

Cary Park District
Board of Commissioners
Committee of the Whole Meeting
May 11, 2023
7:00 PM
Community Center
255 Briargate Road
Cary, IL

Minutes

Board Members Present: Stanko, Carasso, Frangiamore, Victor, Renner

Staff Present: Jones, Horn, Krueger, Hall, Rogus, Raica, Barge.

Guests Present: Attorney Scott Puma

Public Present:

(names were taken from the sign in sheet provided and from verbal introduction by the public during the comment period. Because some individuals did not sign in but were still given the opportunity to speak, some first names only are noted below as they were not captured when stated verbally)

Betsy Poltarak, Steve Jaenicke, Anne Jaenicke, Cindy Barrett, Maggie Beattie, Joseph Rathke, Venitia Oswalt, Mike DiOrio, Laura Tuman, Jenay DiOrio, Teresa Steph, Bob Steph, Anthony Steph, Nicholas Steph, Penni Sikora, Todd Sikora, Akiko Feffer, Rumiko Feffer, Jim Feffer, Dennis Czubik, Dorie Czubik, Theresa Hammonds, Laurel Podgorski, Daniel Secedi, Aaron Spitzer, Holly Spitzer.

President Renner called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM.

Renner asked if there were any matters from the Public, Commissioners, and Staff.

Prior to Public Comment, Renner stated there was no Action Item related to the Sale of Surplus Real Property on the agenda that evening, therefore there would be no discussion from the Board in regard to that topic. He further stated that public comment is for comment only and not a question and answer session with the Board. He asked if someone agreed with what something stated in a previous comment, simply stating agreement with comments already made was appropriate.

Renner called names from a sign in sheet provided for public to sign in for spelling of names and to express their desire to speak. After calling the names on the sign in sheet Renner opened public comment up to anyone else who wished to speak.

Betsy Poltarak shared she is a Brigadoon resident who walks through the open space across from the Community Center every day. She stated she pays over \$600 annually in taxes and questioned “for what?” Betsy felt this open space provides a lot of benefits to their residents such as a great space for Briargate students to explore and utilize for learning, gives the neighborhood children a safe space to hang out with their friends, and is beneficial to mental and physical health. She stated selling and

developing this space into something else would create more traffic in their neighborhood, which would cause a safety concern for students who walk and ride bikes to Briargate. Betsy stated the residents of Brigadoon would have no open green space within walking distance if this piece of property is taken away from them.

Steven Jaenicke stated he has lived here for 39+ years, raised his daughters here, and has walked countless times through this park. He shared his daughters would refer to this park as “the Forest” and it was a safe space for them to play and walk through to get to Barracudas’ Swim Team practice at the pool. He implored the Board to take the community’s input into consideration and understand this space is necessary for this neighborhood. Steven stated the residents of this neighborhood are not asking for this space to be replaced with a playground and do not need anything more, they just want to continue to enjoy this open space.

Cindy Barrett agreed with the previous comments made. She read aloud the motion that was approved at the April 27th Board Meeting, highlighting the word “surplus”. Cindy stated this piece of property is not surplus, it is a necessity and there is no reasonable explanation given by the Board to sell this property. She stated this property should be designated to the residents of Brigadoon and the Board can do what they please with the Community Center and parking lot.

Maggie Beattie stated she bought her home 2 years ago, has a daughter who attends Briargate, and really enjoys this neighborhood. She was very upset when the Community Center Pool was closed down, and now doesn’t want to lose this green space. Maggie reiterated it is not a surplus property and asked the Board to not sell it.

Venitia Oswalt stated she has lived in this neighborhood for 19 years. She shared her kids were Briargate students and would walk through what they called “the Bat Park” daily. She stated this park belongs to the residents and felt they have the right to decide if this space is useful or not. Venitia expressed her disappointment there was no community input collected before moving forward with the idea to sell this property. She shared the idea of having community leaders throughout Cary to help keep residents informed about what is going on since their community had no idea this was even happening. Venitia stated this is not just a green space, it has great history, wildlife and planting that the community would deeply miss if it is sold.

Mike DiOrio asked the Board to confirm the vote taken at the April 27th Board Meeting was not valid. He also presented the Board with a petition containing over 800 signatures from the residents of the community who are against the sale of this property and committed to saving this space. Mike reviewed the portion of the Comprehensive Master Plan that identifies this area of Cary to be underserved with no other comparable options for a park or open space close to their neighborhood. He also provided the Board with some visual ideas of improvements that can be made to the park for the future generations to utilize if the space is saved.

Laura Tuman shared there was 680 signatures on Change.com at the time of the meeting. She read aloud a comment from the Executive Director of The Land Conservancy of McHenry County, which included the following statement “this is a very dangerous precedent for any Park District to sell land that it holds in the public trust”. Laura reiterated this is not just a piece of land, it is much more than that.

