



TOWNSHIP OF FERGUSON

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Parks and Recreation Committee Meeting Agenda Ferguson Township Conference Room 2 Tuesday, November 19, 2019 4:00 p.m.

- I. CALL TO ORDER
- II. CITIZEN'S INPUT
- III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
- IV. DISCUSSION OF THE LOW-/NO-MOW AREA AT CECIL IRVIN PARK

Narrative

The Township heard concerns from residents who live on Sunday Drive and adjoin the park. Property owners expressed discontent with the Grow Zone area. Mr. Bryan Rodgers and Ms. Ruth Cooper were invited to attend this meeting to share their observation and concerns with the Committee regarding the undeveloped area at Cecil Irvin Park. The Committee should discuss the item and recommend any changes to the maintenance of the undeveloped areas of the park. Options may include the following:

- Continue "business-as-usual" and mow the area twice per year before and after the growing season;
- Mow and maintain the undeveloped area in the same manner as the developed area;
- Install a landscape buffer along the park perimeter that may be more aesthetically pleasing to adjoining property owners; or
- Identify another potential solution.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee **discuss** the low-/no-mow area at Cecil Irvin Park.

V. ESTABLISHMENT OF 2020 MEETING SCHEDULE

Narrative

The Committee should identify meeting dates, times, and location to establish the 2020 meeting schedule.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee **discuss** and confirm 2020 meeting schedule.

VI. UPDATE ON THE SONGBIRD SANCTUARY PARK MASTER PLAN

Narrative

Staff facilitated resident and stakeholder participation as part of the continued planning process efforts to broaden the understanding of resident recreation interests and explore opportunities for the park. Public comments were gathered by working with an ad hoc Steering Committee, conducting an online opinion survey, and holding three public meetings. The master planning process is near complete and

a draft of the master plan is attached for the Parks Committee review and comment. The master plan draft will also be on the Township's website for residents to review and offer comment. The Ad Hoc Committee Steering Committee will review cumulative input and update the pre-final design and narrative master plan for the Board's consideration.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee **receive** an update on the Songbird Sanctuary Park master planning process.

VII. REPORTS

1. Staff Report
2. Centre Region Parks and Recreation Authority Report – Mr. Bill Keough

VIII. OPEN DISCUSSION

IX. ADJOURNMENT

FERGUSON TOWNSHIP PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, October 14, 2019
4:00 P.M.

I. ATTENDANCE

The Parks and Recreation Committee held its meeting on Monday, October 14, 2019, in Conference Room 2. In attendance were:

Committee:

Niki Tourscher, Chairperson,
Andrew McKinnon, Vice-Chair-Absent
Kathie Vondracek, Secretary
Shawna Doerksen
Connie Puckett-Absent
Norris Muth-Absent
Denise Meyer

Staff:

David Pribulka, Township Manager
Centrice Martin, Assistant to the Manager

Others in attendance were: Summer Krape, Recording Secretary; Ruth Cooper, Ferguson Township Resident, Laura Dinnini, Ferguson Township Resident.

II. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Niki Tourscher called the Parks and Recreation Committee meeting to order on Monday, October 14, 2019 at 4:03 pm.

III. CITIZEN'S INPUT

Ruth Cooper stated that her property abuts the undeveloped part of Cecil Irvin Park, she heard that 2019 would be the year of beginning phase 2. With 2019 almost over she would like to know what the next stages are. Mr. Pribulka stated that the Township submitted a grant application to the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources that was unsuccessful last year. Since it was unsuccessful the Township was unable to continue. The Township plans to submit another application in 2021 to apply for funding again. If that application is successful, the development of phase 2 will begin in 2022.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF AUGUST 12, 2019 MEETING

Ms. Tourscher entertained a motion approve the August 12, 2019 minutes. Mrs. Meyer made a motion to approve and Ms. Shawna Doersken seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

V. CECIL IRVIN PARK'S UNDEVELOPED AREA

Ms. Tourscher stated the staff received some concern about the grow zone/no mow area at Cecil Irvin Park from Ms. Cooper and a Mr. Brian Rogers. Mr. Pribulka stated that the un-developed acreage has been partly leased to Cinda Corl for a cash crop and the remainder is unable to be farmed because there is a stormwater basin; which in the last year CRPC stopped mowing regularly. The mowing schedule is at the start of the growing season in April and again at the end which is in late September. Ms. Cooper and Mr. Rogers are concerned about invasive species and wildlife that are in this area. The residents would like to know what the Township plans to do with the area. Mr. Pribulka stated the Township did not follow the same process as Fairbrook Park, Cecil Irvin Park was less deliberate than Fairbrook Park's grow zone implementation. The Board identified a section of Fairbrook Park as a designated grow zone area. Mr. Pribulka stated that there are several different options for the area such as: continuing to do what we have been doing by mowing it once or twice a year, mow it once a week, plant a landscape buffer that the Township Arborist prepared which would cost around \$40,000, plant a meadow mix. The Township needs to be careful with what is placed in the area because it is a

stormwater basin and it needs to keep its functionality. Ms. Tourcher agreed that the landscape buffer is expensive.

