



Newton Park Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, September 16, 2020 – 6:15 pm

Electronic meeting held via Zoom at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89088308781>

Website streaming was available at <https://www.newtongov.org/CivicMedia>

MINUTES

Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance:

Is there anyone present that may require special assistance in being able to participate in this public meeting?

- 1) Call to order at 6:15 pm by Board Chair Michener
- 2) Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance statement read by Michener. No requests received for accommodations.
- 3) Roll Call: all five board members present.
- 4) Certification of Iowa Open Meetings Law: Community Services Manager Brian Laube confirmed that this meeting is being held in compliance with the Iowa Open Meetings Law.
- 5) Review and approve minutes from July 15, 2020: motion by Melanie Humphrey to approve minutes, second by Bryce Heitman, motion approved 5-0.
- 6) Storywalk Project: Phyllis Peter of the Newton Library discussed the recently completed Story Walk installation at Agnes Patterson Park. Phyllis said they've received great feedback so far on this project, and that they did not sustain any damage to the story boards during the August 10th derecho. Phyllis continued that she plans to change out the story periodically throughout the year, with the books being targeted at those ages 3-10 years old. She said she intends to place a winter time story in the boards later this fall. Phyllis also added that they've had articles on this appear in the Get to Know Newton magazine and the Jasper County Living publication, and that they are exploring other locations such as Sunset Park for another Story Walk installation in the future. Board Chair Michener inquired if the Library needed help with changing out the story boards, and Phyllis replied that she will be contacting the Newton High School to see if they can line this up as a volunteer opportunity for students.
- 7) Pet Waste Stations in Downtown: Brian Laube requested that this agenda item be discussed concurrently with agenda item no. 8, as they are tied to each other. Board Chair Michener approved.

Park Board Chair – Levi Michener

Park Board Members – Bryce Heitman, Melanie Humphrey, Amanda Price, and Adam Vandall

(Discussion notes included below with item no. 8.)

- 8) Downtown Dog Park: Brian Laube began the discussion on agenda items no. 7 and 8, with the following comments/questions discussed:
- a. Laube stated that City staff has explored a couple locations for a downtown dog park after receiving requests from the public for this, and recommend that a dog park be built in Sunset Park. Other locations had been considered such as Sersland Park, the vacant lot west of Bank Iowa, and near the Community Gardens on N 5th Ave W. A concept plan was then shared with the board showing a ½ acre site in Sunset Park (see attached).
 - b. Laube shared that staff would be seeking funding, either public or private, to get this dog park completed yet this fiscal year if approved by City Council.
 - c. Laube shared that staff's intentions are to keep the existing pet waste stations in Sersland Park, the lot west of Bank Iowa, and near the Community Gardens even if this proposed dog park is built in Sunset Park. This would still allow residents to walk their dogs in these locations, but not turn them loose to run.
 - d. Laube shared that some recent efforts by Newton Main Street had focused on Sersland park as their preferred dog park location, but staff felt that it was not the best location due to:
 - i. Sersland Park is too small. Dog parks should be at least ½ acre, and preferably 1 acre in size. According to Nick Cummins, Parks Ops Superintendent, Sersland Park could suffer grass burns or become muddy if it were used as a dog park.
 - ii. Fencing it in would make it more difficult to mow and maintain by City staff.
 - iii. Residents who don't have dogs may not want to sit in Sersland Park anymore if 100% of it is used by the dogs.
 - e. Laube shared that the lot west of Bank Iowa is subject to redevelopment in the near future, and the City property at and around the Community Gardens will have an environmental remediation project there soon, so neither site is conducive to a long-term installation. Laube shared that the site at and north of the Community Gardens could someday be possibly used as a park ground, but it should wait until the said remediation work is completed in a couple of years.
 - f. Bryce Heitman stated that he liked this location since it's walkable from downtown, and asked what amenities have been requested, or planned, for this proposed dog park in Sunset Park. Brian Laube shared that it would include a pet watering station, double gates for access, a gate for mower access, and maybe some benches for people to sit on.
 - g. Melanie Humphrey added that she likes this proposed location since it also has a parking lot adjacent to it. She continued that having the playground close by could also increase the use here.
 - h. Amanda Price added that Park Center and Newton Village, which are both nearby, state that they are pet friendly on their respective websites.
 - i. Adam Vandall asked that staff consider building the dog park at least one acre in size or greater, as Brian Laube had shared that the current dog park at Westwood Park is about 1

acre. Adam stated that he would expect the Sunset Park dog park to get a lot more use than the one at Westwood, so we should build it big enough to accommodate a greater use. Brian Laube stated that he was using some design guidelines from a national dog owners group, and that he would revise the concept and cost estimate to maybe reflect a larger fenced area, and present this to the board at the next meeting.

