



# *CITY COUNCIL*

## *Public Works Committee*

***Monday, March 21, 2011  
Meeting Report***

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

**Others Attending:** S. Katzenmoyer, C. Jones, F. Denbowski, O. Smith, E. Lloyd, B. Twyman, A. Mukerji

The Public Works Committee meeting was called to order at 6:16 pm.

### **Memorandum of Understanding - PermaCultivate**

Mr. Lloyd reviewed the memorandum of understanding. He stated that he has spoken with Kyle Zeiber several times and Mr. Zeiber now supports the project. He stated that the memorandum needs clarification on maintenance and upkeep. PermaCultivate would be willing to perform some maintenance as an in-kind contribution. He stated that PermaCultivate would respect the current operations from the greenhouse and have been designated with a storage area.

Mr. Denbowski stated that the draft needs to be further revised based on feedback from Mr. Zeiber. He stated that the solicitor has reviewed and approved the memorandum and stated that the Mayor can sign the memorandum without Council approval. He requested that the Public Works Committee recommend the signing of the Memorandum.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested that the full body of Council be updated on this issue before the memorandum is signed.

Mr. Denbowski stated that this memorandum is for a one year period while the long-term lease is negotiated.

Mr. Marmarou questioned the status of the Friends of the Greenhouse. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz explained that this group has disbanded but that Berks Urban Greenery (BUG) and the City use the greenhouse.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned if PermaCultivate could do seasonal sales such as poinsettias from the greenhouse. Mr. Lloyd was agreeable. Mr. Twyman stated that PermaCultivate is working with BUG and is willing to work with the City for park plantings.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that the City parks would benefit from additional plantings.

Mr. Lloyd stated that a future vision of PermaCultivate is to revitalize the rose garden area of City Park with perennials and low maintenance plants.

Mr. Mukerji stated that PermaCultivate is also interested in Parcel 32 on Canal Street for urban farming.

Mr. Smith stated that partnerships are needed throughout the City but that long-term leases must be closely monitored and carefully considered. He stated that Reading school children need more hands-on learning opportunities and suggested that this group also inquire about Angelica Park.

Mr. Mukerji stated that the Redevelopment Authority is supportive of PermaCultivate at Parcel 32. However, he stated that his mission is to get the highest and best use for a parcel and if another opportunity presents itself, PermaCultivate's lease will be terminated in 14 days.

Mr. Lloyd requested a copy of the lease agreement for Friends of the Greenhouse. Ms. Katzenmoyer stated that she will research to determine if a copy is on file.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned if PermaCultivate would hold an event to celebrate its opening. Mr. Lloyd stated that that would.

Mr. Mukerji suggested that Mr. Lloyd explain about the food composting. Mr. Lloyd explained that the group will only compost waste items from the greenhouse site. He stated that they will not bring waste in from other areas but they need to create healthy soil.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz requested that this be discussed at the March 28 Committee of the Whole meeting before it is signed by the Mayor.

### **Inventory of Lease Agreements**

Mr. Jones stated that he had nothing new to report.

Mr. Marmarou questioned what would be done with groups who are not making their lease payments.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that she and the Mayor will be meeting with representatives of East Ends to determine their sustainability.

Mr. Jones pointed out that the current lease agreement was recently re-negotiated but that they have not made any recent payments.

### **Recreation Commission Update**

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that the process is moving forward in a very positive way.

Mr. Denbowski stated that the largest unknown at this point is the financing. The City contribution will be approximately the funding level of the 2009 budget. He stated that the two current recreation employees will not be able to carry their healthcare and pension with them if they choose to transfer to the Commission. He stated that the draft agreement is based on several meetings with Sue Landes.

Mr. Denbowski stated that it is hoped that the School District will discontinue charging a fee for use of facilities and will pay the healthcare expenses of the two current employees if they chose to transfer to the Commission.

Mr. Denbowski reviewed the number of Commission members and how they would be appointed.

Mr. Sterner questioned how this would benefit the recreation program. Mr. Denbowski stated that it will allow the resumption of the summer playground program which would start many other opportunities.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted that the anticipated decrease in CDBG funding will change the City's ability to run recreation programs.

Mr. Denbowski stated that the School District could also provide park security and increase funding for recreation. He stated that both parties will also make in-kind contributions.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that having two parties involved places more resources on the table. She stated that some Council members have requested additional City representation. She stated that if this is done, the same increase must be allotted to the School District. She warned that if the Commission becomes too large it may become ineffective.

Mr. Jones questioned if the agreement dealt only with recreation or if it also pertained to park maintenance. Mr. Denbowski stated that any maintenance is basically janitorial services. Mr. Smith added that other maintenance may be added in the future depending on the growth of the Commission.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted that maintenance is critical. She noted the need to specify which entity is performing what function at each park.

Mr. Sterner questioned if playground associations would continue to exist under the Commission. Mr. Denbowski stated that the City will continue to own all parks and playgrounds and would encourage playground association involvement.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted that it will take time to revitalize the recreation programs but that both entities are committed. She noted the need to communicate with those who currently have agreements with the City that changes may be needed. She stated that not all change is negative.

Mr. Smith stated that agreements would be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Mr. Denbowski stated that the Commission cannot break any current agreements but can make amendment recommendations to Council.

### **Follow Up Items**

- Fleet Services

Mr. Jones stated that the City will be reaching out to surrounding municipalities to offer fleet maintenance. He stated that one municipality is very interested and that the City currently performs fleet maintenance for DID and the Reading Phillies. He stated that negotiations were underway to maintain Reading School District vehicles but that union issues have prevented that. He stated that some County departments are also interested.

Mr. Sterner questioned if the City had the capacity to add these services. Mr. Jones stated that there is ample space but that additional employees will be needed.

The Public Works Committee adjourned at 7:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted by  
*Shelly Katzenmoyer, Deputy City Clerk*