

Allegheny County Council

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Meeting Minutes - Approved

Wednesday, September 2, 2015

5:00 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 5:05.

Invited Guests:

William D. McKain, CPA-County Manager or Desginee

Andy Baechle-Director, Parks Department

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

Mr. Baechle was present from the Parks Department.

Superintendent Moffatt was present from the County Police.

Mr. Woltz was present from the Law Department.

Mr. Barker and Mr. Szymanski were present from the Office of County Council.

II. Roll Call

Members Present: 3 - Futules, Michael Finnerty and Sue Means

Members Absent: 5 - Jim Ellenbogen, Heather Heidelbaugh, Bob Macey, John Palmiere and Jan Rea

III. Approval of Minutes

[9144-15](#)

Motion to approve the minutes of the Parks Committee meeting of Allegheny County Council held on August 12, 2015

Passed

IV. Agenda Items

Ordinances

[8386-14](#)

An Ordinance of the County of Allegheny, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, amending Chapter 650 of the County Code of Ordinances entitled Park Rules and Regulations, to restate the prohibited activities in the Parks involving motor vehicles and to change provide for specific penalties for violation of prohibited activities in the Parks involving motor vehicles.

Sponsors: Council Member Means

At the request of the Chair, the clerk read the title of the bill and Ms. Means discussed her rationale in developing and introducing the bill, noting that her intent was to render driving on grass or trails a more significant offense than merely parking on grass or trails, and that she wanted to make it clear that repairs to vehicles in the park are permissible when there is an emergency situation.

The Chair suggested that the changes be discussed one at a time. Superintendent Moffatt suggested that, in order to park on a grass area, people by definition must drive on the grass to get to the place that they park, and he would not want the officers to become confused with regard to the appropriate fine to impose or the public to become confused with regard to what is and is not permissible. The Chair, Superintendent

Moffatt and Director Baechle discussed the impact of signage on the permissibility of parking. Superintendent Moffatt indicated that, in his opinion, the existing prohibitions are clear enough and are being followed appropriately.

With regard to adding consideration for emergency repairs, Superintendent Moffatt indicated that there do not appear to be any issues at present with regard to vehicle repairs in the parks, and that he would recommend leaving the language as-is.

In response to a question from Ms. Means, Superintendent Moffatt indicated that he does not foresee tickets being issued to individuals who are undertaking emergency repairs, and noted that there had not been any issues along those lines to his knowledge.

The Chair and Ms. Means discussed the procedural options with regard to the bill, and Ms. Means opted to withdraw the bill.

Withdrawn

[8959-15](#)

An Ordinance of the County of Allegheny, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, authorizing the purchase of real property needed to extend Harrison Hills Park and for the purpose of eventually connecting the Butler Freeport Trail and Baker Trail to Harrison Hills Park and the Rachel Carson Trail.

Sponsors: Chief Executive

At the request of the Chair, the clerk read the title of the bill and Mr. Baechle summarized its provisions, noting the cost of the property is approximately \$225,000 and that the County had already received a grant that covers the majority of the cost of the property acquisition.

Mr. Baechle showed the members a map depicting the property to be acquired.

Mr. Finnerty and Mr. Baechle discussed the characteristics of the property to be acquired.

In response to a question from Ms. Means, Mr. McKain discussed the difference between assessed, appraised and market value, and Mr. Baechle indicated that the County had appraisals performed on the property and that those appraisals were the bases for the grant amount and the purchase price.

Ms. Means expressed a desire to see the appraisals, and Mr. Baechle agreed to provide them to the Chair.

Affirmatively Recommended

Discussion Topic: Allegheny County Park Ranger Program

With the permission of the Chair, Mr. McKain gave a brief overview of the park ranger program and the funding streams that make the program possible.

Mr. Miter discussed the ranger program, noting that the primary mission of the rangers is to promote the parks by being available within the parks in order to assist people who are using the parks, while promoting conservation and park usage and awareness of parks facilities by the County's residents.

Mr. Trusty described some of the programs that have been formulated to highlight some of the parks' features and facilities, and noting that a database was being created in

order to establish a comprehensive listing of the things that are available in the parks. He also indicated that he has endeavored to contact a range of stakeholders in order to gain as broad of a perspective as he can regarding questions, concerns or desires to highlight various programs or facets of the parks.

Mr. Miter distributed a schedule of programs that are currently being made available in the parks.

The Chair and Mr. Baechle discussed the possibility of providing a schedule of parks activities to individuals who obtain permits for using parks facilities.

Mr. Miter described the rangers' outreach efforts, specifically as they relate to attempting to increase the amount of contact that local children have with the County parks through the Parks to Schools, Schools to Parks program.

In response to a question from Ms. Means, Mr. Miter indicated that the schedules of events will be available in all of the park offices, and that he could make electronic copies available, as well. Mr. McKain noted that the County is attempting to work with the AIU in order to increase contact between the rangers and the schools.

In response to a question from Ms. Means, Mr. McKain and Mr. Miter described the staffing levels for the program and the plans for staffing going forward. Mr. Baechle indicated that he believes that the naturalists are still necessary within the parks, but he and Mr. McKain agreed that the rangers can perform a valuable role in apprising the naturalists of issues that may be of interest or concern to them.

Mr. Finnerty, Mr. McKain and Mr. Baechle described the fashion in which the ranger program was being budgeted and the existence of funding from the R.K. Mellon Foundation that pays for the 12 current seasonal rangers.

The Chair, Mr. McKain, Mr. Miter and Mr. Trusty discussed the likely activities that will be undertaken by the rangers during the winter months.

Ms. Means and Mr. McKain discussed the possibilities of finding a balance between seasonal and permanent rangers.

Ms. Means and Mr. McKain discussed the possibility of an exchange between City of Plttsburgh and County rangers at some point in the future.

Mr. McKain asked that the members assist with spreading the word about the ranger program within their respective districts.

V. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:49.