

**Far East Area Commission**

**Meeting Minutes**

January 8, 2013

The meeting was called to order at 6:51p.m. Those in attendance were: Jennifer Chamberlain, Chair; Summer Moynihan, Vice-Chair; Scott Gallagher, Treasurer; Larry Marshall; Wayne Hamner; Eric Watson; and Catherine McKinley, Secretary. Absent were: Dustin Thompson. Also in attendance: Lynn LaCour, Director of the Far East Pride Center; Officer Poole, Precinct 20 CLO; and Officer Keckley, Precinct 14 CLO.

Guests: Alan D. McKnight, Director of Columbus Recreation and Parks; Terri, Director of Columbus Golf Courses; and two area residents.

From here forward, the Far East Area Commission will be referred to as FEAC.

The meeting was called to order.

This meeting is an unofficial meeting as this is an election night. There are five commissioners in attendance that gives a forum. As of January 1, no other nominations were submitted for the three positions up for election. The three positions open for election are: Commissioner Chamberlain, Commissioner Gallagher, and Commissioner McKinley. Each Commissioner up for election was asked if they wanted to remain on the Commission. Each Commissioner whose position was up for election also held a position within the Commission.

Commissioner Hamner asked the residents in attendance if they were interested in running for one of the Commissioner positions. Each residents stated they were not interested at this time but would consider being on the Commission next year when three other Commissioner positions are up for election.

The following election results are:

**Jennifer Chamberlain** – to serve for a term of 3 years. Jennifer will also remain as the Commission Chairperson.

Commissioner Marshall made the motion to retain Jennifer as a Commissioner for the next three years. Commissioner McKinley second the motion.

All Commissioners present replied yea in favor of Jennifer’s re-election.

Commissioner Marshall made the motion to retain Jennifer as the Commission Chairperson. Commissioner Hamner second the motion.

All Commissioners present replied yea in favor of Jennifer retaining the Chair position.

**Catherine McKinley** – to serve for a term of 3 years. Catherine will also remain as the Commission Secretary.

Commissioner Marshall made the motion to retain Catherine as a Commissioner for the next three years. Commissioner Hamner second the motion.

All Commissioners present replied yea in favor of Catherine’s re-election.

Commissioner Marshall made the motion to retain Catherine as the Commission Secretary. Commissioner Hamner second the motion.

All Commissioners present replied yea in favor of Catherine retaining the Secretary position.

**Scott Gallagher** - serve for a term of 3 years. Scott will also remain as the Commission Treasurer.

Commissioner Marshall made the motion to retain Scott as a Commissioner for the next three years. Commissioner McKinley second the motion.

All Commissioners present replied yea in favor of Scott re-election.

Commissioner Marshall made the motion to retain Scott as the Commission Treasurer. Commissioner Chamberlain second the motion.

All Commissioners present replied yea in favor of Scott retaining the Treasurer position.

**Summer Moynihan** was reappointed as Vice-Chair. Commissioner Marshall made motion to re-elect Summer as second chair for the next year. Commission Hamner second the motion.

All Commissioners present replied yea in favor of Summer retaining the Vice-Chair position.

Commissioner McKinley read from the by-laws that the secretary is to notify the mayor of any election results or vacancies within ten days of the action. Lynn LaCour will notify the mayor’s office once she receives the meeting minutes with the election results.

Mark Hutsko, Religion Commissioner-at-Large and Max Lallathin, Education Commissioner-at-Large has agreed to remain on the commission. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to have these two remain as Commissioners-at-Large for a term of 1 year. Commissioner Hamner second the motion.

All Commissioners present replied yea in favor of Mark Hutsko and Max Lallathin retaining their Commissioner-at-Large positions.

The Commission still needs to look for a Business-at-Large. Commissioner Chamberlain will contact Mt. Carmel East again to see if they still wanted to serve for the Commission.

