

**TOWN OF MOUNT PLEASANT, SOUTH CAROLINA
RECREATION COMMITTEE
Tuesday, January 2, 2018**

**Municipal Complex, Committee Meeting Room, 3rd Floor
100 Ann Edwards Lane, Mount Pleasant, SC 29464**

Minutes

Members Present: Gary Santos, Chair; Tom O'Rourke, G. M. Whitley

Staff Present: Eric DeMoura, Jimmy Millar

Mr. Santos called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m.

1. Approval of Minutes from the December 4, 2017 meeting

*Mr. O'Rourke made a motion to approve the December 4, 2017 minutes.
Ms. Whitley seconded the motion. All were in favor.*

2. Public Comments

None

3. Employee years of service recognition

Mr. Millar recognized Mr. Garrett Heatherington for five years of service with the Town. He said began employment as a Field Supervisor, then became Recreation Specialist five years ago and recently was promoted to Recreation Coordinator over the FUNdamental Program. He said Mr. Heatherington does a great job and is very dependable.

4. Review of conceptual plan for Memorial Waterfront Park Phase 2

Mr. DeMoura said they were bringing back Phase II of the Memorial Waterfront Park. He said Ms. Lauren Sims was going to present the conceptual plan.

Ms. Sims said on November 12, 2014 they had the Request for Quote (RFQ) Master Plan and in August of that year they held a public input meeting to solicit input from the community as to what sort of items they would like for the Town to investigate to include in Phase II of the park. She said the kickoff meeting was in March 2015 and then the presentation to Council

with the Master Plan was adopted in October 2015. She shared slides of what the Master Plan looked like. She said the Pier Extension part had boat slips and extension off the right side of the pier. She shared slides of the grass area, proposed restaurant and expanded retail space, gift shop, and overflow parking area that was established along with a cooling station and various other elements. Ms. Sims said with that they gave Notice to Proceed on construction and permitting in August of 2016. She said this includes the Pier Extension, Phase I of the Park repairs and improvements, the restaurant and gift shop expansion, and overflow parking improvements. She said Phase I repairs and upgrades were completed and finished in December of last year. She said it included the upgrades to the electrical systems, security and wi-fi systems. She said they revamped the playground, replaced pier lighting, added shade structures, included way finding signage at the Park, relocated and replaced names on some bricks in the Memorial Plaza. She said with the Pier Extension portion the design of the PM foundations were complete and they are awaiting comments from South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR). She said they are ready to go with permitting after receiving those comments to see if the Town needs to do anything with the pier extension. She said the design for the expansion of the restaurant and gift shop is 90 percent complete. She said it was submitted to the Town in December and it is not funded at the present time. She said the estimated cost which they generated back at the Master Planning time frame is approximately \$3.5 million. She shared a slide of the concept of what the restaurant and gift shop expansion renovation would look like. She also shared an aerial of the enhanced daily parking and overflow parking portion. She said the design is approximately 95 percent complete. She said it was submitted to the Town in November of last year and is still under review. She said it is not funded at this time, but it is a \$3.2 million estimated cost expenditure. She shared the detailed plan with additional parking, cooling station similar to a misting station and various recreational elements and art nodes along the middle portion of the parking. She said the pier portion is underway and awaiting the comments from SCDNR and are ready to proceed.

Mr. Santos asked Mr. DeMoura when they asked for if the land they asked for all the land. He said he thought Mayor Hallman and Mr. Kruger Smith had an idea about putting a building on that property. He said he thought they tried to not include that, so they could get it developed.

Mr. DeMoura said he lead the project originally once the land was turned over. He said part of the reason they ended up with overflow parking area was because other ideas never came to fruition, so it was never advanced like they normally would have advanced a project.

Mr. Santos asked if it was still in the plans.

Mr. DeMoura answered in the affirmative. He said they have the information. He said it was a little tricky but the portion where the war memorial is located was deeded over to the Town by the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT). He said the overflow parking area is different. He said some of it was gifted to the Town by easement where they have final say in what goes there. He said he recalled that even to have overflow parking the Town has to get special permission.

