

Meeting Minutes
Fairview Park Board
Feb. 4, 2013

Board members present: Chairwoman Beverly Totty, Bob Benson, Patti Carroll, Mark Dietze, Secretary Richard Edmondson, Neil Rice, plus Park Program Director Jenny Herrera

Absent: Vice-Chairman Jack Cannon, Samantha Towler

Also present: City Manager Andrew Hyatt, members of the Friends of Bowie Park

I. Meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Totty. Agenda was approved, as were the minutes of the January 7 meeting.

II. Park Board updates: Herrera said programming at the park continues, even though the weather is cold. Upcoming events include a talk by Dennis Gibson on the importance of nature in childhood, she said. She also said that summer camp registration began on February 1. Hyatt said that planning is under way for this year's MayFest, which will be held May 25, and that winter weather this year, so far, has not had an adverse impact on the park. Totty inquired about Redbud Trail being blocked off at Loblolly Loop. Herrera said there has recently been maintenance work on some of the trails due to recent heavy rains, and that that might be the reason.

III. Old Business: Edmondson presented a draft of a pine thinning plan, which he said had been endorsed by City Arborist Mike Berkley. The plan calls for the thinning of a 3.2 acre section of the park starting in the spring of 2013. The area would be subdivided into three test plots of roughly an acre each which in turn would be thinned to varying density levels, including one section which would essentially be clear-cut of pines and replanted as a prairie. All replanting, including prairie grasses as well as trees, would take place in the fall of 2013. Care would be taken to prevent exotic invasive plant species from taking hold, including possible herbicide spraying in some areas. Additional sections of the park to be thinned are identified in "Bowie map #1," which accompanies the plan. Edmondson said he had not yet heard back from State Forester Dwight Barnett yet or nay on the draft, but noted that it is "very close" to Barnett's original proposal made at the January 7 meeting. He then introduced a motion that the Park Board approve the plan and forward it to the Board of Commissioners and to the Land Trust for final approval. The motion was seconded by Totty. In discussion on the measure, Benson proposed 1) that a footnote be added defining the term "basal," and, 2) that the plan should include a statement that all trees to be cut would be identified by a forester. Dietze recommended that the term "marked" also be added, along with the word "identified." Edmondson said he could easily make those changes and send out a revised draft by email. Benson proposed that Edmondson's motion be amended to include the proposed changes. The motion then passed unanimously.

IV. Survey results: Dietze said the answers given on the previous survey were mostly about Bowie Park, and that a new survey is called for, one clearly explaining that the city has

additional pieces of land designated for park use and including a map showing their location. Totty said the city's website could include a link to a page that would furnish all of the information, including the map, proposed by Dietze. Totty also announced that she had met with the county mayor to tell him about the survey, and had discussed with him the implications that it has for county-provided services:

“He saw the thing within three seconds of looking at the paper—that it was our soccer fields are insufficient, they were not up to par; and that our community desired more soccer access, indoor soccer, better soccer fields, maintained soccer fields. He didn't give me any promises or any hope, but he did say, ‘we can work together.’ So it looks like something that we may have to show him the money to be able to work together to get what we need... Ultimately if we want something better in the soccer arena, we're going to have to ante up; we're going to have to pitch in, in what we want and what we're willing to work for, and his statement was, ‘If you get half, we'll build anything you want.’”

The county mayor's call for the city to “get half” would likely mean half of the money to both *acquire* the property as well as *build the facility*, said Dietze—“And I'm sitting here saying great. If the soccer club is ready, willing, and able to put in some money, and the city was to designate it, do a survey, and do the land, well that is half,” he added. Totty noted that some people who responded to the survey requested more bathrooms, and suggested that the city manager and staff could look into the possibility of acquiring port-o-johns. She said other survey responders had also suggested things that could similarly be handled by the city manager, citing requests for hitching posts as an example. Herrera said shelter #3 at Twin Lakes already has a hitching post that was put up a couple of years ago.

Hyatt updated the Board on city efforts to make the Evergreen Industrial property more attractive and usable for recreational purposes, including putting in picnic tables and also the possibility of a building a fishing dock or pier, as well as clearing the area of brush and broken limbs.

Totty talked about the possibility of putting a soccer field on the Elrod property, and noted that a number of survey respondents had requested additional soccer facilities, while few, if any, had expressed a need for more baseball, football, or softball fields. She said the next step is to get an architect's layout showing where the soccer field would be, where the community garden would be, as well as entrance, exits, restrooms, etc. She said the layout could possibly also designate where an indoor soccer arena might be built at some future point. Dietze countered that “I don't see the rush,” and reiterated that the only survey conducted thus far was about Bowie Park and that additional surveys need to be done before decisions of this type are made. He said the fact that the survey was focused mainly on Bowie Park might explain the dearth of responses pertaining to football, baseball, or softball.