Ms. Cooper brought a piece of the grass in from the area to show the length, she also stated that the undeveloped area at Cecil Irvin is thick and you can't walk through it. Ms. Cooper stated that she doesn't want to see the Township spend money on mowing the area once a week. Ms. Cooper is concerned about the invasive plants and wildlife, she noted that there is a lot of ground hog holes in the area. Mrs. Meyer asked Ms. Cooper what she would like to see be done. Ms. Cooper stated that she would like the Township to communicate to the community and make information available to residents. She would like to see it mowed more than twice a year. Ms. Tourcher asked if the mowing once every 6 weeks would be acceptable. Ms. Cooper stated that she would like that. Ms. Cooper also wanted to know if there is a list of an invasive species list. Ms. Tourcher stated that Committee member Mr. Norris Muth, who is absent from this meeting, is very knowledgeable on this topic and would be able to discuss this topic better. Ms. Tourcher thanked Ms. Cooper for attending and giving feedback. Ms. Doersken asked if there will be other parks that will be designated a grow zone? Mr. Pribulka stated that staff has discussed some areas that could be a grow zone. Ms. Cooper asked the reason of the no mowing areas. Mr. Pribulka stated that it is to encourage habitat for wildlife and insects, encourage natural areas, and infiltration managing with stormwater. Ms. Tourcher asked the Committee members if they would like to continue this discussion at the next meeting as she would like to get Mr. Muth and Mr. Andy McKinnon's thoughts on this topic. It was agreed that this topic will be added to the November meeting agenda.

VI. STANDARD OPERATING POLICY FOR MOWING IN PARKS

Ms. Tourcher explained that Public Works Director David Modricker has drafted a standard operating policy for mowing in parks. Mr. Keough asked if any other municipality has a standard operating policy. Ms. Dinnini stated that this is for areas that CRPC will not mow. Mr. Keough stated that in his opinion toward the grow zone is that because an area is a no mow area it doesn't mean that the area is not managed. He's not hearing a lot of emphasis on a plan for the no mow areas. There doesn't seem to be a management piece that comes with the low mow/no mow area and that the management side could be costly. Ms. Martin stated that she had met with Lance King, Township Arborist, today regarding this. Mr. King has met with Pam Ford to discuss some management plans. The Committee decided to also add this topic to a future meeting agenda as well.

VII. WATER FOUNTAIN REMOVAL OR REPLACEMENT AT HOMESTEAD PARK

Ms. Tourcher gave a brief overview of this topic to the Committee. Mrs. Doersken stated that the playground will be updated in 2021 so in her opinion the water fountain will be used so it will need repaired. Ms. Martin stated that in the budget this is the last water fountain that will be ADA updated. Mrs. Doersken made a motion to keep/repair the said water fountain and Ms. Vondracek seconded the motion.

VIII. COMMITTEE MEMBER SCHEDULE CONFLICT

Ms. Tourcher asked Ms. Martin if she could ask Mr. Muth what times/days would work for him for the remainder of the year. The Committee decided that a Tuesday or Wednesday at 4:00 pm would work best. Ms. Tourcher stated that she is unavailable on the first Wednesday and the forth Wednesday is the day before thanksgiving. Ms. Martin will send a doodle poll with these dates.

IX. REPORTS

1. STAFF REPORT

Ms. Martin gave an update on Haymarket Park. Township Arborist recommended the Township partner with U.S Fish and Wildlife to convert a stormwater basin into a pollinator habitat. This will be a pilot study to allow the Township engineer to see if there is any negative affect on the water and impacts volume control with the water. Ms. Martin stated to the Committee that Homestead and Fairbrook Park have both been paved this summer. The Zoning Hearing Board received three variance requests for the Whitehall Road Regional Park, two were granted and one was not.

2. CENTRE REGION PARKS AND RECREATION AUTHORITY REPORT – MR. BILL KEOUGH

Mr. Keough stated that the authority has met with State College Borough Water Authority since they own the property beside the Whitehall Road Regional Park and discussed a possible partnership to make some walking trails on their grounds. Nothing has been confirmed but there will be continued discussion. They are currently dealing with variance request that was not approved. Several grants are still in the decision stage for the park.