Mr. Santos said they he remembered it was an issue and he was off Council after that and did not know how it ended. He said he, Mr. Millar, and Mr. Gergick met there and walked the site looking for a potential area for a dog park underneath the roadbed. He said they found a piece they thought would be appropriate. He thought they were going to move forward with that by asking SCDOT about it. He said he thought it would be a good thing to have there as the land cannot be used for anything else.

Mr. DeMoura said if that is the desire there is a process to go through SCDOT. He said with the overflow area not much can be done without permission by SCDOT and he knows they will not allow any build underneath part of the bridges for fear of compromising the structure. He said the entire phase is broken up to three pieces. He said the first is the pier expansion and the estimated cost is \$6 million. He said they do not know what the regulatory body will come back with and if they want the Town to complete enhancements for environmental reasons. He said that bidding projects are difficult because they tend to come in higher than

anticipated. He said the Town does have \$6 million in the budget now for this project with an anticipated two more coming next year. Mr. DeMoura said that everything in the park depends on how much the pier expansion comes in at. He said if it comes higher than \$6 million it does not leave much money left over for other phases of the park. He said it is funded at the present and the restaurant which is a second story glassed area. He said the original idea was the Town would build a shell and a private entity who won a competitive contract would up fit it and operate a restaurant. He said there is no funding at present to do that unless Council appropriates additional funding. He said the third piece which is the subject of the conversation does not have any funding. He said there is funding for the original piece. He said if the Committee wanted them to look at it as a dog area or some other area they could ask the designer to go back and incorporate it into the conceptual design plan so that when funding becomes available they would have it in the design and could move forward.

Mr. Santos said the area they are looking at is very basic and simple and they would not be looking at much money except for fencing and a water area.

Ms. Whitley said she had spoken with people and Mr. DeMoura about the possibility of putting in a splash pad. She said it would be a water play area for children. She said there is one on James Island and North Charleston, but Mount Pleasant is lacking in that. She said she was part of a Moms Group on Facebook, reached out to them and received over 360 likes and a lot of commentary of excitement over this concept of a splash pad. She said there is public support for the idea of a splash pad for Mount Pleasant. She said she did not know with the cooling stations since water is going to piped there if that is a potential location or if there is an additional playground area in lieu of a second playground as there is already a playground at Waterfront Park. She said if there could be something like a splash pad and if that could be explored to see the potential for funding and then creating something to enhance quality of life for parents with young children in Mount Pleasant.

Mr. Santos said this was another option to look at to see if it was something they can or cannot do. He said they had talked about South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) being involved with a splash pad. He said he thought it would be nice.

Mr. O'Rourke said if they are going back to the designers and then go to SCDOT, he would go to SCDOT once rather than with three different things. He said it is not an easy process and it would be better to have the plan completed, agreed upon, and then go to SCDOT it may save a lot of time. He said if the dog park or water feature was going to be added that they look at. He asked if it was not funded.

Mr. DeMoura said the construction would not be funded.

Mr. O'Rourke said if the \$6 million mentioned for funding was TIFF funding.

Mr. DeMoura answered in the affirmative.

Ms. Whitley asked if they need any type of recommendation to have staff explore the cost of a dog park or a splash pad.

Mr. DeMoura said it was up to the Committee. He said it always important to have a plan of where they want things, so they could go back to the overflow area. He said it was hard to move forward with just one item without recognition for all the other items that are being considered. He said they have some money and could spend some additional design money and incorporate a dog park, splash pad or whatever the Committee felt was appropriate. He said the cost to do something is small enough where it should not require Council approval but just incorporate these items into a conceptual design. He said they would ultimately have to fund it so if they would like staff to move forward they could easily have the designer incorporate the two features somewhere just knowing they do not have construction funding for this anytime in the future. He said the park was predominately built with Tax Increment Funding (TIF) money and they know it is gone now with the exception of what was already budgeted before it expired.

Mr. O'Rourke said the further the splash pad goes from water makes the cost higher. He said in the design phase moving that closer to where the water is located would make sense.

