

# Parks & Recreation Committee

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Minutes of the Meeting on  
January 24, 2022

**Village of Homer Glen  
14240 W 151<sup>st</sup> Street, Homer Glen, IL 60491  
Village Board Room**

**1. Call to Order.**

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Co-Chair Nicole La Ha.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.****3. Roll Call.**

Present at 6:00 p.m. were Co-Chair Nicole La Ha, Members Regina Robinson, Russ Knaack, Dale Janssen, Dan Kenney, Bob Kman, Ed Cryer.

Also Present: Communications and Recreation Services Coordinator Amy Blank, Superintendent of Parks and Facilities John Robinson, Community Events Coordinator Sue Steilen, Director of Planning and Zoning Melissa King, Development Services Director Mike Salamowicz, Interim Village Manager Matt Walsh and representatives from Marth.

Members Late: Marty Pavlik (arrived at 6:27 p.m.)

Members Absent: Co-Chair Rose Reynders

**4. Approval of Minutes.****a) November 15, 2021**

Member Kenney made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 15, 2021 Committee meeting; seconded by Member Cryer. The motion passed unanimously.

**5. Approval of Amendments to the Agenda.**

a) No amendments to the agenda.

**6. Public Comment.**

Jim Orban – Resident Orban spoke in favor of including a park in the proposed Marth Development project – the Villas of Old Oak (143<sup>rd</sup> and Golden Oak Drive). As a long-time resident of that area, Mr. Orban asked that the developer be held to at least the minimum size requirement of land for a park (1.05-acres) as he believes that area of the Village is a “park desert” and is badly in need of park space to service the residents living nearby. He stressed the importance of this issue, as this is the “last chance” for the Village to acquire land in that area as the remainder of the Old Oak Estates/Old Oak South/Chickasaw subdivisions have no more open land

available. He urged the committee to figure out a way to expand the proposed park of .41 acres to at least 1-acre.

## **7. Reports from Co-Chairs.**

Co-Chair La Ha reported that the use of the land in Heritage Park for 4 soccer fields passed at the Board level. We still need to figure out a user agreement for soccer programming in that space.

## **8. New Business**

### **a) Discussion and possible recommendation of the park plan for the Villas of Old Oak.**

Director King introduced the project, a residential duplex project that will be marketed to the 55+ community and shared that the Village code requires a certain park contribution in land as part of new development. What the developer has proposed is to contribute a portion of that requirement in land and the balance of that in equipment – so they would build the park. The cost estimates are preliminary and if we were to accept their proposal there would be a verification process to make sure they are contributing what they are required to contribute. The Village and the developer are looking for recommendation from the committee as to whether this proposal is appropriate.

Director King shared that at Plan Commission there was some public comment regarding the park proposal and that some residents did not think a playground park would be appropriate for this area/demographic.

In addition, the developer is giving almost 4-acres of open space (tree conservation area) with this development, which is approximately double what is required from the Village.

Director King shared that staff and the developers went through a number of iterations of the project and have already discussed putting the park next to the open space. Staff recommends that a park does not go next to the open space as the topography of those lots is challenging and does not recommend a park next to a busy intersection. Staff believes that the park location as is has better access to the Old Oak neighborhood and is a safer option.

There was lengthy discussion from all members of the committee as to what they believe is appropriate for that area.

- Member Kenney suggested moving the park inward (lot 8 or 9) so that it connects to the open space area and appears larger. There was concern from the committee that if the park was located in the interior of the development it would not seem like a public park.
- Member Knaack had a lot to say about this topic. He feels strongly that this is the Village's opportunity to fix something that went bad decades ago (the exclusion of park space in this area) and is our last chance to right a wrong.
  - There was concern about the open space acquisition being a liability to us as the Village is not currently in the business of forest management.
  - There are approximately 770 homes in this area without access to a park and this area is at the top of the committee's prioritization list for park additions.
  - The Parks Master Plan (a guiding document for the committee) references that a neighborhood park should be between 3-10 acres. While it would not be possible to get 10 acres out of this development, Member Knaack proposed we get as much land as possible and not settle for the very small parcel that is being proposed.
- Director King felt that it is not fair to hold this developer responsible for the wrongs of the past and encouraged the committee to come to a reasonable recommendation for this park proposal. She also reminded the committee that the developer is including excessive open space, which has a benefit to the public.
- Superintendent Robinson shared that at the Erin Hills park, additional lots were purchased in order to create a larger park. He suggested that this is something the committee could consider.
- Co-Chair La Ha and Director Salamowicz shared that the property on Onondaga in Chickasaw, that the Village owns, has had drainage improvements done to address the flooding issues. Co-Chair presented this space as an additional location for a park that could service the Old Oak/Chickasaw area.
- Co-Chair La Ha felt strongly that the developer should follow our code, which requires 1.05-acres of land and also sees the value of a ready-made park like they proposed.
- Member Knaack would like the committee to explore purchasing additional lots. He offered a number of possible solutions:
  - Taking outlot A, lot 1, lot 23 and 24. Creating a large park and having the road jog around the park
  - Taking lots 23, 24, 15 and 16 and creating a large square park across the front of the development
  - Taking lots 14 and 13, and extending the park into the open space – grading the area. Some open space (and trees) may be lost, but the park would be bigger.

