

City of Aurora, Ohio
BUILDINGS & GROUNDS COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
December 9, 2008

The Buildings & Grounds Committee of the City of Aurora, Ohio met in Council Chambers at City Hall on Tuesday, December 9, 2008 for the purpose of holding a regular meeting. Committee Chairman Thomas Dreher called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Mike DeMay
Thomas Dreher
Dennis Kovach
George Yanda

Absent: James Vaca

Also Present: James Kraus, Director of Parks & Recreation
Darwin Kelsey, Cuyahoga Valley Countryside Conservancy
Charles Frederick, Landscape Architect Consultant
Tracy Humbert, Clerk of Council

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: To approve the meeting minutes of November 11, 2008

Mr. Yanda motioned, Mr. Kovach seconded. The motion carried on a 4-0 roll call vote.

AYES: Mr. DeMay, Mr. Dreher, Mr. Kovach, Mr. Yanda

NAYS: None

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Mr. George Mazzaro, Eldridge Road, stated that it appears that the Administration has ignored the recommendation to set aside rental monies for repairs to properties at the Finance Committee Budget Hearing. However, he stated that the normal \$45,000 was included in the capital improvement section. He suggested that a Master Plan for the properties be created. He stated that there are no line accounts in the current budget for deposits or receipts for rental income or bus income as suggested by this committee.

NEW BUSINESS

Discussion with Countryside Conservancy

Mr. Dreher introduced Mr. Darwin Kelsey from the Countryside Conservancy. He stated that Mr. Kelsey has had discussions with Mr. Kraus and Mr. Kovach.

Mr. Kraus explained that the Parks & Recreation Board began looking into future uses for the Hartman property. He stated that Parks Coordinator Bill Fellenstein brought up the idea of contacting Countywide Conservancy to preserve or conserve land and its usage.

Mr. Dreher stated that there are three properties that the Conservancy may have an interest in. He explained that they are:

1. The Chesnes property which is a 94 acre parcel on Mennonite Road which is being considered for a tree farm
2. The Ray Harmon property which is 119 acres with 49 acres dedicated for recreational purposes with the buildings and surrounding area being preserved for historical use. He stated that it has been suggested to use the property as working farm of some sort.
3. The Margaret Harmon Farm which is a 12 acre parcel that has been considered for a historical museum.

Mr. Dreher stated that the Committee would like Mr. Kelsey's thoughts on the suggested uses, additional

recommendations, and information on how Countryside Conservancy can assist the City.

Mr. Kelsey stated that Countryside Conservancy is a non-profit organization that was created in 1999 to work with the park service to help them with rehabilitation and revitalization of the old farms that were still surviving within the national park. He provided background on how the program began and how they operate. He added that they have rehabilitated eleven farms. He stated that the Conservancy does not get directly involved with working the farms; however, they work across sixteen states in farmland preservation and protection, farm viability issues, farmers markets, and public education projects.

Mr. Dreher stated that he understands that the Conservancy would not be intimately involved with any projects in Aurora except as an advisor. He asked Mr. Kelsey if he would be able to provide some names of people that would be able to assist us. Mr. Kelsey stated that he would be able to do that and discussed the FarmLink program and how it could help.

Mr. Dreher cited an example from Chicago where neighborhood gardens and farms were created and the food was used in the community and sold at farmers markets. Mr. Kelsey stated that similar programs are being considered for Cleveland and East Cleveland.

Mr. Dreher asked Mr. Kelsey for contact information for FarmLink and the Cleveland Food Policy Council. Mr. Kelsey agreed to supply the information.

Mr. Kraus stated that the City will have to investigate the cost for converting the properties for the program and determine how funding and budgeting can be done. He stated that a sample lease has been provided to Law Director Shorr to review.

Mr. Kelsey distributed copies of RFP's that the Conservancy has used.

Mr. Dreher thanked Mr. Kelsey for attending the meeting and for his presentation.

No action was taken

Barn Again Program

Mr. Yanda reviewed the information provided in the packet regarding the Barn Again Program. He stated that he has invited a representative to attend and give a presentation at the January 2009 meeting. He stated that it has not been confirmed but he would continue to work on it.

