

Meeting Minutes  
**Fairview Park Board**  
January 5, 2015

Board members present: Chairman Ron Rowe, Vice Chairman Jack Cannon, Secretary Richard Edmondson, Allen Bissell, Brandon Butler, and Jim Power; also present City Manager Wayne Hall, Park Director Keith Paisley, Park Superintendent Bryan Bissell;

Not present: Patti Carroll

- I. Chairman Rowe welcomed the two new Park Board members, Allen Bissell and Brandon Butler. The agenda was approved. The minutes of the November 3, 2014 meeting were also approved.
- II. General Park updates: Paisley announced a “Hot Coco and a Hike” event scheduled for January 17. Bryan Bissell gave a report on the “Volunteer Day in the Park” held on December 6. Approximately 60 people participated, planting approximately 150 trees that had been donated by Gro-Wild. The trees were planted in the area near the Dome that had been thinned of pine trees and control-burned earlier in the year. The objective was to get new hardwood growth started. Bissell described it as “a very successful day.”
- III. Allen Bissell, who is also a member of the Board of Commissioners, said he thought the Park Board’s efforts have not been productive over the past three years. He especially expressed concern over the Park System master plan currently being drawn up, and said he had recently introduced what has previously been referred to as the “Board of Commissioners mandate” in an effort to “try to get this on track.” Instead of taking a detailed, comprehensive approach, the master plan should be more succinct, particularly in the stating of goals, he said:

If one of the master goals is to develop the Out Parcel, then that’s what it ought to say. That’s what you say—“develop the Out Parcel.” If one of our goals is to expand the park system to include more services, that’s what it ought to say. Or a better variety of services. It doesn’t have to say in a master plan, “...and we’re going to do it by building all these campsites or whatever.” That’s where you go in and as a group we say, “Okay, we think that we should build campsites in the Out Parcel—that falls under that particular master plan strategic thing, this is what it will cost you, this is how much staff it will cost you to maintain it—this is your cost. And we see this as a higher priority than a splash pad.” So that what you give the Board (of Commissioners) is the true cost of what something is, what it falls into in terms of the long-term future of our city, and what priority we ought to be looking at it so that we’re not driven by available monies. See that’s my fear, is that actually we’re going to do little things rather than saying the first thing we ought to do—and I’m going to keep using the example of the Out Parcel—rather than saying the first thing we ought to do is utilize the Out Parcel. Well, in our current financial situation, that may be something the Board has to say, “Well, okay that’s going to cost us \$200,000. We don’t have \$200,000 in this fiscal year, but we can put a third of it up, a third of it up...and then three years

from now...Now, is there anything else we can do that's low cost in between that?...That's what I was trying to get, a very simple structure under a very broad umbrella that has actions by year that you want this Board to consider doing.

A prime concern of his, Allen Bissell said, is to know what the Park Board thinks can be done in the next fiscal year to expand or improve the park system, and he added that he would like to see more than one choice submitted—"so that we can discuss it and see if we can pay for it." He wants to see the choices listed along with estimates on costs. Edmondson asked for clarification on whether the master plan proposals that have been submitted (on Bowie Park, Veterans Park and the Out Parcel) are viewed by Allen Bissell as being too detailed or too wordy, or whether they should include different information from that currently presented. Bissell replied:

I'm saying the master plan is too comprehensive, it's too detail-oriented. Our master plan for our parks should be, "Over the next ten years we're going to do the following three or four things. We're going to expand the park system. We're going to provide more services. We're going to complete the History Village park. We're going to complete the work on the Veterans Memorial Park." Very high level stuff... "We're going to expand the park staffing and use of automation"... Those high level things. Then there is an under document for each one of those that is the actual action plan.

He said the proposed master plan drawn up for Bowie Park is "a great document," but that it "commingles everything to the point that it becomes overwhelming." He said a "strategic plan" should be no more than two pages in length and should state only state a few items, perhaps four or five at most, that the park system needs, along with cost information on each item. Bryan Bissell asked for clarification as to whether Allen Bissell intended that the master plan for Bowie Park (currently 33 pages long in its draft form) should be reduced down to two pages. Allen Bissell said this is what he meant. He added: "And then I'm talking about under each one of those four or five items you have a specific document that outlines the actions you intend to take to fulfill that." Edmondson asked whether the cost information should be in the master plan. Allen Bissell replied that the cost information should go not in the master plan, but in an "action plan." He then described the action plan as a "subset" from the master plan. All the items listed in the action plan, or plans, should tie into one of the broad goals stated in the master plan. For instance, the master plan might state the need for increasing the recreational services offered in the city's park system, while an action plan might propose the building of a soccer field at the Elrod Road property and give an estimate of the cost. The master plan would thus state generally the need for additional recreation opportunities—while the action plan would list the specifics, i.e. the soccer field, for instance, and provide an idea how much it will cost. The two plans are separate, but are tied or linked to each other in this manner. Allen Bissell likened it to a jellyfish—with the top of the jellyfish being the master plan, and the tentacles underneath representing the action plans.

