking for a place to go. Burgess asked if we could make salt licks that would lead them out of town. He is worried about this because residents have stated that they are going to start poisoning the deer which is against the law. He asked for solutions or a course of action which could be taken to live with them or to push them out. Spiros stated that if people hunt the deer where they are suppose to, the deer that are here would go there. Burgess said that the deer problem has also affected downtown merchants.

Ashenhurst suggested talking to someone from the Soil and Water Conservation Office or the Extension Office about what other communities are doing to deal with open spaces in the area. They would probably be happy to attend a future meeting.

This topic will be further discussed at a future meeting.

Other Business

Pilacky stated that Bryan Stubbs should attend a future meeting to talk about the Oberlin Project.

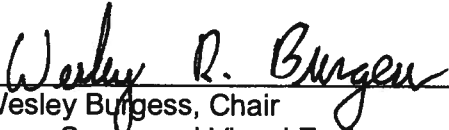
Miller stated that at the intersection of Lorain St. and Main St., there is a plant on Lorain St. in the open space that is a site line hazard looking north.

Ashenhurst stated that City Council scheduled a work session for Sept. 12th on the Climate Action Plan, Oberlin 2025 and Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan.

Pilacky stated that the Cleveland Museum of Natural History is hosting an upcoming Conservation Symposium.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the commission, the meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m. Motion by Miller; seconded by Spiros.



Wesley Burgess, Chair
Open Space and Visual Environment Commission



Sheri Runals
Staff Support

Approved: 9, 27, 11