Finance Committee Response to the Sale of the Orchard Ave Property

Mr. Dreher reviewed the response from the Finance Committee regarding the Orchard Ave property. He stated that Mr. Trew feels it is premature to sell the property and that it could be revisited when the culvert box project is complete.

OLD/PENDING BUSINESS

Chesnes House

No action was taken and this will remain on the agenda.

Reinstallation of Kiwanis Moore Park Sign

Mr. Kraus stated that he would check on the reconstruction of the sign and expects it to be reinstalled in the spring. Mr. Yanda reported that the Kiwanis support the spring decision. Mr. Dreher asked that the matter be removed from the agenda.

Harmon Farm – Working Site

No action was taken and this will remain on the agenda.

Charles Frederick Presentation regarding the Hartman Farm

Mr. Dreher introduced Mr. Charles Frederick and Mr. Harold Hartman. Mr. Kraus stated that the City wants to have a plan for the Hartman property that the Hartman's can endorse. Mr. Kraus stated that Mr. Frederick was consulted and that he met with the Hartman's, and Councilmen Dreher, Kovach, Vaca, and Galaska. Mr. Kraus stated that Mr. Frederick has completed some conceptual plans based on the meeting.

Mr. Frederick displayed several conceptual drawings for the Hartman property. Ideas included a tree farm, sugar bush, greenhouse, community garden, arboretum, shelter, and an active recreation area. He explained the property elevations, riparian areas, the homestead area, and where the suggested uses may work. Mr. Kovach stated that he did not like so many soccer fields being considered. Mr. Frederick noted that it is only conceptual ideas at the time. Mr. Kovach suggested tennis courts. Mr. DeMay stated that the recreation area takes away from the park atmosphere. He stated that he prefers more tree farms. Mr. Yanda stated that the active recreation is away from the house and he likes the conceptual plans. Mr. Hartman stated that the layout is interesting and it is a good start for the future use.

Mr. Hartman passed out containers of maple syrup to the members of the committee.

Mr. Kraus asked the committee members what they would change so that he could pass the suggestions on to the Parks & Recreation Board. He added that active recreation was suggested because there is none in that section of the city. He added that soccer fields are more in demand and are adaptable for other uses such as lacrosse or football. Mr. Kovach suggested starting the project by planting trees on the property. Mr. Hartman suggested that the Super Sweet Sugar Maple species would be appropriate and would assist the maple sugaring project. Mr. DeMay suggested involving the schools with the plantings.

Mr. Dreher asked Mr. Kraus if he would like a motion supporting the conceptual plan. Mr. Kraus stated that he would if the committee is comfortable with it.

MOTION: To support the conceptual plan presented by Charles Frederick with the addition of tennis courts in place of one of the soccer fields and to begin the planting of Super Sweet Sugar Maple trees

Mr. Kovach motioned, Mr. Yanda seconded. The motion carried on a 4-0 roll call vote.

AYES: Mr. DeMay, Mr. Dreher, Mr. Kovach, Mr. Yanda

NAYS: None

Mr. Dreher thanked Mr. Hartman and Mr. Frederick.

No action was taken

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Mr. George Mazzaro, Eldridge Road, commented on the Orchard Ave property. He stated that Mr. Vaca indicated that the lots would not be able to be sold individually; however, he felt the adjoining neighbors may have an interest in a portion if the lot was split. Mr. Mazzaro stated that he does not understand the recommendation from Mr. Trew and Mayor McGill. Mr. Mazzaro stated that it should not take more than a couple of hours to rebuild the Kiwanis-Moore Park sign. He suggested contacting the Federal Forestry Department regarding trees. He suggested changing the zoning classification on all city owned properties to "Public Use." He added that given the current economy he is fearful that some of the land will be sold.

ADJOURNMENT**MOTION: To adjourn**

Mr. Kovach moved, Mr. DeMay seconded. The motion carried on a 4-0 roll call vote.

AYES: Mr. DeMay, Mr. Dreher, Mr. Kovach, Mr. Yanda
NAYS: None

The meeting was adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

Thomas Dreher, Chairman

Tracy Humbert, Clerk of Council