

Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting - February 2, 2022 via Zoom

Attendees: Tina Maresca, Karrie Sergio, Carlo Reca, Kristen Vetter, Brittany Ross, Manny Rawlings, Heather Castellani Milboer, Cindy Fasolino (on phone)

Present: Jason Pinto, Jeff Ahne, Nora Lucas

Opening:

Tina made a motion to open the meeting, Karrie seconded. Kristen made a motion to approve December's minutes, Heather seconded. All approved December's minutes. January's minutes will be approved at the next meeting because we did not post them in time for all to review.

Capital Projects:

Jason said the parks need some work, so they put together a capital plan that goes through five years. There are some projects that they want to do in the near future with the Recreation Trust Fund and some other projects that they would like to ask the Board to possibly take from surplus or bond.

The first two projects that would be bonded, that we wouldn't be able to use the trust fund for are the **Lanza Field lights and backstop**. The Lanza Field lights are \$244,000 but we will save money on the project because electricity on the LEDs is a lot cheaper and the return on investment is \$129,000 over 10 years, which is quite a bit of savings compared to what we're paying now. We're going to pay more in electrical fees over the 10 years if we don't replace the bulbs and that doesn't take into account maintenance costs like changing the bulbs or rewiring, which we do every few years, and that can be 5-7 thousand dollars. The other benefit in switching to LEDs would be the local sports leagues will be able to rent them because it will be significantly cheaper, which for the leagues it's just not affordable now. He thinks we would see a revenue increase in field usage because the sports leagues would be more inclined to use the lights.

Tina asked why we would have to do a bond instead of using the trust fund. Jason said with the trust fund his understanding is that folks that build in the Village, they either have to provide a recreational amenity or they have to pay the Village a fee for the Village to provide the recreational amenity and that it's for large projects. The Village can use the funds to build a playground or renovate a playground for example, but we can't use it to do the Lanza Field lights because that's not necessarily a recreational amenity, that's why it would need to be bonded or come from surplus. Nora confirmed that's the gist of it and so far, the only thing we've used it for are the swings at Columbus Park and the Jefferson Avenue basketball courts. Carlo said there was about \$450,000 remaining in the fund that hasn't been used in years. Jason said there's almost \$433,000 in the fund and we haven't used it since Columbus Park, but something like Jefferson Ave Park, we can renovate entirely with the trust fund. We would be able to refurbish the tennis courts and playground surfaces at Florence Park but not utility things like lights.

Jason also mentioned he was talking to Jerry and thinks it's important we all understand that with the Army Corps project that got approved, Jerry has a design meeting in the coming weeks and the design process could take nine months, then the project could start maybe next March. That project is going to have an impact on parks like Ward and Columbus. He's not sure what the entire impact will be in terms

of when they're doing their work, but a lot of folks utilize Florence Park and if we can have Jefferson renovated, it would be nice to have an alternate location close by that could be used if by chance Columbus Park is out of commission. Nora said it will be for a period of time. Carlo said based on his history with the parks department, we were supposed to undertake a project a park like every 2-3 years to renovate it totally, if not the structure it was going to be the rubber surface, because initially all of them had wood chips, which we have at some parks but not all, so this is a great opportunity to renovate Jefferson. Jason said when he first started, they were on a schedule. The first rubber surface was at Warren, then they did Florence, but that wasn't done right. They were supposed to do Jefferson renovation next and then it never happened. Tina said Stanley was also resurfaced and Jason said Columbus basketball court surface was done more recently too. Jason said the good news is the work they did on the Jefferson basketball court will remain, but everything else is going to go, including new fencing. Jason and Jeff are going to work on pricing and design and then they will bring it back here to discuss plans as they progress. Brittany asked, with the daycares in the area, if we could have any community input into the design. Jason said they could but since it's such a broad scale he would want to have options put together first from a vendor, then show that to a small group of stakeholders in the area. Jason said that's the main focus in the near future for the capital plan but there are other items.

Jason said he talked to Jerry about the **Dog Park** and he would like to bond it, thinks it's going to be around \$100,000. Every hundred thousand dollars is an \$8,000 bond fee to pay so Jerry said that we can come up with a fee structure to try to pay off that bond meaning you would have to pay to get into the dog park type deal, but he said that he is going to work on that with us so we can move forward with trying to come up with a plan for that.

Karrie said in looking at where the Dog Park falls on the capital list it's a really long time to wait for something that has been talked about for so long. Now we're talking about it being a bond and not money that supposedly had been budgeted for, so that's a concern and she thinks it deserves a little bit more attention because of how long people have been pushing for it. A lot of things on the list are things that need improvements, and they should be done, but there are new things like the pickleball courts, or other things that we already have, but we don't have a dog park and people with dogs are really looking for a place to go.

Kristen agreed saying it's been going on for a ridiculous amount of time and doesn't understand, if it's on the list as an option that we can use the trust fund for, why does it need to be bonded and why are we waiting three more years to bond it? At the same token, why are the tennis courts which, on the previous lists were slated a year earlier, we already have quotes received and we have the money, why we're still waiting two more years? She doesn't understand the flow of money.

