



CITY COUNCIL

Public Works Committee

Monday, June 21, 2010 Meeting Report

Committee Members Attending: D. Sterner, S. Marmarou, M. Goodman-Hinnershitz, Chair

Others Attending: S. Katzenmoyer, F. Denbowski, K. Zeiber, M. Lubas, J. Guillama

The Public Works Committee meeting was called to order at 5:13 pm by Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz, chair.

Egelman's Park Baseball Field Agreement

Mr. Marmarou noted that many baseball clubs are interested in using this field. He noted his discomfort with having a private organization control the usage.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested a review of all agreements between the City and outside organizations in regards to recreation facilities. She stated that the agreements should be analyzed and should incorporate standard language. She also stated that improvements to these facilities were completed with public funding.

Mr. Marmarou stated that the person overseeing the use of Egelman's field is inconsistent and uncooperative with groups inquiring about the use of the field.

Mr. Lubas stated that the City's philosophy is that City youth should have priority for the use of all City facilities. He suggested that a new agreement be signed in this case. He stated that the City performs maintenance at this field and the other party receives the revenue from the use of the field and the concessions.

Mr. Denbowski stated his belief that a 30 year agreement is too long for recreation groups. He noted that no one should have exclusive use of a public facility.

Mr. Lubas expressed his belief that this field should be brought back under City control.

Mr. Zieber recommended that this agreement be terminated. Mr. Lubas agreed and stated that the City needs access to this facility and that he could then schedule its use as he does with all other City facilities.

Mr. Sterner questioned the procedure to terminate the agreement. Ms. Katzenmoyer reviewed the termination clause included in the agreement. She noted that the June termination date has passed but the agreement could be terminated in 2011 if the process begins now.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested that this group be notified of the City's wish to terminate the agreement. She noted that this facility is too valuable to be underutilized.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz requested that other such agreements be brought to the Public Works Committee for review. Mr. Denbowski suggested that the summer intern in the Mayor's office work on compiling the agreements and collect copies from the Law office.

Mr. Sterner stated that this should be done in any case as work continues on the formation of the Recreation Commission.

Mr. Denbowski stated that he recently learned that this group has applied for grant funding. He noted that this makes it appear that the City is competing with itself when applying for grants. Mr. Lubas explained that the group had a feeling the agreement would be terminated and this was a way to prevent or delay the termination.

Planned Utilization of Parks/Playgrounds

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz explained that she had heard from the Violence Prevention Center of Berks that the City is closing recreation facilities. She noted her wish to have this as a general discussion about utilization but the issue with the Violence Prevention Center has taken on a life of its own.

Mr. Guillama introduced himself to the Committee. He stated that he works in the juvenile probation system and has received a grant to form an Evening Reporting Center (ERC). The Center is run through the Children's Home of Reading by Juvenile Probation at the former Cloister location. He noted that the center is very successful and that there are more youth interested in the program than there is space. He noted that he was told by a member of the Violence Prevention Center that the 11th & Pike facility was closed. He noted his hope to open a second ERC location at 11th & Pike to use his remaining grant funding.

Mr. Marmarou noted that constituents are complaining about gangs and drug use at 11th & Pike.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted that she spoke with Ms. Katzenmoyer about the closing of the 11th & Pike facility. Ms. Katzenmoyer relayed that all City rec centers close annually in April to transition to the outdoor summer program. Mr. Lubas explained that it has been done this way

for several years. However, the timing of the closing combined with the reports on Act 47 people have misinterpreted the closings this season. He stated that 11th & Pike will not have playground leaders this year.

Mr. Denbowski explained that the Violence Prevention Center approached the Mayor for a location for a computer lab during the summer months. He stated that they were given access to 11th & Pike as there will be no programming in the recreation center during the summer months. He stated that the Reading School District supported the Violence Prevention Center in the past. He noted that their programming has gone well beyond the original scope of a computer lab.

Mr. Marmarou questioned when their use began at this facility. Mr. Denbowski stated that it was approximately two months ago.

Mr. Marmarou noted that this is when the complaints began. He was upset that he should have been notified that this group was using the facility as it is located within his Council district.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that this remains a City facility and that an agreement with a group does not give them complete ownership and exclusive use. She noted that the Administration signs these agreements but it would be a courtesy to inform Council. She noted that there should be criteria for groups using City facilities including the length of time and the advertising they may do.

Mr. Denbowski stated that there are many groups using City facilities that do not have written agreements including Olivet and the Boxing Club at Baer Park.