Edmondson suggested the possibility of having a new survey available for people to fill out when they come and pay their property taxes, but Hyatt said it was probably too late to do that this year and that 65-70 percent of property taxes are in escrow and the payment comes

from a bank. Edmondson also suggested MayFest as a potential opportunity for circulation of a survey. Rice suggested the possibility of enclosing a survey on the park system later this year when the city mails out its tax notices, while Dietze described Publix supermarket as a “great partner” in that it is sitting on what was once park land, and suggested the management of the company might be willing to assist in disseminating a survey to the public. He said the company might even be willing to offer an incentive for people to fill out the surveys, such as offering a donation of some sort to local parks or schools. He also said the fact that shoppers at Publix do not necessarily pay city taxes wouldn’t matter so much. Hyatt said the survey could include a “generic” question such as “Do you live within a certain distance of Bowie Park,” or simply ask respondents to tell what zip code they live in. Hyatt also suggested the possibility of getting permission from the School Board and sending the surveys home via school kids. He said the city had done that in the past and had gotten almost 100 percent response. Dietze suggested possibility of also involving churches, the Lions Club, and “anyone else who stands to benefit from this.” Rice said necessary components of survey statistics are “validity and reliability,” and that “there really needs to be some thought given to how a survey is composed.”

Rice gave an update on Triangle School, saying he had met with an architect at the school who will be handling wiring and insulation, and who had told him that the windows cannot be restored.

V. Out Parcel: Totty said she thought a good use for the out parcel would be overnight camping, and noted that the parcel is not covered under the conservation easement. She also said there are management and consulting companies who specialize in building campgrounds, and some who not only build them but will also manage them for a fee. She then asked the other Board members for their comments or thoughts. The first to speak was Dietze, who said, “While I don’t disagree that camping is a use, I don’t know that it’s *the* use.” He once again reiterated that more public input is needed. He also said he would like to see the Board of Commissioners formally clarify, in writing, that the parcel is not to be used as a firing range. Then, once that clarification is made, the next step would be to do a survey. He also suggested that the out parcel, even though not covered under the conservation easement, should be formally declared a part of Bowie Park.

The next to speak was Carroll, who said she would look favorably toward having a campground in the area, and could also envision a lodge as well. However, she also cautioned against rushing into a decision. Totty interjected that a lodge would generate hotel/motel tax, income that could be earmarked toward the park.

Benson described the out parcel as “a unique piece of property” in that it is part of Bowie Park, but separated by Dice Lampley Road. He also said he thought camping would be a good use for the parcel.

Hyatt also said he thought camping would be good, and also suggested the possibility of cabins. Herrera, too, liked the idea of cabins, and said that campgrounds limited to tent camping are going out of business. She said the area might also be suitable for 5-K races, and noted that she often gets requests for such.

Rice also said he liked the idea of a campground, and one that would also include RV camping.

Edmondson, too, said camping would be a great use of the out parcel, but added that “the first question we want to ask ourselves is whether this land would be suitable for camping.” He said campgrounds generally require level ground because “when you park your RV at night, you want to park it on level ground. You don’t want to go to sleep with your feet up here and your head down there.” While he has never walked the out parcel himself, Edmondson said he had heard from others that it has a slope to it.

Totty asked if the Board members would be amenable to having a representative from a campground management or consulting firm come and address the Board. Edmondson and Rice both said they would. Hyatt said he thought the terrain would be suitable. Dietze said sporting goods stores don’t sell tents anymore, and that if the city is “going to get in the business of lodging and cabins, then I want to attack it like a business plan.” He said a business plan should be done with “fiscal responsibility.” Businesses work, he said, “because they use tried and true practices,” and he added that “everything else that doesn’t use that practice doesn’t work.” However, he also cautioned, and again reiterated, that “we don’t know what everyone wants,” and that for that reason it would be premature to have consultants come and address the Board:

When we get to the point that we say, ‘Gosh it’s crystal clear, they want cabins—they want a skate park—they want a dog park—’ then, and only then, if we are going to utilize our time efficiently, do we bring these experts in. But I guess I’m kind of putting my foot down and saying, ‘I don’t want any more experts coming in on maybes.’ I want to focus, and focus hard, on what does the community want.

VI. Widening of Bowie Lake Road: Hyatt said the bids on the project would be opened the following day (February 5) at 2 p.m.

VII. New Business: Totty said the Board of Commissioners has asked the Park Board to develop a feasibility study on highway road signage for Bowie Park, and at this point she turned the floor over to Hyatt, who supplied pricing information he had been quoted from the LOGO company. A one-color sign on the interstate advertising the park would cost a one-time fee of \$768 (which would pay for four signs, one in either direction, plus one on each exit), plus an annual fee of \$529. Hyatt suggested the money, if the project is approved, should come out of the Park Fund, or that possibly the Friends of the Park could might raise money for it. Benson made a motion to recommend that the Board of Commissioners approve the signage. Totty seconded. Totty also asked Eva Harris, president of the Friends of the Park, to address the issue. Harris said the matter has been placed on the agenda of an upcoming Friends meeting (to take place February 9). She said the idea had been discussed in previous years, and that there was substantial support for it amongst the membership. She said that possibly the group might vote to take on one expense or the other, that is to say the one-time fee or the annual fee. Hyatt said he didn’t think the annual fee would be due until 2014. Dietze moved to amend the motion

to the following: the organization “Dietze for Bowie Park” would agree to put up the one-time fee if the Board of Commissioners would agree to pay for the annual fee.

Carroll commented that it was “a very generous offer” on Dietze’s part. She also said she didn’t think the paying of the annual, ongoing fee should be the responsibility of the Friends, nor should the cost be paid for out of the Park Fund. “I think it should be a budgeted line item as a marketing tool that can be forever used to bring people into Fairview,” she said. Totty called for a vote on the amended motion. It passed unanimously. Benson then withdrew the original motion.

VIII. The next meeting will take place March 4, 2013, at 6 p.m. The meeting was then adjourned.