Jason said spoke with his boss today and that's where he felt the money should be spent in the near term, it's not in his control. He thinks the Dog Park is going to happen a lot sooner, but that's where it fell on the list. Nora said the \$100,000 for the Dog Park is just an estimate, there have not been proposals for it. Kristen said, yes, but on something like the tennis courts, who decides? The money is there and as Carlo pointed out we really haven't used it, it's not making any money sitting in the bank,

we have a list of things that desperately need to be done, we have items where we actually have quotes received for pickleball courts, for tennis courts, what are we waiting for exactly, what has to happen?

Carlo said everyone's got pet projects, he has a little history here also and sat on the board and dog parks, but we've also spoken about a basketball court as well down at the harbor for many years over and over again. He feels a small sliver of people are going to use the dog park, a larger group of people will be using the basketball courts, like summer camp. We've also been talking about expanding the spray ground which the camp would use as well. It's about setting priorities on what's going to be utilized the most. He feels the \$100,000 would be better spent on a basketball court or the spray ground.

Tina asked Nora what she would suggest people do if they have ideas or suggestions. Nora said if it's from the Committee, the Committee needs to decide as a whole what the priorities are.

Going back to Kristen's question, Jason said there have been other recreation priorities and parks priorities haven't been there, like pandemics, storms, sewer projects, other capital projects, bridges and everything else that staff is going through, these things got pushed back and that is the best answer he can give on why he feels things haven't gotten done. He also said the Board has a work session agenda that is jam packed and it's not that they don't want to get to it, there's a lot of things going on. Quotes are already no good. Nora said Jason's right, the trustee work sessions have had things carry over for many months. It's not just PRC projects that aren't getting done, the pandemic and the two storms have really been one of the biggest time sinks for staff right now and creating the FEMA reimbursement list. It's been an extreme two years and they've been dealing with a lot of damage, budget changes, employees out because of Covid, and trying to get the FEMA reimbursement.

Jeff explained they're trying to get all the stuff done as soon as possible. Some stuff on the list can't be done now, like the basketball courts that Carlo mentioned. They're not going to put basketball courts in and then the county is going to come and rip them up and they're going to be no good. So, the dates on this list are just what he and Jason came up with of what they want to accomplish in five years, it doesn't necessarily mean it's in order of importance. Some things will be pushed up, some things will be paid out of the funding we already have, some things we are going to want a bond, it's just the way it works. What we're trying to do now is the Florence Park playground floor before we lose it totally and it costs us even more money. We're trying to do the Lanza lights and the backstop, the Dog Park, and the Jefferson Park improvements. Whether that money comes out of our trust fund or we have to get stuff bonded that's how it's going to work, but this is the opening conversation to push those things forward.

Brittany asked besides financially, if there anything that we can do to help move things forward. Jeff said the Village has been essentially closed because of the pandemic and then we had the flood. We have a lot of work to catch up on, but now that hopefully Covid's ending, and we can get back to a sort of normal state, things can continue to move forward on a regular schedule. Carlo said just to set priorities again, because of the flooding the Village lost a fire department, that's a high priority, and Tompkins bridge also, so the focus is on those projects and funding, those are necessities more than a basketball court, spray ground, or dog park. Jason said Jerry is hopeful, he believes that the Village is

going to be in a really good financial position at the end of this budget in terms of surplus, revenues and sales tax, so hopefully that will give everyone a little bit of encouragement to try to do some capital work. Next meeting he will have real quotes for the lighting, Jeff will work on getting vendors for the playground and as far as a formal quote for the dog park he doesn't know if we have to use that \$19,000 quote or get a formal quote. Nora said that quote was just for design and thought Jerry felt that was too much money. Karrie agreed saying Jerry has already done a dog park elsewhere and he thought that money could be better spent on the park itself.

Karrie also thinks we should prioritize and be focused on things that are absolutely necessity, not wants, and asked Nora about the FEMA application deadline. Nora said it's in the coming weeks and we would not be in a good financial position if Village staff had not documented everything. Not only do we need to get reimbursed but we also have to replace equipment. We've had three FEMA emergencies in under two years and the amount of money we've spent has really put some communities in a hole. We're lucky we're going to be made whole but it is making everything take longer. Jason said he thinks we're going to be in a better place to work on getting some of these projects done. Brittany asked about a realistic timeline. Jason said on the field lights, from speaking with Jerry, we have the quote and can get that to the Board on a work session, maybe March 14th and because that's ready to go it's something that can be done very quickly with the vendor before spring sports if the board approves it. Jeff said first and foremost for him is Florence Park playground rubber surface replacement because it's deteriorating and is starting to cause a safety issue. Jefferson Ave Park, Florence Park tennis courts and the Dog Park will take more planning, getting designs and quotes. Then we have to see where we are financially and timewise seasonally.

