

PARKS & RECREATIONS BOARD
CITY OF NORTON
Monday, December 18, 2006

The Parks & Recreations Board convened for a public meeting in the Boardroom of the Shirley L. McGuire Community Center. Acting Chairperson Neva Gibson called the meeting to order at 6:14 p.m.

I. ATTENDANCE:

PRESENT: Neva Gibson, Scott Testa, John Conklin

ABSENT: Audrey Toland, Frank Laury

ALSO PRESENT: Jeff Pritchard, Director of Planning and Community Development

II. OLD BUSINESS:

A.) Discussion regarding the Development of Norton Parks Projects:

Acting Chairperson Gibson asked Mr. Jeff Pritchard to embellish on 'Item A-Discussion regarding the Development of Norton Parks Projects' on the agenda. He suggested the Board prioritize the smaller parks' projects from the list submitted at the last meeting. (See attached.)

Mr. Pritchard presented a copy of an Akron Beacon Journal article pertaining to the trail conversion from Hudson to Akron. (See attached.) He said that it was essentially the same thing Norton was proposing for the Canal Corridor to Fairlawn, which will be a substantial cost. He said that the feasibility study for this project is approximately 50% complete. Once completed, federal funds will be sought. If granted, the project will be feasible for Norton. It will be a regional project, that will serve Norton and other communities in terms of passive recreation and linkage to other parks. Mr. Pritchard added that this is one of the larger projects on the list.

Mr. Pritchard said that another larger project is land acquisition to extend the hike and walk path for the southern portion of the Lake Erie Railroad. The Board discussed different properties that would work well for this project. They also discussed extending Columbia Woods Park and the existing soccer fields at Loyal Oak Park. The Board discussed two possible properties to acquire for the extension of the soccer fields and the pros and cons of each.

Mr. Pritchard suggested that smaller projects to prioritize for next year would be things such as trash containers and road improvement within Columbia Woods Park, which a grant could be possible for that project. Some of the projects on the list would be costly, but some might be possible to do as Boy Scout or Girl Scout projects. Ms. Gibson said that she spoke with a Girl Scout representative and was told that they would be interested in helping plant arborvitae trees in the Columbia Woods Park. Mr. Pritchard said that upgrading the Columbia Woods Park sign might also be possible if it was not too costly.

Ms. Gibson wondered if Mr. Pritchard received news yet in regards to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) grant for the Columbia Woods Park playground equipment. He said that he spoke with someone that day and the State budget had not yet been approved. He said legally there was a 90-day period before they submit any funds, but the person he spoke with was going to try to submit a tentative approval list in mid-January. Ms. Gibson wondered if the grant was not approved, would there still be money for the playground equipment in the Parks funds. Mr. Pritchard said yes. Mr. Scott Testa wondered where the new playground equipment would be located. Mr. Pritchard said it would be near the pavilion.

Mr. Pritchard mentioned that there was sufficient money for a trash-recycling center still left in the recycling fund from a grant three years prior.

Ms. Gibson said that she still thought a lighted sign at Williams Memorial Park, which was discussed earlier this year, would be nice. She said she would contact Mr. Tim Crawford, KIWANIS former President, in regards to this project. There was further discussion.

Ms. Gibson wondered when the monies from the additional Cable Franchise Fees would start being dispersed into the Park's budget. Mr. Pritchard said it should begin in 2007; but the Parks funds would still be lean.

Mr. Pritchard noted that the Boy Scouts did a nice job on the cement bases they installed for the trash containers in the Columbia Woods Park. He asked Mr. John Conklin how many were installed. He said approximately fifteen.

Mr. Conklin said that maybe the Board should wait until they hear from ODNR regarding the grant before they decide what projects can be accomplished next year. After discussion, the Board agreed, but decided they could discuss the prioritizing of the list at their next meeting.

III. NEW BUSINESS:

None.

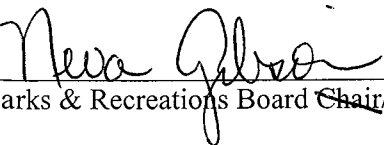
IV. CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES:

A.) Parks and Receptions Board Minutes of Monday, November 20, 2006:

The Board reviewed the minutes of Monday, November 20, 2006, and Acting Chairperson Gibson called for a motion. **Mr. Testa moved to approve the minutes as submitted; seconded by Mr. Conklin. ROLL CALL: Mr. Testa-Yea, Mr. Conklin-Yea, Ms. Gibson-Yea. The motion passed 3-0, approving the minutes. They were signed and processed accordingly.**

V. ADJOURNMENT:

Acting Chairperson Gibson announced that the next meeting was scheduled for Monday, January 22, 2006, at 6:00 p.m., which would be an organizational meeting. With no further business coming before the Board, Acting Chairperson Gibson adjourned the meeting at 6:44 p.m.