X. OPEN DISCUSSION

Mrs. Meyer stated that she attended the story walk as a resident and it was great. Someone wrote a letter to the CDT slamming the story walk. This person complained about the way it looked, not the correct age group for it, and money could have been used elsewhere. Ms. Martin suggested that the Township will write a short story in the Township newsletter to clear up some of his issues. Ms. Martin said she would reach out to Ms. Meyer for a quote to include in an article.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Doersken made a Mrs. Meyer seconded. With no further discussion, the Parks and Recreation Committee adjourned at 5:30 PM.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

KATHIE VONDRACEK, SECRETARY
FOR THE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE

Songbird Sanctuary Park Master Plan

Ferguson Township, Centre County, Pennsylvania
2019-2020

Prepared for:

Ferguson Township Board of Supervisors, Centre County Pennsylvania

Steering Committee:

David Pribulka, Township Manager

Centrice Martin, Assistant to the Township Manager

Andrew McKinnon, Parks and Recreation Committee Member

Kathie Vondracek, Parks and Recreation Committee Member

Norris Muth, Parks and Recreation Committee Member

Lance King, Ferguson Township Arborist

Kristina Aneckstein, Ferguson Township Community Planner

Jon Kaufmann, Ferguson Township Resident and Shaver's Creek Environmentalist

Introduction

Songbird Sanctuary Park is a passive park in Ferguson Township, Centre County. Songbird Sanctuary Park serves the nearby residents and schools, Young Scholars, Goddard School, and State College Area High School in the southeast portion of the municipality. Songbird Sanctuary was acquired by the Township in 2016 and this document serves as the first (pre-final draft) master plan. Incremental developments have occurred in stages since that time. Incremental developments include invasive species removal, pollinator habitat area and tree plantings. This master plan will propose passive amenities only, maintenance plan, and summarize the master planning process.

Planning Process

The Songbird Sanctuary Park Master Plan provides a vision for the park into the next decade and beyond. The park planning process for the Master Plan included four main parts:

1. Inventory and Assessment of the Natural Resources
2. Park Master Planning
3. Public Participation
4. Costs and Implementation Strategy

Community Background

Ferguson Township was formed in 1801 and was named for Thomas Ferguson, an early settler. The Township encompasses approximately 50 square miles and the 2010 U.S. Census population counted 17,690 residents. The 2018 American Community Survey estimated the population at 18,837.

The municipality has home rule governance and is a member of the Centre Region Council of Governments (CRCOG). CRCOG includes six municipalities in the State College Region. Ferguson Township surrounds State College Borough, home to Penn State University, to the north, west, and south.

Songbird Sanctuary Park is one of twelve municipal parks owned by Ferguson Township. As part of a Pine Hall Drainage Area Evaluation performed by Sweetland Engineering in 2004, this 8.99-acre property, formerly owned by private citizen, was identified for being a natural absorption area for upstream drainage which provides stormwater infiltration. The property was added to the Township Official Map as a Natural Area Conservation for having both significance for passive recreation and environmental benefits. In 2016, the Township acquired the 8.99-acre property bounded by Owens Drive and Blue Course Drive.

Township municipal parks are acquired and developed by Ferguson Township. Centre Region Parks and Recreation (CRPR), an agency managed by and provides services for CRCOG municipality members, provides maintenance and recreation programming for 54 municipal parks owned by participating municipality CRCOG members.

Inventory and Assessment of Natural Resources

Songbird Sanctuary Park is an undeveloped park site with a pollinator area located in the southern portion of the park. Most of the site is undeveloped with zero amenities situated next to a parking lot in the cul-de-sac of Owens Drive. A natural vegetative buffer separates the park from most of the nearby parcels.

General Site Data

Size/Location

The park, as it exists today, is 8.99-acres in size and is located South of the Waffle Shop, 1610 West College Avenue, State College, and continues along Blue Course Drive until property boundaries abut against residential properties situated in Kennelworth Court in Ferguson Township.

Access

Vehicular access to the site is provided from Owens Drive, State College in Ferguson Township, Centre County. Pedestrians or bicyclists may also access the site from the sidewalk along Blue Course Drive, State College, between the traffic light at the corner of Blue Course Drive and West College Avenue and the traffic light where Blue Course Drive intersects with Westerly Park Way.

Existing and Surrounding Land Use

The existing land use is municipal passive park. Surrounding land uses include:

- Commercial zoned property lot is positioned (in front) of property along West College Avenue
- Single family residential lots surround the park on the southside
- Undeveloped wooded area border the (left side), on the other side of Blue Course Drive.
- Undeveloped land, owned by Penn State, (property type V) is on the other side of West College Avenue

Natural Resources

Vegetation

The site currently has a mixed stand of vegetation. The Northern part of the tract is dominated by a grove of Aspen. The area of the property near Owen's Drive is composed of a lot of Black Walnut. As such, not much other woody plant material is found in this section.