Karrie asked about the life expectancy of the playground rubber surface, feels like it's soon to replace. Jeff believes it was not installed properly from the beginning. Also, Jeff said each year it's supposed to be inspected and when the rubber surface starts balling up there's a re-sealer that you're supposed to do that prolongs the life of the rubber surface. Nora said they're going to use a different vendor and Jeff said inhouse they're also going to be implementing a maintenance schedule to reseal the rubber surfaces. Carlo asked Nora about when we go to bid, aren't we supposed to take the lowest bid? Nora said we're supposed to take the lowest responsible bid but we don't ever have to use someone we used before if we don't think they're qualified or responsible. Jason said jobs will be watched over very well.

Tina asked if there was anything else on this, Jason said no, we will be discussing capital projects at the next meeting as well. Tina said each month we can stay on top of what we think should be happening next and discuss it.

George Latimer joined the meeting to check in and see if there's anything on our agenda that requires action by the county government. Jason said on behalf of the entire population, all 20,000 residents, he thinks the county Pier at Harbor Island, whenever we can get that done, we'd be super appreciative. George said that's fair enough and that it's our golden jewel. George asked if there's a specific plan and said he will check it out and find out where we are. Someone can give him a call tomorrow.

Parks Update:

Jeff said we had a couple of snow/ice storms that they've been dealing with, other than that they've been assisting the harbor master with building docs, they've been doing a lot of shop maintenance trying to be better prepared for the spring and summer seasons. He's using this time to really change the way they do things in the shop, getting input from his own guys on what needs to change and what needs to be done better.

Recreation Update:

Jason said they're doing a lot of planning. Recently, this month they're doing the hiring information so that will be out next week for part time seasonal jobs; lifeguards, camp counselors, beach attendants, parking booth attendants, etc. Camp information will also be coming out next week with the registration open for residents the first week in March. The seasonal beach/parking passes for Harbor Island Park are going to go on sale the first Monday in April, and they are also working with different groups on events. There are a lot of requests for permits, so they sent out to all the field users, all that is starting to come in. They hope to open the fields for the spring/summer season the first week in April. So it's a busy time of year.

Carlo asked Jeff if they were going to try to address that sinkhole in right field near the school house that's been sitting there for years. Jeff said that's the plan if the weather breaks in early March, to go around the Harbor and all the other parks and start to fill in some divots and sinkholes, spike and seed too in the spring and fall.

Kristen said she's had a couple conversations and knows the city of Rye is requiring all their seasonal staff to be fully vaccinated, what's the Village's policy? Jason said on the employment application there's a questionnaire where it asks you if you're vaccinated, unvaccinated, or if you do not wish to disclose and that's the only thing that the Village has told him so far. He doesn't think they have a policy Village wide as of yet but they're trying to gauge how much staff is vaccinated. Kristen said she knows with kids, parents would prefer staff be vaccinated. Brittany asked if the camp will be all outdoors again. Jason said mostly outdoors but the pavilion will be used, especially for the younger ones, same as last year. Brittany thought that might be a concern that kids would be indoors at all. Jason said whatever the Village's policy is with hiring is what he has to go by, he doesn't know which way the Village is going to go. Nora said she thinks Jerry's trying to figure out what to do based on the mandates and the court situation.

Jason told us the Village historian reached out to him, the Historical Society wants to do an event on the bandstand where they do traditional dances and teach people how to do them. According to the historical society, this is a sponsored event so Westchester gets money from the state for these types of historical performances and some of that money went to our historical society. We don't have a flyer yet but it will be mid-May. Nora said Jason and Jeff are also working with the Arts Council and the Emelin, there's going to be two concerts in the summer that the Emelin and the Arts Council partner with and then there's going to be four Friday concerts in parks. Jason has a full list of a bunch of events they're working on; movie nights, Tiki nights, camp outs, car show, parades, the first being the St Patrick's day parade on March 20th, the Firemen's parade is June 29th. He's also working with the Rye Neck PTSA on Sprint to School the end of April/early May, so there's a lot of things coming up.

Karrie wasn't sure if everybody was aware but the Board has slated on February 14 to review the public law about smoking in parks. With the legalization of marijuana there is the possibility of adding marijuana to the list of prohibitions but at one of the Board's sessions/meetings, we have a new trustee who was questioning whether or not smoking should be prohibited at all. Since we are PRC and make recommendations, thought we should have an opinion on what we think so that the Board is aware of how this Commission feels about all of that. Nora said the proposed law is to simply add marijuana and any marijuana product to the current prohibition. There is no smoking allowed in parks now but marijuana is not prohibited so the law expands the prohibition. Karrie stated she thought we should add marijuana because while it's legal it's still a substance, just like smoking, and the law should stand that smoking should be prohibited in the parks. Kristen said smoking is legal too and agreed that just because something is legal doesn't mean you should do it our parks. Brittany also agreed and said she sees cigarette butts all over Harbor Island Park and around park benches so questioned if there were areas we deemed as public. Currently there are no designated smoking areas. Nora said if we want to make a statement as a committee, we need to vote on it otherwise we can make statements individually. Tina made a motion to support adding marijuana to the existing law that prohibits smoking in parks, Brittany seconded, Karrie did a roll call, all in favor. Tina will send an email to the Board with our recommendation.

Closing:

Tina made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Karrie seconded. Meeting adjourned.

Next meeting is March 2nd.