

PARK COMMITTEE MEETING
Wednesday, April 28, 2021 6:30 p.m.
Village Hall

Members Present: Chairman Dennis Galicki, Councilwoman Nairn, Mayor Koons, Ted Kruse, Martha Bistriz,

Members Absent: Greg Pike, Bill Howell

Visitor: Judy Harvey

Galicki called the meeting to order and read the roll.

Judy Harvey provided the committee with a packet of information concerning the proposed butterfly garden. As background, Harvey heard of the butterfly garden which had originally been installed by a Girl Scout troop but was no longer being maintained. Harvey saw this as an opportunity for a project sponsored by the Harvey family. She contacted Jeff Griff, Lowes Greenhouse, to develop a plan since the current garden was deemed unsustainable. Griff designed a large maze type garden. The design was scaled down to a more suitable size and provided to the committee. It would be closer to the pavilion and more visible from the street. It would be professionally installed and a committee of individuals who enjoy gardening would help to maintain it. If agreeable, the Village would do the mowing around it. Harvey added that the group would also maintain the existing butterfly garden this year. She reiterated that the project would be a Harvey Family project funded by the Harvey family. Harvey explained that her husband, former Mayor Tom Harvey, was involved with the Village for many years, and this would be their gift.

Galicki clarified that the garden was for pollinators and noted its proximity to the pavilion. He advised that from time to time, the Village uses pesticides in and around the pavilion and playground to keep the wasp/hornet population down. He asked if Harvey considered the effect this might have on the pollinators. Kruse offered that in treating the areas, the prevailing wind blows away from the garden. Nairn stated that the previous year, the pavilion had only been treated for carpenter bees, and she recalled no treatment for wasps and hornets. Kruse explained the same pesticide is used for both. The committee discussed that only the building is treated and not the surrounding vegetation. The Mayor verified that Patton Pest Control had already provided the first treatment.

Harvey explained that the new garden would be installed during the fall and that some of the plants from the existing garden could be repurposed in the new one. The original garden would then be put back to its original state. The optimal location for the garden was discussed. The Mayor did not see a problem with the new location. The potential need for a variance was raised by Kruse, but the Mayor said no. The Mayor thought Pete McDonald, Western Reserve Land Conservancy (WRLC) would be very happy that something was being done. Harvey and Kruse agreed that it would be beneficial to have limited traffic near the garden and suggested putting the garden more towards the west after getting approval, which did not seem to be an issue. The Mayor stated that the area had been staked to show the proposed area. Kruse had not seen it.

Harvey wanted to have benches on either side of the garden as well. Harvey explained her interest in not burdening the Service Department with work on the garden. It would just be necessary for them to have the circles mowed and then in the spring, the entire garden would be mowed flat. This is how the garden regenerates.

Kruse expressed approval of the project, and Galicki agreed and said the next stage would be to bring the project to Council for approval. Galicki made a motion that the Park Committee support Judy Harvey and her garden group and their proposed butterfly garden to be placed in South Russell Village Park, seconded by Kruse. Voice vote – ayes, all. Motion carried.

Galicki suggested definitively determining and marking the new proposed area for the garden so that Council could view it before the May 10th Council meeting. Kruse suggested meeting with Pete McDonald for approval but was not sure this could be accomplished before the meeting. The Mayor stated he would contact McDonald and thought he would give approval over the phone.

Nairn asked if approval would be sought for the certification from the Monarch Association as the Girl Scouts had done with their garden. Harvey stated she would contact the organization regarding the potential need for recertification.

Harvey verified that the committee approved of the inclusion of two benches, and they agreed.

The Mayor stated that Harvey would be on the agenda for the May 10th Council meeting. On behalf of the committee, Galicki thanked Harvey for taking the lead on the project to not only revive a wallowing former Girl Scout project but joining the committee's mission to make the community a better place to live and work. He appreciated her willingness to give to the Village and community and thanked her for her initiative.

Galicki asked the committee for its thoughts of the feasibility of the Fall Festival and what it might look like this year. He advised that the matter had been discussed by Council and he thought there was community interest and support for it. However, he surmised that many supporters might be envisioning Fall Festivals from 2019 and earlier and not in terms of the pandemic and the remaining restrictions. He noted changes in restrictions but recognized that the potential need for sanitization, social distancing with lines, and individually packaged food. He suggested food or ice cream trucks as an alternative but thought it would be necessary to consider management of previous attractions like the bouncy house, hayrides, and farm/yard equipment.

