

ROBERTS PROPERTY COMMITTEE MINUTES

June 21, 2006

Present: Co-chair Ellen Zoppo, Charles Cyr, Chris Cassin, Ed Swicklas, Ken Cockayne, Melanie Dumont, Delores Capers, Nathan Peabody, Co-chair Kevin McCauley and Sean Moore.

Chair Ellen Zoppo asked members to introduce themselves. The minutes of the May 17, 2006 meeting were approved with one correction, noting that Chris Cassin had been present.

Under Public Participation, Park Commissioner Tom Ragaini stated that as the Roberts Property gets closer to the final recommendation, he was curious as to whether the Committee had reviewed public vs. private management options. Chair Ellen Zoppo stated that there had been informal discussions and that the final cost analysis will most likely have various options.

Under New Business, Ellen Zoppo updated the Committee that there had been some police activity in Roberts as they cracked down on underage drinking in the woods, as well as parking issues associated with the parties. The sign on Perkins Street had also been destroyed and Ellen noted it should be replaced. The committee concurred.

Under Old Business, the parking situation was discussed and Ellen reported that there was no new information at this date. Kevin McCauley noted that the issue would be raised again with Mayor Stortz and the Public Works Board. She stated that she still hopes that a compromise may be realized in that the city and West Cemetery can discuss a shared driveway access which would be very cost efficient.

The committee discussed the revised plan that was presented by Dave Dickson from Milone and MacBroom. Dave noted that while the site is inherently active recreation, there is very much a passive spirit with the ADA path that could accommodate bikes, walkers, joggers, strollers, and the like, as well as the linkage to the 200 acre Hoppers Preserve. He said that in addition to the fields, there are many opportunities for multi-generational space and activity.

Park Commissioner Cindy Donovan asked if a dog park was still being considered for the Roberts Property. Dave Dickson illustrated the area along Perkins Street that was designated as a future dog park concept if the city acquired the property from the Roberts Foundation. Ellen reminded the committee that it had been the consensus of the dog owners to look elsewhere for a suitable location last March since the timeline for property acquisition is unknown, and the area shown along Perkins was very close to the active areas and might not be the best fit for the dogs.

Ken Cockayne noted that it appeared that the internal playground area might be in play near the softball field. Dave Dickson stated it could be tweaked.

Chris Cassin asked about the expenses and income side, and whether there was a revenue generation factor. It was the feeling of the committee that revenue generation for the use of fields and tournaments should be factored into the cost analysis.

The committee also discussed the potential lighting of the fields and Kevin McCauley noted that a public address system might also impact neighbors.

Ed Swicklas discussed the fact that the City must still enter into an agreement with Slo-Pitch in order to fulfill the city's obligation to the agreement that was signed 6 years ago. The Slo-Pitch league has recently renewed its lease with the New Britain Water Department and now needs one additional field. Ellen Zoppo stated that she feels that the Roberts Property should be included as an option so that the city could fulfill its obligation and settle the issue. Ed Swicklas will continue to discuss options with the Slo-Pitch officials.

Ellen Zoppo asked the committee if they felt comfortable with the plan as presented and revised. The consensus of the committee was that they were very pleased with the plan as presented. Ellen asked Dave Dickson to come back in July with some tentative cost estimates for the construction of the plan. There was discussion among the committee about the potential of phasing in the project in stages but it was also noted that the expenses increase by 5% each year and sometimes it is not cost effective or efficient to phase a plan such as this.

Ellen asked Dave to provide a PDF file of the revised plan for the committee members and also for the media to use.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Ellen Zoppo
Co-Chair