Lynne introduced Alan McKnight and Terri Leashman (sp?) from the Columbus Recreation and Parks. Mr. McKnight primarily wanted to talk about Walnut Hills Golf Course. It is a 9-hole golf course and has operated since the early ‘70’s. The Golf Division of Recreation and Parks operate 7 golf courses – five 18-hole courses and two 9-hole courses. The Golf Division has struggled the past couple of years to keep a positive cash flow. They have lost an estimated $200,000 per year since 2007. The decision was made to close Walnut Hills Golf Course. The Recreation and Parks are going to retain the property. An area resident asked Mr. McKnight about deed restrictions on the property. He responded that yes there are deed restrictions on the property. He has been talking to Bob Weiller, who developed the property. The resident also stated she could not locate any public information stating the exact deed restrictions. Mr. McKnight stated he could get those for her.

Commissioner Hamner stated that he understood that the golf course off Rt. 256, Turnberry, was losing more money than Walnut Hills and that Walnut Hills at least breaks even at the end of each year. Mr. McKnight stated that it does not break even. Commission Chamberlain asked which one pulls in a higher deficit. Mr. McKnight stated probably the other since it is an 18-hole course. It too has deed restrictions.

Mr. McKnight stated the hope is to keep it as park property. The property will not be sold. The intent is to keep the property and transfer it over to the Recreation and Parks side of the department and develop it into a park. There aren’t any plans yet in place. The hope is to work with the commission to see what the needs are and help design the park. There is a club house on the property that is in poor condition. It has been discussed to destroy it or remodel it to rent it out like that of other shelter houses in other parks. There has been no decision made yet. There is 69 acres and they want to work with the community on its development.

The residents in attendance were concerned that the Recreation and Parks Department would sell the property and a builder would erect apartments. Mr. McKnight assured them they were not going to sell the property.

Commissioner Hamner mentioned that he and others spoke with Walnut Hills Golf Course people, while looking at businesses to help build the Far East side, and at that time they did not see any changes in the short term. Mr. McKnight stated that when the time comes to start planning on the development of a park on that property, he will want to meet with the community civic association, the area commission, and the residents. At this time, there isn’t any funding for this project. The city will continue to mow the property but it will not be mowed as a golf course.

The building is going to be secured by the windows are going to be boarded and the building cleaned out. It was suggested that any copper be removed.

Commissioner Chamberlain asked what hours will be posted for the property. Mr. McKnight stated they will be the regulated 11pm-7am hours per the city code for parks. This property will not be promoted as a park until it is developed or in the development stages. Commissioner Marshall asked if the hours could be set from dusk to dawn. Mr. McKnight stated some parks request the dusk to dawn hours. Recreation and Parks will change the hours if a community asks. He would prefer to wait and see if it is an issue. He also stated the city has 230 parks and only half a dozen of them have the dusk to dawn park restriction.

Commissioner Marshall mentioned that Walnut Hills is adjacent to Farrisburg area, which is a very troublesome area. There are gangs that have moved into that area. The area resident in attendance is a block watch coordinator for her community that is around Walnut Hills and is requesting the hours on the property be dusk to dawn now. Commissioner Gallagher interjected that we are getting ahead of things and that the park doesn’t exist yet.

Mr. McKnight stated that his office will work with Columbus Police and others since they will be the ones to patrol the area because the Recreation and Parks cannot enforce the law or write tickets.

Commissioner Chamberlain asked Mr. McKnight at what point is the Commission notified that the property has officially become a park. Mr. McKnight stated that the Recreation and Parks Department assumed responsibility for the property as of January 1, 2013.

Officer Poole asked Mr. McKnight if the building could be made into some form of a recreation center. He went on to explain that the Far East side has been looking for a location for such a center. Mr. McKnight stated they have discussed the Far East Side Rec Center but it is on the other side of Walnut Hills. Currently there isn’t any funding for a rec center. He did say that he would sit down with the Commission and start discussing what it is that we would like to see in a rec center and at possible locations.

Commissioner Gallagher made a statement that to his knowledge the building on the property is the only recreational facility that falls within our area commission boundaries. He made a recommendation that based on the fact that we are a very large area and our area grew faster than anyone probably anticipated; we want to make sure it is an area that we are able to use by looking at the demographics of the people in the area. Right now it is an area run by gangs and people wouldn’t want to take their kids into that area. We need to look into areas where that type of demographics does not come into play.

