

PARK BOARD MEETING MINUTES
September 2, 2009

Board Present: Sam Garceau, Scott Grinder, Janet Luchies and Mark Anthony Martin, Andrea Stork, Susan Williams

Staff Present: Bill Deming and John Milowe

Excused: Elizabeth Jarzambek, Bery Pannkuk, John Pfund, and Christine Price

Meeting was called to order at **6:30 p.m. at Westfield Park.**

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES: The August minutes were unanimously approved.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS: Dave Ostrem (Kazoo Area Foot Chase) and Westfield Park neighbors: Denise DeVries, Michelle O'Neill and Grace Smith

1. Denise DeVries commented that Westfield Park is well kept, and sees a lot of active use from residents. She noted some areas of concern: broken yellow slide and squeaky swings. She also raised concerns of crossing Milham Road by foot to get to the park. She said the speed limit is 45 miles an hour in the area and with no sidewalks, or crosswalks this creates a dangerous situation. She suggested some kind of traffic light there, possibly one where you push a button to get the "walk" to cross. She suggested signs and crosswalks to aid in pedestrian access to the park.

Bill Deming explained that the road will be under construction within the coming year, and said that he would raise the concern with the Transportation & Utilities Department (note: an e-mail was drafted to that effect and sent to the appropriate parties on September 3, 2009).

Grace Smith, inquired about capital improvement funds for Westfield Park, and asked what is being planned as far as improvements. John Milowe explained that there is regular upgrading, and improvement fund and that all of the city parks are reviewed annually. He indicated he wasn't sure what improvements were to be completed next at Westfield Park. The neighbors were asked for input. Discussion ensued regarding children's safety, and it was noted that many of the play structures in city parks seem geared toward younger aged children (toddlers).

Concern was raised about the wall near the swingset/play area, and the distance of the picnic shelter from the swingset/play area. It was noted that besides AYSO soccer, there was little to do for middle/high school youth at the park. Discussion about the importance of having "age-appropriate" activities/areas within the park for older children and the neighbors expressed concern that the need was being overlooked within the Portage Park system. The play structure at Moorsbridge Elementary School was noted as being interesting, and something that older kids like. (Specifically the play piece that allows the child to hold onto a wheel above their heads, feet on another wheel, wiggled her body and spin around.) Discussion about public play structures and who inspects structures ensued.

A neighbor suggested that it might be a good idea to post when/where Park Board meetings are to be held in order to increase resident participation. The suggestion was made to post in the Portager. All the residents were thanked for their input and comments and encouraged to join the Park Board.

2. Resident, Dave Ostrem, of the Kazoo Area Foot Chase, made a presentation about the upcoming event, which will be held September 12, at Celery Flats. Mr. Ostrem explained that this is the 8th annual event. Originally, the event was to be held in a different municipality, but due to the cooperation on part of the Portage Parks Department and the Portage Police Department, as well as ability to change the course yearly – each of the eight events has taken place in Portage. Mr. Ostrem asked for volunteers to help in a walking portion of the event.

3. Scott Grinder relayed a story of a recent incident that happened to one of his neighbors at Ramona Park. The neighbor entered the park before the pay booth was open and was later approached by a lifeguard or ranger instructing her to go back to the pay booth and pay for her use of the park. The neighbor had small children with her, which meant she had to pack up her things, including the children, to go back to the pay booth to pay the entrance fee. She explained the situation, but was told that's what the rules were. At that, she decided to pack up her children, and leave the park. She suggested a gate be put up to block cars from entering the beach lot or the park should be kept closed until the booth is opened. Discussion about looking into the process, and possibly having the lifeguard/rangers that are requesting compliance with the entrance fee being able to issue a day pass on the beach. The issue was tabled, and will be reviewed at a future meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

A. **Westfield Park Overview:** presented by Scott Grinder

B. **Sub-committee reports**

- Photo Contest: Andrea reported we are still looking for sponsors.
- Spray Park Update: Scott Grinder reported that the sponsorship drive has been ongoing. Scott and his committee members were on hand at many of the summer entertainment series events, which has led to increased awareness of the spray Park initiative, but few actual donations. The need for additional time to procure donations was encouraged. The amount targeted for the spray Park is around \$225,000.

C. **Collaboration Event Ideas:** Per a directive from City Council, the Park Board, Environmental Board and Youth Board are to develop a cooperative environmental event for the spring of 2010. Initial suggestions from the Park Board are: shoreline cleanup along lakes, creek shore cleanup on Portage Creek and seedling planting. Mark Anthony Martin reported that he has been in contact with the Environmental and Youth Boards regarding the joint initiative and communication is ongoing.

D. **Park Board Assignments Reports:** Board members gave reports on their park assignments – all parks are active and well maintained.

The meeting reconvened at 7:15 pm at Harbor's West Park.

SUMMARY ACTIVITY:

1. Mark Anthony read summary activity: reported that most summer activities are coming to an end.
2. John Milowe commented that the Full Moon Canoe event on August 6 was well attended and appeared to be well received.
3. SES summer events were scaled back due to the economy and funding, however SES events were still plentiful and enjoyed by Portage Residents.

Comments from the board members: Thank you Sam and Andy for your service. Both members served two terms on the Park Board and are "retiring" and have vowed to welcome volunteering where needed on Park Board Events. It has been great working with you.

Meeting adjourned at 7:25 pm

Respectfully Submitted,
Andrea Stork, Park Board Member