

Allegheny County Council

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Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, October 21, 2015

5:30 PM

Conference Room I

Committee on Parks

Nicholas Futules-Chair

Members: James Ellenbogen, Michael J. Finnerty, Heather S. Heidelbaugh, Robert J. Macey, Sue Means, and John Palmiere

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:30.

Invited Guests:

William D. McKain, CPA, Allegheny County Manager or Designee
Andy Baechle, Director, Allegheny County Parks Department

Mr. McKain was present from the Office of the County Manager.

Mr. Hopson was present from the Parks Department.

Ms. Glotfelty was present from the Parks Foundation.

Mr. Bonner was present from the Audobon Society.

Mr. Barker was present from the Office of County Council.

II. Roll Call

Members Present: 4 - Futules, Michael Finnerty, Bob Macey and Sue Means

Members Absent: 3 - Jim Ellenbogen, Heather Heidelbaugh and John Palmiere

Members 2 - Jan Rea and John DeFazio

Non-Members:

III. Approval of Minutes

[9242-15](#)

Motion to approve the minutes of the September 2, 2015 meeting of the Committee on Parks.

Ms. Means moved to amend the minutes prior to approval.

Mr. DeFazio indicated that the change would have to be authorized by motion.

Mr. McKain described his recollection of the conversation referenced by Ms. Means.

A motion was made by Finnerty, seconded by Macey, that this matter be Passed. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

IV. Agenda Items

Ordinances

[9204-15](#)

An Ordinance of the County of Allegheny, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, authorizing the Allegheny County Parks Foundation to enter onto the County's Parks for the purpose of constructing and maintaining chimney swift bird habitats at certain locations within the Parks, with the County to retain ownership of the chimney swift bird habitats.

Sponsors: Chief Executive

At te request of the Chair, the clerk read the title of the bill and Ms. Glotfelty described the Parks Foundation's conservation activities within the parks.

Ms. Glotfelty and Mr. Bonner provided some background information relating to chimney swifts. Mr. Bonner noted that chimney swift anatomy has evolved such that they must nest on vertical surfaces and will only nest in protected ares like chimneys, and that these types of structures are not as prevalent in manmade structures anymore. Mr. Bonner noted that chimney swifts consume only insects and are therefore a valuable insect predator, and that the goal is to construct about 100 habitats, with 8 to 15 in each County park and the bulk of the construction performed by Eagle Scout candidates.

Ms. Glotfelty noted that the Pittsburgh Foundation provided a \$75,000 grant for the project, to supplement the funding made available by the Audobon Foundation.

Ms. Glotfelty indicated that the Parks Foundation has sought the advice of the Friends of the Parks with regard to placement of the habitats.

Mr. Bonner noted that, once completed, this would be the largest concentration of chimney swift habitats in the country.

In response to questions from Mr. Finnerty, Mr. Bonner noted that the habitats are about 12 feet high, and that the habitats are inspected annually to ensure that they are in good condition. Mr. Bonner indicated that chimney swifts very rarely leave much debris in the habitats, and that the structures likely will last for something on the order of 10 years.

Mr. Finnerty expressed support for the concept.

In response to a question from Mr. Macey, Mr. Bonner said that the anticipated timeline would complete as many habitats as possible by spring of 2016, with full completion within a year or a year and a half.

Mr. Macey and Mr. Bonner discussed the possibility of constructing one or more habitats in Renzie Park, and the Society's current efforts at introducing school children to the Society's conservation activities.

Mr. Macey expressed his support.

Mr. Bonner discussed the roosting habits of chimney swifts diring migration, noting that one of the Society's goals is to determine how the swifts select their temporary sites in order to preserve them.

Ms. Means and Ms. Glotfelty discussed the per-unit cost of the habitats, with Ms. Glotfelty estimating that the average is probably around \$1,500 to \$2,000.

In response to a question from Ms. Means, Mr. Bonner noted tha tthe Society would undertake maintenance for the habitats that are constructed.

In response to a question from Ms. Means, Mr. Bonner noted that the species is not endangered, but that the species does face challenges due to the increasing rarity of suitable nesting habitats.

In response to a question from Ms. Means, Mr. Bonner indicated that the biggest risk to the habitats is posed by raccoons, but that the construction of the habitats renders it difficult for raccoons to reach the nests.

Ms. Means expressed a desire to amend the ordinance to render it more specific regarding the number of habitats and the nature of the maintenance contemplated. Ms. Means' motion to amend failed for lack of a second.

A motion was made by Macey, seconded by Finnerty, that this matter be Affirmatively Recommended. The motion carried by the following vote:

Members Yes: 3 - Futules, Finnerty and Macey

Members No: 1 - Means

Members Absent: 3 - Ellenbogen, Heidelbaugh and Palmiere

Members 2 - Rea and DeFazio

Non-Member:

V. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:05.