Mr. Lubas reiterated that the recreation center will reopen in September.

Mr. Guillama questioned the Recreation Commission. Mr. Denbowski explained the concept and stated that both the Reading School Board and City Council have authorized the study.

Mr. Lubas stated that it was his hope that the Violence Prevention Center programming be complimentary to the City programming or would take place when the Rec Center is closed. He stated that this was not the case and now third parties are being brought into the facility without the proper clearances.

Mr. Denbowski stated that this agreement expires in August 2010. He stated that this was done as a good faith effort at the request of the Reading School District.

Mr. Lubas stated that he requested the agreement be short-term. He stated his belief that Violence Prevention violated the spirit of the agreement and has taken advantage of the City. Mr. Zeiber agreed and stated that they should be brought in and reprimanded.

Mr. Marmarou suggested that the Administration investigate who has keys to this facility.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the special clearances needed for those who work with youth. She stated that if the City does not have a policy in regards to this, it may also be held liable and this is a very dangerous precedent.

Mr. Zeiber suggested that these types of policies be included in all agreements and that consequences for breaking the agreement should also be included.

Mr. Sterner questioned the consequences. Ms. Katzenmoyer suggested that the agreement be terminated and the group not have access to City facilities.

Mr. Guillama further explained the ERC and stated that the program is for youth who have not committed serious offenses. The program runs after school until 9 pm. He stated that it is intense mentoring and there are youth who wish to remain involved after their probationary period is over. The use of a second facility would allow the program to expand.

Mr. Zeiber suggested Keffer fieldhouse or Schlegel fieldhouse. Mr. Lubas agreed with Keffer but stated that logistics are bad for a program such as this at Schlegel. Mr. Zeiber offered to give Mr. Guillama a tour of Keffer.

Mr. Marmarou questioned the age of the youths served by the ERC. Mr. Guillama stated that it is for 12 – 17 year old males.

Mr. Marmarou questioned who is running the Violence Prevention Center. Mr. Denbowski stated that the program is operated by Chris Fegley and Wayne Bealer.

Mr. Sterner reiterated that these gentlemen should be brought into City Hall and for discussion about their public statements and the violation of the spirit of the agreement.

Former Police Academy in City Park

Mr. Sterner stated that he received a call about this building. He stated that City property owners must make repairs to their homes but the condition of this building is very bad.

Mr. Zeiber explained that the City Park Master Plan calls for this facility to be rehabilitated into a café. He stated that the Master Plan does not give a timeline for projects or suggestions for funding.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned the condition of the interior of the building. Mr. Zeiber stated that it was structurally sound but the interior condition of the building is very poor. He stated that it does not meet current codes. The electricity for the entire park is run through this property.

Mr. Sterner questioned demolishing the building. Mr. Zeiber agreed with demolition of the property leaving a structure for electrical purposes. He stated that it is a liability to the City as it stands.

Mr. Denbowski stated that he would bring this issue to the Mayor's attention.

Ms. Katzenmoyer reminded all that the Park is located within an historic district and any plans, including demolition, would need the approval of HARB.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz requested an update at next month's meeting.

Installation of Stop Signs at N 13th & Richmond Sts

Mr. Marmarou stated that he has received many complaints since the installation of the signs. He stated that the residents were not informed about the installation and that notification is required by PennDOT regulations. He stated that the stop sign has the potential for causing many accidents.

Mr. Marmarou stated that the 5th & Bingaman intersection is much more in need of attention.

Mr. Denbowski questioned how residents would be notified. Mr. Marmarou stated that it would be general advertising requirements including an ad in the local newspaper.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz requested a follow up on this issue at next month's meeting.

Mr. Marmarou stated that this is another issue that Council should have been informed of by the Administration.

Neversink Playground

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that the banks have not been cut and the City is in violation of its own code. Mr. Zeiber explained that the banks are cut less frequently (once per summer) than the play areas. He noted his understanding about the appearance. He stated that the banks are now being sprayed with a growth deterrent when cut. He stated that this is the same policy that was used in years past but the perception is different this year. He stated that the Summer Youth Employees have begun working and this will be one of their projects.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned when work will continue on the fence. Mr. Zeiber stated that Rick Plank retired in the middle of the project. He stated that the concrete work must be completed before the fencing can be installed.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz reported that the new drains are working well.

The Public Works Committee adjourned at 6:22 pm.

Respectfully submitted by
Shelly Katzenmoyer, Deputy City Clerk