Jenay DiOrio thanked all the community members for attending the meeting. She shared that just last week, she took her Briargate students over to the park, as she does multiple times each school year, and expressed how important that space is to not only the residents, but the students at Briargate as well. She reiterated how necessary the open green space is and asked the Board to stick to the Comprehensive Master Plan.

Teresa Steph stated how much the space is utilized by kids and it was already hard to lose to Community Center Pool. She stated the Board works for the citizens of Cary and the citizens do not want the property to be sold.

Fran stated the Board did not give enough consideration to selling this property. She referred to previous comments made from the Board regarding the new open space behind the Community Center, which Fran stated is not an even exchange to sell this property. She asked the Board to please leave this space as is for the Community.

Jim stated he used to work at the barn that was in this area many years ago. He shared he would walk through this open space often and that it holds a lot of historical meaning. Jim suggested the Park District create something more recreational with the space behind the Community Center.

Emily Smedlund stated she did not want to move to this area, but it was the closest thing to living on a farm she could get. She shared that her house and the open space nearby is the reason she bought her house. Emily expressed how proud she was of the community for attending the meeting to voice their opinions.

Jen stated she moved here from Palatine because of the country feel, open space, and walking distance to Briargate. She shared she is devastated at the thought would losing this open space that they walk through every day.

Zack shared he played in this park growing up and is a great to take the dogs to use without having to drive across town to the Dog Park. He expressed how sad he is to see how much green space the community is losing lately and would hate to see this go too.

Anne stated she lives right across from the old Senior Center, which is now being turned into apartments and garages. She expressed frustration towards the Village for not listening to the residents of the area when deciding what to do with the property and asked the Board to not treat the residents who live in this neighbor and utilize this park the same way.

April stated she has lived here for 18 years. She shared her kids loved playing at this park, making forts, and use it to walk the dogs every day. April stated many people in this area have young kids that often use this space as well.

Anyone in attendance who wished to speak on this matter were given the opportunity to do so, whether or not they signed in prior to the meeting. There were approximately 70 attendees who did not wish to speak as part of public comment on this matter but based on their verbal agreement with others who did speak, it is being included in the minutes that they were not in favor with a sale of Community Center Park.

Renner asked if there were any other public comments, hearing none, he asked if Attorney Scott Puma had any comments to share.

Attorney Puma stated the Board, based upon the public input now received, would likely be discussing the sale of property at an upcoming meeting, likely in closed session. Renner noted that two Commissioners have already stated they are unable to attend the May 25th meeting of the Board. Renner reiterated no action will be taken by the Board to move this item forward, until additional discussion has taken place and notice of any further action will be placed on a Board agendas.

Under Matters from Commissioners, Victor shared she enjoyed the Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD) Legislative Conference in Springfield on May 2-3. She briefly reviewed a few of the House Bills she learned about which included information on bonds, lifeguard minimum wage, multiple occupancy restrooms, etc. Victor further stated she was happy she had the opportunity to attend and is excited to share more information with the other the Commissioners. Victor also shared Park District Conservation Day is Saturday, August 19 at the Illinois State Fair. Stanko shared he read some great information in the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Parks and Recreation Magazine in regard to multi-use trails and improving bike signage on trails. He felt this is something the Park District should address during the Comprehensive Master Plan update. Carasso reminded the Board about the Cary Park Foundation Pars Under the Stars event on Saturday, May 20. She encouraged Commissioners to volunteer at the event. Renner reminded the Public in attendance that there was no further discussion on the agenda that evening for the Sale of Surplus Real Property and the Board would be moving on with the items on the agenda.

Under Matters from Staff, Jones shared some of the exciting things happening at the Park District as it heads into the busiest season of the year.

- 90% of the Community Pool has been demoed and removed, with about 3-4 weeks of work remaining on the project.
- Community Garden Plots sold out and have a waitlist for the first time in years.
- Over 100 Seniors attended the first Corned Beef & Cabbage lunch at the Cary Fire Protection District in March, which was the first time this event was held in person since COVID.
- Camp ECHO registration is completely full with over 2,100 total registrations (2022 had about 1,500 total registrations).
- Sunburst Bay Aquatic Center is ahead in sales of pool passes compared to this time last year. Opening day is Saturday, May 27. Management staff is working to train over 100 staff.
- Foxford Hills Golf Course did over 2,000 rounds for the month of April and grossed 2M in total sales.
- The new Dance program will have its first recital on June 10. There has already been 450 tickets sold for the event.
- Preschool Graduations will take place the week of May 15 outside at the Preschool. Jones emailed the Commissioners the dates and times for each class.
- Parks staff was able to complete a prairie burn of about 50 acres on the east side of Sands Main Street Prairie.