Bistriz said with everything being in flux, it is hard to say how things will be in five months. Nairn agreed and thought that issues with the mutations of the virus were problematic. Kruse said that eliminating too many of the attractions would result in a loss of appeal. He felt that the committee needed to give the decision more time because restrictions have begun to loosen up and there currently is no football schedule. There would be no sense in scheduling if there were no date to pick. Galicki agreed but said his greatest struggle was with what the festival would look like and whether it would have appeal. He asked Kruse and Bistriz how much time was required to plan. Bistriz suspected that the vendors the Village typically used were not being

booked, so she thought there would be no conflict there. She also offered that the Jaycees had moved Blossom Time to fall and said this may be another date to consider when scheduling. Bistriz suggested offering a concert in the park as an event that would hold appeal and where people could be separated. Galicki acknowledged that the Mayor had discussed concerts in the park with the former Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce.

Galicki asked when the committee thought it would be possible to decide about the Fall Festival, and Bistriz and Kruse agreed it would not be for another couple of months. Nairn suggested making a hard decision by July 1st. Kruse emphasized that the date should not conflict with football. Galicki encouraged the committee to keep the creative juices flowing to think about possibilities for the festival. He added that a suggestion he heard was to organize old fashioned games like sack races, etc. if other attractions like the bouncy house and rock-climbing wall were not possible.

Nairn suggested a huge ice cream social. She thought it was important to be inclusive of all age groups. Galicki stated in terms of the current restrictions, if there was an ice cream truck like the King Kone truck where the ice cream product is prepackaged, that would fit.

Galicki urged the committee to forward any ideas to him.

The Mayor thought the Village would be having a Fall Festival and thought the easiest thing would be to have a couple of food trucks and an ice cream truck. He also thought bouncy houses and hayrides would also occur. The committee responded that time would tell.

Galicki explained that during the pandemic, the Village had not accepted park pavilion reservations and it had been on a first come first served basis. He asked the committee whether the time had come to reopen the pavilion to reservations. Bistriz and Kruse thought it should. Nairn agreed. Galicki advised that he would present the matter to Council and have an effective date of Tuesday, May 11th.

Regarding park tree and bench donations, Galicki asked the committee if the original intent were that the donations be in perpetuity or just for the life cycle of the tree and/or bench, and with the demise of either, would they be available for purchase by another resident. Bistriz thought this was an interesting question. Her impression was that once it fell apart, then one would have to purchase another item. She did not think the Village should have to replace it in the future. She asked what prompted the question. Galicki advised that some trees and portions of benches had been replaced, and there was maintenance involved. Another aspect of the issue concerned the materials with which the benches were made. He explained that there are composite materials and/or recycled plastic products that look like wooden park benches. He questioned whether the Village would get more life out of this type of product. Kruse agreed and added that although a better-quality bench would cost more, it would last longer. He thought there should be a standard and all benches should be the same. He did not think wood was the right material. Kruse stated that he has seen products in catalogs that are wonderful. Galicki relayed a program by the navy involving recycling of water bottles which were subsequently turned into indestructible park benches. Galicki thought the Village could possibly get more bang for its buck with less maintenance and a little more life out of the benches. Kruse suggested setting a

meeting to discuss the benches, establish standards, and identify a product. Bistriz agreed. She also offered that plaques from former benches and trees could potentially be placed in a spot commemorating the donors. She likened the concept to brick walkways with donor bricks. Galicki agreed this was a good idea and encouraged it be development.

Nairn stated that she was on the Cemetery Committee for eight years and one of the biggest arguments she recalled over the years was the general aversion to plastic and plastic benches even if they looked like wood. The plastic was not thought of as a fitting material for the Cemetery. She thought wood and stone were wonderful. Nairn said there are people who do not like plastic. Kruse thought that minds could be changed on this matter with seeing the actual product. Galicki added that people have preconceived notions of what a plastic bench looks like. Nairn agreed. Galicki understood the issue of not having the plastic benches in the Cemetery, but thought a public park was a different matter. Kruse said he would bring the information and samples to the next meeting.