The remainder of the site aside from the pollinator garden is made up of the usual successional species. Tress such as Black Locust, Boxelder Maple, and other mature trees can be found scattered throughout the central and southern portions of the tract. 1.25 acres of native tree and shrub plantings, and a half an acre designated to develop a pollinator garden in the northern section of the property.

Invasive Species

Invasive species were noted throughout the entire wooded area of the park. Controlling non-native and invasive plants is important for the long-term health of the vegetation and habitat for wildlife.

Pollinator Garden

The approximately ¼ acre pollinator garden was planted in the spring of 2019. The garden design and planting plan was prepared by Penn State University Master Gardeners. Over two dozen species of native plants were selected that provide season long food sources for pollinators. Species include Coneflower, Butterflyweed, Aster, Milkweed, and others.

Drainage Patterns

There is a stormwater detention basin that serves the Waffle Shop property that does discharge to the north of the property.

Man-made Resources and Influences

A closed depression due to a small berm was reported in the Pine Hall Stormwater Analysis Findings and Recommendations report (2003).

Site Analysis Conclusions

The site analysis determines the best uses for the park site. The analysis of existing site conditions greatly influences the park design and master planning. Key conclusions of the site analysis include:

- The floodplains to the west of the property.
- The natural wooded landscape should remain intact to preserve the environmental benefits that provide significant stormwater infiltration and to offer site visitors a peaceful exploration outdoor experience.
- The park is encumbered with invasive plant species. These detrimental plants should be eradicated from the site and replaced with native species.
- Numerous mature shade and ornamental trees are established in the park site. These trees should be maintained, as possible. Unhealthy and hazard vegetation should be removed.
- The shaded areas within the park provide a nice setting for passive recreational experiences.
- Walking path(s), or the construction of the path, should not disrupt the low lying areas proven to be effective at infiltrating stormwater or the stormwater detention basin that serves as a discharge area for the Waffle Shop property.
- The constraints throughout the park should be considered and respected in the design. Constraints that were identified to aid in determining the alignment included; (1)

connectivity to an accessible parking space, (2) avoidance of slopes that would not meet accessibility guidelines, (3) avoidance of the low lying areas that retain stormwater after precipitation events that provide information infiltration of the stormwater, and (4) avoidance of mature trees that might be impacted by construction of the walking path.

- A significant portion of the site contains slopes in excess of 5 percent which will be a challenge for adding amenities that meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.

Songbird Sanctuary Master Plan

The Master Plan design and narrative (draft) was developed for Songbird Sanctuary Park to reflect recommendations from the Steering Committee and public. The design and narrative is a consolidation of the ideas and comments from review of the Committee's brainstorming activities that then morphed into conceptual scenarios for the public to prioritize a list of amenities for one cohesive master plan for the park site.

The Master Plan (draft) was/is presented to Parks and Recreation Committee at public meeting and available on Township website for review and comment from all stakeholders including residents, municipal staff, and Ad Hoc Steering Committee. Public comment regarding the master plan included (as of 11-15-2019):

- Provide up to three (3) benches
- Install Kiosk to highlight:
 - Park infiltration area
 - Park history, benefits, amenities
 - iNaturalist
 - ebird
- Create a walking dirt path
- Provide a section of walking path that is American Disability Act (ADA) accessible
- Continue invasive plant removal
- Develop invasive plant management maintenance plan
- Maintain pollinator habitat area
- Provide entrance with signage from Blue Course Drive for pedestrians
- Consider a water bowl for wildlife
- Provide bird box
- Provide screech owl box
- Provide bee box
- Provide boot station
- Provide additional plantings for a tree buffer zone along the perimeter of the property
- Add trash bin

Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles were defined for the Songbird Sanctuary Master Plan, based on the findings of the planning and public participation process:

- Maintain the existing natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas on the site
- Minimize the amount of earthwork to protect and preserve the site's natural characteristics
- Enhance the convenience of accessing the park that meet American Disability Act (ADA) requirements
- Explore opportunities to enhance the natural aspects of the site and that incorporate passive features that promote wildlife
- Develop trails to encourage walking and healthy activity



Songbird Sanctuary Proposed Master Plan (work in progress)

Legend

Feature

- ADA Path
- 10' Housing Buffer
- Basin
- Fenced off Tree plantings
- Pollinator garden
- Pollinator garden walkway
- Tree Planting Area, no fence
- Proposed Non-ADA pathways
- Flood Zone A
- Parcel Lines
- Proposed Info Kiosk

