

TOWN OF MOUNT PLEASANT, SOUTH CAROLINA
RECREATION COMMITTEE
Monday, June 4, 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, Steve Gergick

Mr. Santos called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m.

1. Approval of Minutes from the May 1, 2018 meeting and the May 2, 2018 special meeting

Ms. Whitley made a motion to approve the May 1, 2018 minutes and the May 2, 2018 special meeting minutes. Mr. O'Rourke seconded the motion. All were in favor.

2. Public Comments

Ms. Elizabeth Boyles, 601 Coral Street, Mount Pleasant, and in the Planning Department was recognized. She wanted to remind everyone that they have an open house the next night at Town Hall from 5-7 p.m. She said they are going to be discussing the Comprehensive Plan. She said they have a land use and a transportation recommendation that they are starting to move forward with. She said they are looking for public feedback to make sure they have it right. She said there will be opportunities to give comments on transportation and land use issues. She said there will also be a transportation presentation at 5:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers. She said all the information is also on line.

3. Employee years of service recognition

Mr. Gergick recognized Ms. Rhea Pitts who has worked for the Recreation Department for ten years. He said she started off at the Jones Center and for the last five years has worked at the Senior Center as an Administrative

Assistant. He said she had worked in high school and college as swim instructor for the Department. He said she was a pleasure to work with and is loved by all members at the Senior Center. He said she helps with registration and is Rec Trac leader. He said she played a big role in the Senior Center's success.

Mr. Santos said that Ms. Pitts sister ran the Tapio School of Dance. He said her family had been involved with working with youth in the community for many years and said they appreciate that.

Mr. Gergick recognized Ms. Diana Drake who has worked with the Recreation Department for 15 years. He said she was Mr. Millar's right-hand person in Athletics and now works for Mr. Hansen. He said she handles all the rentals of the facilities and gyms and has done a great job. He said she was part of the Employee Relations Committee for the Town to help put together all the activities that they do town wide. He said she is part of the Awards Committee for South Carolina Recreation and Parks Association (SCRPA) and volunteers for Town events such as Children's Day, Christmas parade, Blessing of the Fleet, and Special Olympics. He said it was a pleasure to have her on staff.

4. Recognition of Wando High School Boys Varsity Soccer National Champions

Mr. Santos said there was some issues with them being able to attend so he said they would have them come at another time. He said that Wando was ranked number one in the nation in soccer.

5. Consideration of request from Shem Creek Presbyterian Church for a one year lease extension for the use of the Darby Building

Mr. Gergick said Shem Creek Presbyterian Church had been using the Darby Building for church services. He said they had a lease for a year and are looking to renew their lease again. He said they had been good stewards of the facility and they pay a 50 percent rate of the normal rental rate to use the facility and pay for the staffing cost. He said it was being brought to Committee for a one-year extension.

Ms. Whitley asked what the underlying reason was for the 50 percent rate and asked if they were asking for the 50 percent rate again.

Mr. Gergick answered in the affirmative and said the underlying reason is not to pay as much as full rate. He said when the request is brought to Committee it was for consideration and the last time they were given the 50 percent rate. He said there was not a magic number as to why that number was chosen.

Mr. Santos said with the history he has seen is they are trying to save money, so they can get out on their own facility. He said they want to get out on their own and do not want to stay under the Town and by the Committee allowing them to do that they are able to start saving money. He said the idea was to help them get started and then they get out and have their own facility.

Ms. Whitley asked if the Committee gives discounted rates to other religious organizations that use Town facilities.

Mr. Gergick answered in the affirmative. He said the Christian Science Group uses the Miriam Brown and the Young Life Group uses the Park West Pavilion facility and the Jones Center.

Ms. Whitley asked if they give discounted rates to non-profits that request to use the facilities if they are also working to get their own facilities. She said she was trying to understand what the standard was to be sure it was uniformly applied and to understand whether or not this was something moving forward that they think is appropriate for the Town do. She said the dollar amount is somewhat trivial.

Mr. Gergick said that the normal rental rate was \$75 per hour for the facility. He said at half price they are getting it for \$37.50 per hour for two hours and are paying \$75 instead of \$150.

Ms. Whitley said this was basically ad hoc and they take whatever organization comes asking for. She asked if they have to ask for a discounted rate or does the Committee automatically to religious organizations.

Mr. Gergick said they are requesting it. He said as Councilman O'Rourke mentioned in some of the email conversations he thought it would be a good idea to standardize a system to determine when groups do get a rate reduction and when they do not. He said that Ms. Whitley was correct that groups come to the Department and asked for a rental and they are looking for a fee waiver or a reduced rate. He said they have done that for different organizations such as Wounded Warriors softball tournament each year and they are usually given a discounted rate at the Jimmy Seignious fields. He said there are other groups that come in and when seen as a worthy organization or cause the Committee has supported that in the past.

Mr. O'Rourke said he would like to make a motion that they approve the request from Shem Creek Presbyterian Church for a one-year lease extension for the use of the Darby Building.