Nairn said she had spoken to the Mayor and Service Department with her concerns about the wooden benches, and she was assured of the repair and maintenance of the benches. Galicki said that this would also come with a cost for labor. Kruse added that splinters can be an issue with the wooden benches. Bistriz noted that the benches around the playground are wood and are very solid. She added that she liked the new sign.

Galicki addressed the need for a strategic plan for the park, and reminded the committee of the various ideas proposed over the years which included a recreation center, pools, soccer fields, a Veterans Memorial, rain gardens, permanent bathrooms, expanded parking, etc. He did not object to projects going forward but thought that instead of entertaining the project du jour, a strategic plan should be developed. He asked the committee to consider this. Kruse said it was not a bad idea but would be a lot of work. He added that things change and what seems like a good idea today may not seem so tomorrow. Nairn stated that last fall during the budget work sessions, she suggested a permanent restroom facility fund be started to put aside \$10,000 every year. She verified with the Mayor that it had been approved. The Mayor was not sure. Nairn stated that it would cost \$50,000 to build it and putting money aside over time would lessen the impact on Village finances. She thought it was necessary to have facilities in the park.

Bistriz addressed the 10 acres on East Washington and the three acres on Bell Rd. The projects like the restrooms and parking lot were specific to the latter. Last year, she and the Parks Committee walked the park with Pete McDonald and Greg Studen. She advised that the reason the Village has the majority of the land is to create a more diverse habitat for wildlife. She thought there were knowledgeable people in the community who might work on a proposal for how to better use the land for diversity. She addressed burning and said it would really help the diversity. Bistriz thought a subcommittee might want to develop a proposal for this. Galicki said he appreciated the suggestion and if she was aware of community members like this, he asked that she let the Parks Committee know. If the committee is going to address any of the projects, whether it is the expanded parking lot, restrooms, flagpoles, etc. it all takes money and it is necessary to budget.

Kruse stated that the park, in his mind, is for the citizens of South Russell, not for the habitat of wild animals and creating a diverse situation and letting things grow up. He thought this was not the important part, but rather making things enjoyable for the residents. He disagreed with Bistriz on this matter. Nairn stated that a point was made concerning a problem with the health of the park as reflected in the lack of insect life. Kruse asked who made this statement. Nairn thought it was McDonald and Studen. Bistriz said she would agree to disagree and thought the community would benefit greatly from diversity in the park and more wildlife. Kruse stated that the majority of the people are not there to observe wildlife. Bistriz identified the variety of wildlife in just a small portion of the park and described the remainder of the park as a green desert because it gets cut yearly. Kruse added that if it were not cut, the birds would be driven away. Bistriz advised that there was an idea to section off areas so as not to interfere with those elements with which the Village must comply.

Galicki was happy the committee was having a healthy discussion. He added that the committee meetings should be a venue where such discussions can occur and lead to consensus or compromise. Galicki thought the discussion flowed into that of a strategic plan for the park and the necessity for a forward vision to determine what the park should be and what is important to the citizens. Whether it included a playground and some habitat, Galicki thought there was plenty of area to incorporate all these things.

Kruse stated that it would be necessary to let the park grow up to encourage wildlife, but this was not, in his mind, what the purpose of the park was. The presence of people would deter wildlife and letting the vegetation grow up would deter residents. Nairn stated that it needed to be a people park. Bistriz clarified that she thought there could be better use of some of the grass planning and thought it important to explore this.

Nairn stated she had two residents last year propose installation of bocci courts on the Washington Street side of the park. She was told that people would come to the park to use them, and she concluded that the residents are thinking about the park.

Galicki stated that with any of the ideas presented, if there were concerns, it could always be brought to the vote in terms of the vision of the park.

The Mayor stated that Bistriz's idea was more about the quality of hay continuing to decline. He said it would be necessary to have a burn in the next year or two. It would be done in sections and would not displace the birds. Bistriz thought it would be beneficial to have a plan and an idea of what needed to be adjusted. Kruse stated that the grasses out west where all the grass seeds are grown are burned, which results of a 20% increase in seed production.

Galicki determined there was no new business and adjourned the meeting at 7:45 p.m.



Dennis Galicki, Chairman

Prepared by Leslie Galicki