Parks & Receptions Board ~~Chair~~/Vice-Chair


Parks & Receptions Board ~~Vice-Chair~~/Member

1-22-07
Date

1. ...
 2. ...
 3. ...

Columbia Woods Park Improvements					
Quantity	Item	Cost	Total	Description	Priority
60	Pin Oaks	?		Per the Columbia Woods Master Plan	?
12	Flowering trees	?		Per the Columbia Woods Master Plan; <i>ornamental flowering trees</i>	?
1	Park entry sign	?		Per the Columbia Woods Master Plan	?
4	Concrete pads	?		Concrete pads for bench seating areas around the football field	?
1	Gazebo	?		Gazebo to be located in the island area of the pond	?
1	Aeration unit	?		Aeration unit to aerate the pond	?
?	Light poles	?		Replace existing light poles	?
? square feet	Sidewalk	?		Sidewalk to be located to the north of the tennis courts	?
?	Pavement and curb	?		Improve the road and parking areas	?
1	Basketball court	?		Replace existing basketball court	?
10	Park benches	?		Provide adequate seating in the park	?
10	Trash containers	?		Provide adequate trash containers	?
1	Volleyball court	?		Provide new recreational opportunity	?
	Permanent restroom	?		Provide permanent restroom facilities in the comfort station	?

Trail possible between Akron and Hudson

It would cover 13 miles in five communities and cost \$10 million. Negotiations still need to happen

By Bob Downing
Beacon Journal staff writer

An old railroad bed from Hudson to Akron might be converted into a hike-and-bike trail.

Hudson, Stow, Silver Lake, Cuyahoga Falls and Akron have been quietly working to turn the rail line into a 13-mile trail that would connect near downtown Akron with the popular Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail.

The price tag is estimated at \$10 million, and the costs would be shared by the five communities, said Deborah Rolland, coordinator of the Summit County Trail and Greenway Plan.

The five cities began meeting about 18 months ago and have completed a feasibility study that shows the trail can be built, said Eric Hutchinson, Hudson park superintendent.

"We're laying the groundwork . . . and we're excited about where we're headed," he said. "It's fantastic project, but we have a lot of work still to do."

Work is likely to begin at the northern end in Hudson and spread south into the other communities, he said.

Hudson has identified the trail as a top recreational priority and will provide an important link from downtown Hudson to Stow, Silver Lake, Cuyahoga Falls and Akron, he said.

Building the trail will depend on the availability of federal and other funds, but the goal is to start construction in Hudson in the next few years, officials said.

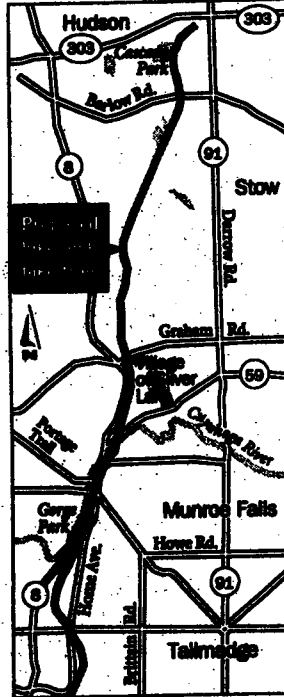
Hudson received a \$25,000 grant from Summit County to buy the rail right of way from Barlow Road north to just south of West Strassboro Road (state Route 303). The city provided a \$25,000 match.

That two-mile stretch of what is often called the Akron Secondary Line is owned by the Norfolk Southern Corp.

Trail supporters have not been in contact with the railroad, and negotiations have not started, Hutchinson said.

The rail line south of Barlow Road is owned by Akron's Metro Regional Transit Authority. Metro RTA has been involved in the discussions and supports the trail plan on its 11 miles of right of way, Rolland and Hutchinson said.

Metro RTA sees the trail as "a good interim use" of the right of way, which the agency holds in case rail should return, said



Kirt W. Conrad, director of planning and development.

The line has tracks and ballast in place from near state Route 303 south to Broad Boulevard in Cuyahoga Falls, he said.

There is no track between Broad and East Tallmadge Avenue in northeast Akron; some track remains between East Tallmadge and Akron's Northside Station, where the trail would end just a block from the popular Towpath Trail, he said.

Where track remains, the trail would be built next to it on the rail right of way, probably with a small fence between the track and the trail, Conrad said.

Where the track is gone, the trail would be built on the track bed, he said.

The trail also would connect with two legs of the Hike & Hike Trail operated by Metro Parks, Serving Summit County.

In the 1990s, officials looked at the Akron Secondary Line as a possible commuter rail line between Akron and the Cleveland area. The price tag was \$170 million, and the project was killed in 2002.

Bob Downing can be reached at 330-496-3746 or bdowning@thebeaconjournal.com.