- Two members from the Cary Park Foundation attended Honors Night at Cary-Grove High School where they presented seven students with \$600 scholarships.
- The final project items are being completed at Sunburst Bay which include replacement of the clown fish, grating, replacing the sand in the volleyball courts, and work in the detention basin.

The minutes from the April 13, 2023 COW meeting were presented for approval.

Victor moved to approve the minutes as presented. Second by Frangiamore.

Voice vote: 5 – Yes. No – None. Motion carried.

The first Direction Item American with Disabilities Act (ADA), 2023 Transition Plan Update. Raica, Director of Planning and Development, stated the extensive audit of the Park District was last completed in January 2009 and adopted by the Board in July 2012. Since that time, Raica stated the Park District has completed numerous projects throughout the park system and facilities to address the items listed in the audit. He highlighted some of the major projects that were completed over the years which included Sunburst Bay Aquatic Center, Kaper Park and Lions Park, and the Preschool. Raica stated the ADA Transition Plan is updated every 10 years and explained that all open items were reviewed and placed in the 2023 ADA Transition Plan Update. He further stated this is a negative document that identifies deficits and will continue to serve as a road map for improvements in the future years. He highlighted the Park District has already made great progress working through to complete these items by addressing at least half, if not more, of the list over the last 10 years. Raica stated once the Board approves the draft version, it will be placed on display for public input on the Park District website for 30 days and shared with NISRA for feedback as well.

Renner asked for questions or comments from the Board. Frangiamore asked if the Park District will or need to have another full audit completed. Raica stated no, not at this time, only if any changes come about in regard to the Americans with Disabilities Act. Carasso thanks Raica for all his hard work putting this information together. Stanko referred to page 3 in the Park Site Transition Plan and asked why the Community Gardens were not included in the audit. Raica responded that portion of the park was not developed at the time of the audit in 2009. Stanko also asked why Veterans Park was not included. Raica responded with only something that wasn't meeting ADA standards would have been listed in the report, therefore there was nothing to address. Stanko questioned why under Lions Park, there is still a section referring to the Preschool when that facility has changed over to a Maintenance Garage. Raica responded there was no specific reason it was not updated, but can be modified. Renner asked for any other comments from Commissioners, hearing none, he asked for a motion.

Victor moved to recommend Board of Commissioners approve the draft Cary Park District, 2023 Americans with Disabilities Act Transitions Plan Update. Second by Carasso.

Roll call vote: Yes – Frangiamore, Carasso, Victor, Stanko, Renner. No – none. Motion carried.

The second Direction Item was Policy 5-012, Bench and Tree Donation Program. Raica stated an operational objective for FY2023-24 is to further develop policies of the Park District to address and reflect current matters related to Park District operations and employees. He explained for years the Park District has maintained a memorial program for trees, benches, etc. with a space for a plaque. Raica

stated over the years, the Community has expressed interest in memorializing lost loved ones or a life event and staff has worked with these individuals on a case by case basis to find desirable locations for these amenities. He further stated this policy would standardize the approach and methods to better serve individuals, as well as help Park District staff manage this program.

Renner asked for questions or comments from the Board. Stanko asked how the trees are being labeled. Raica responded no plaques are place on the trees, but the individual is given a map to locate the dedicated tree. Stanko suggested providing a list of appropriate locations for donor items. Raica stated he would work with the individuals to find an appropriate location that best fits their desire. Jones added this policy is meant to be an outline and provide guidance. Stanko asked if the word “native” could be added before “tree” in the wording of #3. Jones recommended if it is added, it be included in the policy statement. Frangiamore asked if there has been other requests for other items besides a tree or bench and if this policy would apply to those other items. Raica responded yes, there has been donated such as the sculpture at Chalet Park. Jones added staff had a discussion in regard to listing other items in the policy, but decided to use tree and bench, with the ability to discuss other options when working with the individuals, if necessary.

Frangiamore moved to recommend Board of Commissioners approval of Policy 5-012, Bench and Tree Donation Program. Second by Victor.

Stanko reiterated the importance of adding the word “native” into the policy. Renner felt staff should be trusted to make the decision to do so.

Stanko moved to amend the policy to include the word “native” in front of the word “tree(s)”. Second by Victor.


Roll call vote: Yes – Frangiamore, Carasso, Victor, Stanko. No – Renner. Motion carried.

Renner asked for a motion to adjourn.

Motion to adjourn the meeting by Carasso. Second by Stanko.

Voice vote: Yes – 5. No – None. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35pm.



Daniel C. Jones, Secretary
Park District Board of Commissioners