Mr. O'Rourke made a motion to ask staff to incorporate a dog park and water feature to the existing plan. Ms. Whitley seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Mr. Kevin Cunnane, 3032 River Vista Way, Mount Pleasant was recognized. He said that the dog park came up last month for the complex at Park West. He said this place is becoming everything but as it a big Town and when an event takes place they are not going to get parking for two to five years old at the splash pad. He said they should be looking to broaden the horizons elsewhere in the Town to do this type of thing. He said it was a Town of 84 thousand people and everything should not be within a half of mile of the harbor. He said there are other park lands and empty space with Carolina Park as a perfect example of a blank canvas. He said they should complete two identical ones and use the same design twice to benefit the whole Town.

Ms. Whitley said she met with the Recreation Department to talk about that during the campaign about Carolina Park. She said Carolina Park is putting in a restroom and there will an open lawn area and a space for a playground. She said that was another place she thought would be a great opportunity for a splash pad. She said after speaking with Mr. DeMoura she thought that phasing it and timing it as to what was getting funded sooner or what the space would be is that a splash pad on this side of Town is something that could be implemented more quickly. She said she was not saying there could not be a splash pad in Carolina Park and they should not pursue both, but this was something that could happen sooner.

Mr. DeMoura said what they have designed for Carolina Park are athletic fields. He said they know water is getting there now. He said that all these things can change. He said as Council Members they can design, redesign and shuffle decisions but the plans for Carolina Park have been for it to be an active recreation area.

5. Discussion of future improvements to Carolina Park Recreation Complex and Mugsy Kerr/Whipple Road Tennis Complex

Mr. Santos said he was concerned about the funding and had spoken with the Chairman of the Finance Committee about getting some funding to complete Carolina Park, so they can move ahead with the Mugsy Kerr Center and develop where the ball field is. He said they are hurting for fields and cannot do away with the field yet until they have other fields. He said his goal was to push hard to get Carolina Park completed so they can turn around and improve the Mugsy Kerr Center and building the tennis courts and pickle ball courts.

Mr. Millar said he could speak on this but did not have any pictorials with him. He said that Carolina Phase III has athletic fields which encompasses a rectangular field, 200-foot girls' softball fields, a 325-foot baseball field, playground, outdoor basketball courts and a dog park. He said there is no funding to build it but just had funding for design.

Mr. Santos said one of his concerns was they do not have any girls' softball fields in Mount Pleasant and they play on men or boys' fields. He said they certainly need girl fields and they cannot be going to North Charleston and Charleston to play on certified softball fields. He said they need them here in Mount Pleasant which is another reason he would like to see Carolina Park built sooner rather than later so they could give the young women a field to play on, a real field. He would like to open it up to the Committee to discuss it and said Mr. DeMoura knows more than anyone else about the funding possibilities, how quickly can they move on it, so they can develop this facility to give the citizens and children a place to play and help the Mugsy Kerr Center as well.

Mr. O'Rourke said the Chair of the Recreation Committee did contact the Finance Committee Chair. He said it is hard for to look at Whipple and Carolina Park and what they are going to do. He said it would be fair for the Recreation Department to tell the Committee where they want to be five years from now. He said if softball is an issue, which it is, he wondered if there are other issues and what those issues are, what do they need, and

what was the priority of those needs. He said then they go back from a capital standpoint and look at how much they can do. He said it was going to be hard for them to fill one need and another pop up elsewhere. He would like for them to look at all the needs for everything and not just sports in the Department. He said then they could look at how they could fund it. He said there could be needs that he does not know about that Mr. Millar, Mr. Gergick, or Mr. DeMoura know about and if they fix these without knowing about those it would be a disservice to the people that need those things.

Mr. Millar said to that point once Carolina Park III is fully developed that allows a lot of flexibility. He said that as Mr. Santos said regarding Whipple Road which they have design for six more tennis courts on the baseball field that they need now for our programs. He said Whipple is a busy facility and it would be great to have six more tennis courts as they would fill easily. He said the quicker Carolina Park happens the quicker they can do that, and he agrees.

Mr. DeMoura said the last Recreation Needs Assessment that was completed listed trails at the top and they are always ongoing and being developed. He said the two largest items from the Needs Assessment are the double gymnasium and volleyball courts that are currently under construction and phase III of Carolina Park which is funded, which a good portion of what Mr. Millar had mentioned will be funded. Mr. DeMoura said the draft Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) which Committee and Council can do what they want since it is their document has Carolina Park phase III as the number one Recreation item. He said it has to compete for space and money, while it is number one it is behind several Transportation projects; several Stormwater projects; an Operation Center for Public Services; Police, Fire, Training Master Plans, and upgrades to fire stations. He said it is competing, but it does have money. He said that after next year assuming they adopt the CIP as it stands, they would have approximately \$4 million to complete phase III at Carolina Park. He said that would go a long way in meeting a lot of needs.