Cannon said the idea behind the drawing up of a comprehensive master plan had been to give the staff a document to work from, and to be able to refer to from time to time as needed. He added:

The Bowie master plan is just about complete other than the fact that we've got to figure out what the control burn cycles are going to be to go with the jellyfish tentacle where you're going to have the action plan as far as—(for instance)—“In March we do our controlled burns...and here's who we need to work with.

Cannon also said the Park Board needs to have an ambassador or representative on the Williamson County Parks and Recreation Board. Rowe said he thought “we haven't got to that point yet,” and added that he agreed with Allen Bissell that “we need to put structure to this.” Bryan Bissell voiced the opinion that a master plan for a park should be more comprehensive, and include more information, than the type of plan being proposed by Allen Bissell. Said Bryan:

I think it's probably important for you to understand that the master plan, the overall objective for the master plan, I think, is maybe not exactly what—I know you think you're talking about the same document, and you may want to call it the master plan, but the master plan, a general master plan of a park or park system includes a lot more than just the action plans and the things that you're talking about. It also includes the inventories, what you have now, what you hope to get, it includes your wildlife, it includes your vegetation. The master plan is very detailed and includes a lot of things that—when you said earlier that you'd like to see that shrunk down, I don't necessarily think that shrinking that down is the goal here. I think that including what you're talking about within it, so that you show what you currently have, where you're at now, and also where you're trying to go and also what you hope to see in the future, and what you'd like to see future staff and future boards work towards would be more at least my idea of what the master plan would entail.

Allen Bissell responded, “I think that the way you all are approaching the master plan seems to be a very good idea where each one of these is a master plan, each one of these tentacles, is a master plan. Then maybe what I'm looking for is a strategic direction or a strategic plan.”

Bryan Bissell said he understood the need for the type of strategic plan Allen Bissell was talking about but that the strategic plan should be inserted into the master plan.

“No, I see it exactly flip-flop from that,” Allen Bissell replied.

The conversation also branched into current city subdivision regulations which call for developers to provide open space for playgrounds or neighborhood parks. Rowe said that regulations require any new development coming in to have green space. He said the amount of greenspace could be “up to ten percent,” but added that no precise amount is specified. Also it is questionable as to whether the city would want to take possession of and be responsible for each one of these parks or green spaces, Rowe said, and that the general feeling on the Planning Commission is that the homeowners associations should maintain them. Edmondson asked if the regulations shouldn't be tightened up to require developers to allocate at least a minimum amount of green space based upon the size of the development.

Allen Bissell suggested that a recommendation to that effect could be the type of thing that would go into the strategic plan.

Rowe passed out a document he drew up entitled “Park Commission Suggestions for the 5-Year Plan” that incorporated suggestions (14 in all) given by each member at the November 3, 2014 meeting. At that meeting each Park Board member put forward three to five suggestions of things they would like to see implemented over the next five years. Rowe’s document also included a flow-chart diagram of the city’s park system. Allen Bissell said he plans to email each Park Board member an outline of a hypothetical strategic plan that would include a diagram somewhat similar to Rowe’s, only with more detail. Bryan Bissell cautioned against expanding the park system or the services provided by the park system without first making sure there is sufficient park staff to handle the extra responsibility. Power said the park system is understaffed now, and that the problem is especially bad during mowing season. Allen Bissell said the 2015-16 budget year is going to be lean. Hall said he is hopeful the city will get a \$2000 grant from Walmart for placement of flagpoles at Veterans Park. Allen Bissell said that would be the sort of low-cost item the city could probably fulfill this year, but that larger park projects, such as the campground at the Out Parcel, would be unlikely to get approved. Another low-cost item might be a dog park. Allen Bissell said he thought a city-owned property on Deer Ridge Road would be the perfect place for such a facility. Edmondson pointed out that the Deer Ridge property had never been designated by the Board of Commissioners for park use, but Bryan Bissell said this would not matter, and that the Park Board could recommend it anyway. Board members reached an informal consensus that ADA accessibility, flag poles, a picnic shelter, and paved parking are the goals to work toward at Veterans Park. The consensus also included the need for a ranger station at Bowie Park, and the desirability of a splash pad to be developed jointly with the county.

IV. Public comments: Several members of the Friends of Bowie Nature Park made comments, including Kathy Tarolli, who said the city web site currently does not mention the Park Board meetings. Hall said that the city is working on a new web site and that that problem would be corrected.

V. Park Board comments: Power asked about the bridge across the creek. Bryan Bissell said preparations are under way, a material list and a proposal have been prepared for the Board of Commissioners, and that “we hope to start construction on it in the next couple of weeks.” Cannon said there is a need for two benches to be placed along the Perimeter Trail in the back half of the park, one of them “about 25 percent of the way up from Hall Cemetery” and the other at Hall Cemetery itself. Cannon also said he had talked with a state official who had suggested the possibility of the city acquiring volunteer help through Americorps.

VI. The next meeting will take place February 2, with the starting time at 7 rather than 6 p.m. The meeting was adjourned.