Commissioner Gallagher asked Mr. McKnight that since the golf course is officially under the parks umbrella as of January 1, does that make the hours the same as other city park hours or does it have to be designated a park to have park hours? Commissioner Moynihan stated that the communities near Independence Park went into Recreation and Parks submitted a letter that police be allowed to arrest people who are in the park after dusk after they had the hours changed. She asked if the communities by Walnut Hills be allowed to have the police arrest people on the property between dusk and dawn prior to the property being deemed a park and park hours posted.

Commissioner Chamberlain stated that if it is going to be a vacant property, we want to have something in place before anything starts and we can ‘nip it in the bud’. Mr. McKnight asked that the Commission make a formal request to the Recreation and Parks. Commissioner Moynihan asked if ‘No Trespassing’ signs can be posted prior to it being a park. Mr. McKnight said he would have to look into to the city codes surrounding No Trespassing and what the law enforcement part would be.

The area residents stated they would prefer to see the building demolished than to leave it up for illegal activities to start in it. Mr. McKnight stated he understood what they were saying but he doesn’t want to tear it down and then later the communities want to put up a building. Terri stated that it would actually cost the city more to demolish the building. It has asbestos in the lower level and the overall removal would be costly.

Commissioner Marshall stated there is a right-away at the north end of the property that is being discussed. He asked Mr. McKnight is that was part of the golf course. Mr. McKnight stated it isn’t and it does not fall under Recreation and Parks but it does fall under the city, so the city would maintain it. Commissioner Marshall added that maybe it could be developed into a walking path. Mr. McKnight stated it could be put in the plans to have the right-away be added to the park and then could be a walking path. Mr. McKnight showed the Commission an aerial view of the property. The Commission will retain the aerial photo.

Mr. McKnight agreed to attend a meeting with the Walnut Hills civic association. Commissioner Hamner will also attend the meeting on February 12 at 7pm. The civic association will then bring the results of the meeting to the next Commissioners meeting.

Looking at the property photo, Commissioner McKinley asked what the other structure was on the property. Mr. McKnight stated it is a maintenance building.

Mr. McKnight stated that if any of the communities around the property see any illegal activities occurring, please let his office know and notify the police. Commissioner Chamberlain explained that we are trying to make a push forward to revitalize this area of town and we don’t want to see any steps going backwards.

Commissioner Chamberlain also represents Cedar Run Civic Association. Mr. McKnight handed her the plans to develop the park in her community.

Commissioner Hamner affirmed that the FEAC wants to work with Recreation and Parks and City Council and work within the means and if that means meeting with City Council members and others to get funding for the park, then that is what we are willing to do. Mr. McKnight stated that City Council, especially Councilman Klein, is aware of the closing of Walnut Hills.

Terri stated that Walnut Hills was chosen out of the seven golf courses because it would cause the least impact overall. All of the golf courses have pro shops and catering, except Walnut Hills does not have catering. Also, Terri did not have to lay off any of her full-time staff. She stated that yes there are deed restrictions and they state that if the property is not going to be run as a golf course, then it is to be owned by another non-profit. None of the non-profits wanted the property.

Mr. McKnight gave his phone number: 614-645-8432 and Terri’s phone number is: 614-645-5420.

Commissioner Chamberlain asked why the parks time is 11pm-7am. Mr. McKnight stated that in the summer if a family wanted to take a walk and go into the park, they should be allowed to up until 11pm. Mr. McKnight stated that the best thing for the parks is to have the communities residence around them use them. When communities are using the parks it detours criminal activity.

The Commission thanked Mr. McKnight and Ms. Teashman (sp?) for coming.

Commissioner Chamberlain asked the Commissioners present to approve her to draft a letter to the Recreation and Parks to put up a No Trespassing sign until they give it to us that it is officially a park. The Commission believes that this is for the safety of the communities around the property. Commissioner Chamberlain asked for a motion for a formal recommendation to have a No Trespassing sign posted at Walnut Hills until we get information based upon the outcome of the community meeting. Commissioner Gallagher made the motion for a formal recommendation to have a No Trespassing sign posted at Walnut Hills until we get information based upon the outcome of the community meeting. Commissioner McKinley second the motion. All Commissioners in attendance voted yea to the motion.

The next FEAC meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 5, 2013.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:03 p.m.