Mr. O'Rourke asked if it was \$4 million annually that is coming off the CIP that they have or in \$4 million fund balance from the CIP account.

Mr. DeMoura said it was money that can be used for capital expenditures. He said there is \$4 million going toward Carolina Park phase III proposed in the budget for next year to match for the current year. He said this was the draft proposal that they will get in a few weeks.

Mr. Santos asked if that was for July 1 budget.

Mr. DeMoura answered in the affirmative.

Mr. Santos said he wanted to make sure people knew when they say next year they were not talking about 2019 but that it starts July 1.

Mr. DeMoura said they will be taking a big step with the new gym and a large amount toward Recreation needs at Carolina Park phase III. He said that Whipple Road Tennis Complex will be left out which has needs but there is no funding available any time soon.

Mr. O'Rourke asked if Rifle Range was on the CIP plan.

Mr. DeMoura answered in the affirmative. He said the items for Recreation are: Carolina Park phase III, Jones Center Comprehensive Repair, Athletic Field Drainage, Duffy Baseball Complex, and some repair at Darby. He said they do not just complete Capital items, they have also woven in repairs and maintenance and Rifle Range is further down the list. He said mostly because funding challenges are extreme for that project.

Mr. Santos said one thing will help is completion of the Lucy Beckham High School because in talks with the school district and talking about a first-class soccer pitch and national champions and Wando does not have a true soccer pitch to play on. He said they talked about a soccer pitch in the lacrosse field as well, but they have some practice fields. He said that will help as well because we share with the Charleston County School System and they use it during the day and we use it the afternoon and evening. He said he does not think they have pushed enough over the past four years for some of these things and he is ready to get the children and adults on the fields.

Mr. O'Rourke said they do not need Clemson University to come in with a needs assessment but asked if staff could look at five years from now and the things staff would like to do so the Committee can have a feel for what goes there. He said they were open minded enough for them to be thinking about things that they are not doing right now such as things that could enhance what they already have such as generate revenues. He said the Committee is willing to answer any questions when they go through that exercise.

Ms. Whitley said she hoped in this assessment that they would look beyond sports. She said loved that people like sports but there is an opportunity for arts, theatre and music as they are recreation items also. She thought it was a heavily weighted toward sports but said there are children who love plays and fashion and design and hopes staff in the needs assessment would come forth with those types of programs as well.

Mr. Santos said at Rifle Range Road they had talked about a multi-use facility where they will be doing some of those things and they are in the plans. He said he was trying to push the plans along quicker.

6. Program/projects update

Mr. Millar reviewed the program report. He said that in Athletics they had Speed Training and Wrestling which has had increased participation. He said that once the Town Hall Gym is complete the Town will have the Wrestling Program and will not have to use Wando. He said Adult Soccer participation numbers are up and down but was consistent over the last two years. He said Tennis and Senior Center memberships were consistent. He said Swimming lessons had lower participation numbers that could be due to instructor turnover. He said with Special Events, the Holiday Market there were an estimated 4-5,000 attendees with 100 different vendors and three schools. He said they estimated 20-22,000 in attendance for the Christmas parade. He said there was an upcoming Sock Hop to be held at Park West.

Mr. O'Rourke said long ago there was a 5K road race that Ms. Harrington put on prior to the parade. He said the street were already closed and

everyone was there, and it was successful. He wondered if there would ever be an opportunity to do that again. He said they can be completed quickly.

Mr. Millar said they could look into it.

Mr. Santos said a triathlon would be good. He said they had it coed, one person participating or teams. He said previously they had people coming from eight different states. He said the Committee will come back soon with ideas for everyone. He said people do not have to be a football player, baseball, but a runner or a triathlete and serve everyone. He said it was a good time to be in Recreation in Mount Pleasant.

7. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:05 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Bedenbaugh, 01/02/18