He said to also have staff look at some standardization when it comes to rental. He said the reason he started the email exchange was that he is the Finance Committee Chair and they are trying as hard as they can to find revenues that they are going to need in the Town as they move into the future. He said this was a great group as is others. He said that \$75 for the two hours is a good deal to not lease space monthly in the Town. He said he would make a motion to approve it but wants staff to have a discussion about some type of standardization and come back.

Mr. Santos seconded the motion. Ms. Whitley was opposed. The motion passed by a two to one vote.

6. Discussion and possible action with regard to the reconstruction of the tennis courts on Queen Street

Mr. Gergick said they have a Queen Street court project that is funded by the Land Water Conservation Fund. He said the project initially was to replace the three courts that are there. He said due to the concerns about flooding and storm water drainage issues in the Old Village and the Town ordinance requiring the 40 percent maximum impervious surface in the area the Town was going to adhere to its own policy, rules, and ordinances

and keep the impervious surface under 40 percent. He said to do that they needed to reduce the number of courts to two courts instead of three courts. He said they could not get there with three courts and stay under 40 percent. He said that was the current plan to move forward with two courts. He said it was being brought for the Committee's consideration as to whether they would like to request a waiver from the Board of Zoning Appeals (BOZA) to grant a variance to the 40 percent rule in order to keep three courts.

Mr. Santos asked Mr. DeMoura to give some history of why the Town created the ordinance with the 40 percent impervious surface so people can understand for the record why it was done. He asked how it may affect them if they go against the Town's ordinance trying to protect the houses in the Old Village from flooding.

Mr. DeMoura said the Old Village area has experienced, for some time, flooding issues particularly in storm water. He said the infrastructure that is in place is owned almost entirely by the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT). He said there are areas that do not have any infrastructure. He said that some of the infrastructure that is there and owned by the State is not working properly. He said they have seen over the last few years there has been increased periods of heavy rainfall which seems to have exacerbated the situation. Mr. DeMoura said they have an area of town and others in town that is under threat more often because of the storm water situation and problem. He said until proper infrastructure can be put in place, which is under design, they have taken other measures to be able to control storm water. He said that one of those is to require that no more than 40 percent of the property can be impervious. He said that is the ordinance that they have at play and it applies to the entire area. He said when they designed this project, it is an improved project of the Town they ran into this ordinance which required them to redesign to two courts. He said they had brought that issue to Committee a few months ago and there has been significant public interest since that time. He said they are at a point where they have an improved project, have funding for it supported by a grant, and they are looking for

direction on which way to proceed. He said they can either move forward with a request of a variance from the Board of Zoning Appeals (BOZA) and if they grant it then the Town will move forward and build the three courts. He said if they do not then he said a decision needs to be made as the grant money is still available and applicable that they move ahead and build the two-court alternative.

Mr. Santos said he knew that the legal staff was present at the meeting if they wanted to respond to this. He said if they grant this and, in a month, someone wants to build, and they want a variance as well he asked if it put them in any legal situation if the Town gets a variance and others request one to build larger houses.

Mr. DeMoura said they would have the same process afforded to them as the Town does and that is to go to through the Board of Zoning Appeals. He said that they have the authority to grant a variance or not. He said they may choose to allow a variance or not for the Town and the same for a private property owner. He said that the legal staff can respond if they like but he does not believe it put the Town in a weaker position to enforce the ordinance. He said there is a remedy and it is the Board of Zoning Appeals and they are charged with making these types of decisions.

Ms. Whitley said it was three existing courts and thought it was a policy decision of a prior Council to not have a grandfathering in provision to this 40 percent impervious ordinance. She said the way the law stands is that if someone's property covers more than 40 percent and there is a hurricane they cannot rebuild their existing home and they have to build something different. She said she did not know if she agreed with that but that is the way it is. She said she thought people were going to be applying for variances to rebuild if that comes up and she did not see that there was a large problem with applying for a variance as BOZA might deny it. She said she did not think it was problem to apply for a variance for the tennis courts because they will not cover more surface as they are currently covering. She said she thought the amount was off by ten percent with 50 percent coverage verses 40 percent.

Mr. Gergick said it was close to 52 percent coverage. He said it was slightly less than they currently are as there was some design changes to reduce it by a few percentage points.

Ms. Whitley said she thought that Full Council deserved an opportunity to look at this issue.

Ms. Whitley made a motion to recommend that they apply for a variance and see Full Council has to say about it.

Mr. Santos said they can recommend to send it to Full Council as he thought that Full Council should deal with it. He said they are going to have people that get flooded and will show up really upset that the Town came out with a 40 percent ordinance to protect the flooding and now they are asking for a variance to allow someone to build more than 40 percent. He said it was going to be a contentious issue, so he thought they should send it to Full Council.

Mr. DeMoura said the Town would be the applicant and it would have to be a matter considered by Council. He said it would need to be a formal action.

Mr. O'Rourke said he does not want to see less courts and thought if they put a court in the middle of James B. Edwards Park it would be a problem. He said that everything they do is going to be a problem as this is not easy. He said this was the first he heard about taking it to Full Council, but he thought they should as he and Ms. Whitley are new, and they are thinking without any of the information that the Town had to argue with when they came up with the ordinance. He said he liked bringing it back to Full Council, so they can hear what everyone says.