- j. Levi Michener stated that he liked the idea of the dog park in Sunset Park.
 - k. Bryce Heitman inquired about using the grass areas near the water tower as well. Brian Laube stated that the raised area west of the water tower is an underground water storage tank that would a) likely not be a good idea to have pets above the drinking water supply, and b) would present an ADA-accessible problem due to the raised elevation. Brian added that he would request permission to add a pet waste station north of the water tower near the public sidewalk.
 - l. Amanda Price asked about the possibility to utilize the vacant lot east of the Windstream building on S 2nd Ave E, but that was dismissed as it is private property and not City-owned.
 - m. Brian Laube closed by stating that there would be further discussion on this at the next board meeting.
- 9) Naming of pond in new park ground in Arbor Estates: Brian Laube stated that the board is not naming the pond, instead beginning discussions on the naming process which would eventually fall on City Council to approve any name. Discussions continued with:
- a. Laube stated that the new pond is on City property that will be an extension of Agnes Patterson Park.
 - b. Laube added that staff needs to name the pond since the Iowa DNR is asking what it'll be named, as they will be eventually stocking it with fish.
 - c. Laube added that two suggestions have already been received: Arbor Pond and Golden Pond. Laube added that there already is an Arbor Lake or Pond in Grinnell so maybe that should be avoided.
 - d. Levi Michener and Amanda Price suggested maybe Cardinal Pond.
 - e. Brian Laube proposed that board members email him with name suggestions that they gather, and then complete an online survey to rank all submittals, with discussion and maybe a vote to recommend a name or top 5 names at their next meeting. The board agreed to this plan, so Laube stated he'd email a timeline to the board tomorrow.
- 10) Old Business:
- a. Bryce Heitman asked whether the recently approved reorganization of the Community Services Division into the Community Services Department would have any impact on the board or parks budgets. Brian Laube explained that the board should not see any difference, and that the parks budgets would now be overseen by one director instead of two. Laube shared that the main change is that parks maintenance staff will now report to him instead of the Public Works Director starting on October 1st.
 - b. Bryce Heitman asked if the Park Board goals recently approved have been approved by City

Council. Brian Laube stated that Council will consider all of them as part of their goal setting session immediately following the council meeting on September 21st.

- c. Bryce Heitman asked if any new info was available for the proposed Westwood clubhouse and business plan. Brian Laube stated that he was wrapping up work on it, and wanted to share some specifics with City Council first, likely at their goal setting session. Brian stated he may have more to share at the next park board meeting.

11) New Business:

- a. Amanda Price thanked City crews and volunteers for all the clean-up work they've completed, and asked about remaining work and damage to the parks from the August 10th derecho. Brian Laube stated that he had just spent five hours earlier today with an insurance adjuster looking at damage to City buildings and grounds, and that the other than tree damage the park system was fairly fortunate to only suffer minor damage in places. He did add that the worst damage to parks buildings was at Woodland Park, where two open-air metal shelters were crushed by falling trees. Nick Cummins added that the City is sending out tree removal bid packages in the next few days to complete tree removal and clean-up work in the parks and cemeteries. Brian Laube also added that people should respect the "Parks Closed" signs in place at Woodland, Maytag, and Sunset Parks due to the continued safety concerns of storm-damaged trees and the ongoing clean-up work.
- b. Melanie Humphrey inquired about what will happen to storm-damaged headstones in the cemeteries. Jamie Murphy, Assistant Parks Ops Superintendent, stated that crews would attempt to stand up some of the stones that were toppled by falling trees after these trees are removed later this year. She added that responsibility to repair any damage would fall back to the family of those buried there, but in some cases there would likely not be any surviving family in the area.
- c. Melanie Humphrey gave a shout out to Jessica Lowe Volks and also the Friends of Newton Parks for their organizational work on directing volunteers to help with storm clean-up.
- d. When asked if the pool suffered any storm damage, Brian Laube stated that it only suffered destruction of the three large umbrellas and that these are covered by insurance.
- e. Adam Vandall asked if the former caretaker's house at Maytag suffered storm damage, to which Brian Laube responded that only one small window was broken.

12) Adjourn: motion by Price, second by Humphrey to adjourn, all in favor. Meeting adjourned at 7:14 pm.

Attachment A - Proposed Dog Park in Sunset Park (referenced in agenda item no. 8)



Park Board Chair – Levi Michener
Park Board Members – Bryce Heitman, Melanie Humphrey, Amanda Price, and Adam Vandall