

Allegheny County Council

*County of Allegheny
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Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 11, 2009

4:00 PM

Conference Room I

Committee on Parks

Nick Futules, Chair; Jim Burn, Joan Cleary, Matt Drozd, Jim Ellenbogen, Mike Finnerty, Bob Macey, and Jan Rea - Members

I. Call to Order

Summary: *The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m.*

Invited Guests:

Jim Flynn, County Manager or Designee

Andy Baechle, Director, Parks

Summary: *Invited Guests Present: Jim Flynn, County Manager; Andy Baechle, Director, Parks Department*

Recognized Attendees: Jody Noble, Manager, Legal & Environmental Services, Duquesne Light; Bruce Woods, Supervisor, Vegetation Management, Duquesne Light; Pam Niehaus, Manager, Engineering, Duquesne Light

Council Staff Present: Jared Barker; Stephanie Buka

II. Roll Call**III. Approval of Minutes**

4614-09 Motion to approve the Minutes of the July 2, 2008 Parks Committee Meeting.

Action: **A motion was made by Cleary, seconded by Macey, that this matter be Passed. The motion carried unanimously.**

Roll Call: Present: Joan Cleary, Matt Drozd, Bob Macey, Jan Rea, Nick Futules, Rich Fitzgerald, Vince Gastgeb, and Chuck McCullough
Absent: Jim Burn, Jim Ellenbogen, and Michael Finnerty

IV. Agenda Items**Ordinances**

4587-09 An Ordinance of the County of Allegheny, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, authorizing use of the County's South Park BMX Track facilities.

Sponsors: Chief Executive

Summary: *Director Baechle said they prefer to issue a new contract with South Park-BMX, Inc. rather than extend their contract.*

Chairman Futules asked about insurance, and Mr. Baechle said the required insurance is in order.

Councilman Drozd asked about the County's liability, and Mr. Baechle said the County is self-insured and also covered by the Municipal Tort Act.

Action: **A motion was made by Cleary, seconded by Macey, that this matter be Affirmatively Recommended. The motion carried unanimously.**

4589-09

An Ordinance of the County of Allegheny, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, approving the use of certain County-owned real property, namely the McConnell farm house located in WHITE OAK PARK, by Mon-Yough Community Services, Inc., for training of clients, and interpretive, education program for visitors.

Sponsors: Chief Executive

Summary:

Director Baechle told the members that White Oak Park is home to an old, historic farm house, with Angora Gardens surrounding such. He explained that Angora Gardens is a program administered by Mon-Yough Community Services that helps brain-injured clients through various therapeutic programming.

Action:

A motion was made by Cleary, seconded by Macey, that this matter be Affirmatively Recommended. The motion carried unanimously.

4590-09

An Ordinance authorizing the County of Allegheny to grant a revocable license to Duquesne Light Company to replace its North-Wildwood electric power line in the southeast section of North Park.

Sponsors: Chief Executive

Summary:

Ms. Noble said there is a 1982 Agreement in place, but Duquesne Light is interested in replacing the existing North-Wildwood electric power line with a higher voltage line in North Park. She added that they are seeking a 100 foot wide easement over the County-owned parcel and they will perform vegetation management. Ms. Noble said Duquesne Light will pay the County \$60,000.00 for the cost of trimming trees and will help improve the trail in North Park. The revocable license agreement is requested so that if the County ever chose to sell North Park, Duquesne Light Company's rights would then become permanent.

Ms. Noble explained that Duquesne Light filed this application in 2004, but there was community opposition. After multiple hearings, the Pennsylvania PUC did approve of this plan in February 2007.

Chairman Futules asked about the impact this would have on North Park and Mr. Woods explained that vegetation management will be selective and only remove those trees that are dead or decaying or those which would negatively affect the reliability of the line or residents views.

Ms. Noble added that a significant part of this project is vegetation management, and Duquesne Light has employed a third-party contractor (Eisler Nurseries) to conduct a restoration effort with planting low growing trees and shrubs.

Mr. Baechle was concerned that Duquesne Light may, at some point, consider a condemnation or choose to erect a higher, unattractive tower. Ms. Noble said they want to avoid a condemnation.

Councilman Drozd asked if this project is being completed in the least expensive manner and he also inquired about the residents satisfaction. Ms. Noble said there are 13 factors they look at for line-site, and cost is one of those factors. She said she couldn't state that they were taking the least expensive route. Some other factors they

look at include environmental impact, the effect on property owners, etc. She said vegetation management is the main issue for property owners and Mr. Woods is working with each of them, as well as with Mr. Baechle. She said, for the most part, owners are satisfied.

Mr. Baechle said the Parks Department did receive a general statement from Duquesne Light about vegetation practices, but it did not include specific plans.

Councilwoman Rea asked if Duquesne Light was extending the work they completed on Peebles Road and Ms. Niehaus replied yes. Ms. Rea inquired about their work with property owners and Mr. Woods said they began their work at the end of October 2008 and they should be finished in approximately a week or two. Ms. Rea asked them to do whatever they could to help the residents adjust to the change.

Councilwoman Cleary asked about maintenance of the trail and Mr. Baechle said the County Parks Department will be responsible for maintaining the trail.

Ms. Cleary asked Ms. Noble if a 100 foot wide easement was considered normal. Ms. Noble explained that they are guided by the Electric Safety Code and 100 feet is normal.

Councilwoman Cleary asked about the \$60,000.00 figure and Mr. Baechle explained that the figure is an estimate based on what it cost to cut trees in 2003-2004. He said the County owns many of the distribution lines in the Park, so the County would like Duquesne Light to cut trees along the power lines for \$60,000.00. Some discussion concerning whether the County may be able to obtain a higher figure ensued. Ms. Noble and Mr. Flynn agreed to work on further negotiations concerning cost, as well as the low-growth restoration effort.

Councilwoman Cleary asked whether Duquesne Light had a list of constituents that have not been satisfied, and Ms. Noble said along the 4.9 mile long project, there are only 2 people that they are in discussions with.

Councilman Drozd asked about burying the lines and Ms. Noble said that was not taken into consideration because it is cost-prohibitive.

Councilman Drozd asked if Duquesne Light has a similar situation in any of the other County Parks and Ms. Noble said she was not prepared to discuss this but they are looking at one other Park.

Mr. Flynn said the ordinance, as written, lists a replacement of 3,420 feet of existing power line, but the actual linear square footage is 1,900. He said an amendment by substitution will be offered at the Regular Meeting of Council.

Action: **A motion was made by Macey, seconded by Cleary, that this matter be Affirmatively Recommended. The motion carried unanimously.**

V. Adjournment

Summary: *The meeting adjourned at 4:55 p.m.*