Mr. O'Rourke said he seconded the motion.

Mr. Santos asked if the motion was to take it to Full Council.

Ms. Whitley said to determine whether or not they should request a variance.

Mr. Santos said they have a motion and a second and asked if anyone was present and wanted to speak.

Ms. Colleen Griffin, 840 Pitt Street, Mount Pleasant said she came to request that they ask for a variance. She said she understands the Town's efforts to preserve permeable surfaces especially in the Old Village to allow drainage and to reduce flooding. She said she does not believe a long standing and a much-used neighborhood amenity should be penalized for irresponsible building that happened many decades after those courts were built. She said it does not take long to walk around the Old Village and see examples of recent building of larger multiple homes is going to benefit only one private owner at the expense of all of their neighbors whereas granting a variance to the tennis courts would benefit the entire neighborhood, the Town, visitors to our Town, and the Recreation Department classes.

Mr. Carter Griffin, 850 Pitt Street, in the Old Village, said he was there to ask the Town to maintain and continue to have three tennis courts on Royall. He said he had attended summer camp at the courts and although he does not take lessons currently he visits frequently along with many of his friends to play recreationally. He said that many times they have had to wait up to 30 minutes for a court to open included the center court which contains a broken net and a large terribly repaired crack down its center. He said the tennis courts are used by a large portion of the Old Village residents and three are necessary to keep tennis players satisfied. He said it was great for kids unable to drive because the courts are close enough for them to bike to. He said they often do not have the opportunity to play on courts outside of the Old Village. He thanked the Committee for their consideration.

Mr. O'Rourke asked when they do the math on the 40 percent if they just include the parcel where the tennis courts are, or do they include the entire James B. Edwards Park. He asked why they do not include that.

Mr. DeMoura said they are separate and divided by a roadway. He said the courts are the courts. He said if they included it with Edwards it would be below the threshold.

Mr. O'Rourke said he did not want less than three courts. He said he did not think they should go backwards in the number of tennis facilities in the

Town. He said he does not want to have less facilities with a growing tennis community and growing town. He said he does not know how they will do it.

Mr. Santos said they have Mugsy Kerr that is expanding.

Mr. Gergick said they do have an expansion plan for Mugsy Kerr following the completion of Carolina Park. He said once Carolina Park is completed they will be able to give up the baseball field that is behind Mugsy Kerr. He said that it will allow for the expansion of six new courts.

Mr. Santos said they are moving forward with tennis and pickleball.

Mr. Gergick said they are currently under construction of an additional clay court at Mugsy Kerr. He said in the future they will have seven additional courts at that facility.

Mr. Santos said they all agree they want to grow.

Mr. Santos said they have a motion and a second on the floor. All were in favor.

7. Program/projects update

Mr. Gergick said since the last report there is a gym being built outside of Town Hall. He said that poured concrete walls will be going up this week. He said they are very excited about it. He said it will be replacing the single court gym that was here previously. He said it will have two courts and will have volleyball, pickleball, wrestling, four side to side basketball courts. He said there will be outside restroom facilities for the track and football field.

Mr. Gergick said since the last report they have had the Blessing of the Fleet, and the Farmers Market has been held every Tuesday. He said Mayor Haynie has made the Farmers Market his new outreach program for people to meet him. He said Ms. Tracy Richter accepted the Spirit of Cooperation Award from the Community Pride of Charleston County on May 18 in recognition of the Town's partnership with Moultrie Middle School in offering the Farmers Market. He said the past weekend they had the T-ball/Coach Pitch Jamboree at Park West. He said there were hundreds of kids along with Charlie the Riverdog. He said they had a young

girl sing the National Anthem, the Fire Department did the color guard and the Police Department was present with the SWAT team and their vehicle.

Mr. Santos said that staff did a tremendous job. He said everything went smooth and he heard great things from the parents. He said the little girl who sang was fantastic.

Mr. Gergick said that Party in the Park starts Tuesday night. He said they have great music acts along with food, beer, and beverage for everyone at 6 pm at Waterfront Park. He said that the Junior Golf Tournament would be June 12 at Patriots Point. He said that they would possibly have Mr. Santos hit the first ball.

Mr. Santos said he did it last year. He said the quality of the golf at such a young age was amazing. He said golf teaches them so much and not just how to play the game but how to treat people in life with a lot of patience and class. He said he loved being a part of it.

Mr. Gergick said there have a new event on June 23 called Court Queens. He said it was a 3 on 3 women's basketball tournament at Park West.

Ms. Whitley said a couple of months ago the Committee put forth a concept of doing an art walk at Alhambra Hall and having local artist. She asked if any progress had been made in setting up an art walk.

Mr. Gergick answered in the negative but thought they could discuss it to get some more direction.

Mr. Gergick said at Alhambra Hall they had the Spring Carnival in May.

8. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting at 9:04 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Bedenbaugh, 6/4/18