- The developer shared that they are not interested in having a park in the middle of their development (lots 23, 24, 25, and 16) and believe that what they are proposing is adequate and (from their past experience with other identical developments) believe it will be most successful as they have planned it. Additionally, they shared that these types of developments do not attract families. In a similar development that Marth completed they sold only one unit to a family with a child.
- Director King reminded the committee that if a lot were to be purchased, a decision would need to be made quickly, as this development will take only two years from start to finish to be completed.
- Regarding Member Knaack's suggestion of taking lots 13 and 14 and grading useable land from the open space portion, Director King and the developer reiterated that the topography of the open space portion would be extremely challenging to work with.
- Member Pavlik made the point that he sees the value of a fully completed park (as in the current proposal) and while he understands that this park would be serving an area with a large amount of homes, in his opinion, not all 770 households will be visiting the park at the same time – so it does not need to be huge. He thinks what is being proposed is adequate.
- Co-Chair La Ha added that taking the park as is (and not spending Village funds at this time) would give the committee more leverage (more funds) to build an additional park on Onondaga in the future.
- The developer added another reason why a park was not planned on lot 14 is because it is across the street from a commercial space (where the Purple Onion building is currently) and the developer did not see that as ideal for a family park.
- There was discussion about the slope of the hill to the south of lot 13 and 14. The hill slopes down, into lots 13 and 14. If the developer were to grade a larger area to the south of the lots, it would push the slope of the hill back, creating a very steep hill on the south side of the area.
- Co-Chair La Ha asked for the committee to state their recommendation:
  - Straight land donation (1.05 acres) on lots 13 and 14 and grade the land south of those lots as much as possible to create 1-acre. (3 votes – Knaack, Kenney, Kman)
  - Straight land donation on lots Outlot A and 1 (1 vote – Robinson)
  - Take park as proposed on Outlot A with park equipment (4 votes – Janssen, Cryer, Pavlik, La Ha)

Member Knaack asked the committee since it was divided if they are willing to come to a consensus on wanting at least the minimum land requirement of 1.05-acres. Member Cryer and Member Pavlik both said no, they feel there is more value in the smaller, equipped park.

**b) Discussion and possible recommendation of the Open Space proposal from Villas of Old Oak.**

Director King clarified that the proposed plan currently states that the HOA would take this parcel of land and the Village would set up a dormant SSA, so the Village could take over and manage the land if the HOA did not maintain it. The question for the committee was whether the committee would like the Village to take on the open space from the beginning, which was offered by the developers early on in the planning process. Whether the HOA or the Village takes this land – it will have a tree conservation easement on it (so it remains open space). If the Village takes this on, we will have to put a forest management plan in place (invasive removal, tree hazard removal).

Superintendent Robinson asked Director King to explain what happens if the HOA falls apart. She continued that if that were to happen the SSA would come out of dormancy, if the Village felt like the land was in disrepair, and the Village would be able to put a special tax in place on those residents in order to collect funds to pay for the management.

Co-Chair La Ha asked if the Parks staff has the knowledge to care for this type of land. Superintendent Robinson said that the Village already pays a contractor to manage our open space/natural lands, so likely we would do the same in this scenario.

Regarding access to the property, the driveway that currently exists on the property will remain as an access point.

Regarding sidewalks, Director Salamowicz said there will be a sidewalk that goes from Lemont Road to Bell Road along 143<sup>rd</sup> street.

Member Knaack said in his experience from living next to a forest preserve that a lot of maintenance is done that is probably costly, including: clearing brush, removing invasive species, girdling maple trees, spraying, scheduled burns.

Co-Chair made a motion to recommend the Village take the Villas of Old Oak open space. Member Knaack seconded the motion. A role call vote was called:

La Ha – Yes

Cryer – No

Kenney – Yes

Kman – Abstain

Knaack – Yes

Janssen – No

Pavlik – No  
Robinson – No

Motion to recommend that the Village take on the Open Space did not carry (4 No; 3 Yes; 1 Abstain)

**c) Discussion of proposed Special Events for 2022.**

Coordinator Steilen explained that a list of the events that occur in Heritage Park was included in the packet for the committee members. Coordinator Steilen was looking for the committee's feedback on whether this is an adequate number of events; is there anything else the committee would like to see; is there anything the committee feels like we don't need?

Some changes to the schedule:

- Coordinator Steilen proposed having the Farmer's Market July-September, rather than May-September. The committee was in favor of this change. The committee agreed keeping the market on a Thursday is OK.
- The Homer for the Holidays event was proposed to change to a Friday night, rather than a Saturday night. The committee was in favor of this change.

The committee agreed that they would like to keep all of the events that we currently have and are in support of staffing the events appropriately. The committee agreed we cannot add any more events, as our staff is already stretched to their maximum capacity.

Member Knaack asked if we can leverage volunteers to fill in staff gaps. Coordinator Steilen shared that we used approximately 600 hours of volunteer time for the events in 2021. It was agreed that the Village could probably leverage some volunteers in a more efficient way, but the experience up until now has been that it is sometimes a challenge to get volunteers. Volunteers are often students looking for community service hours and they cannot be trusted with high responsibility tasks.

Superintendent shared his experience with EMA and said that it has been a challenge for him to get quality, consistent, dedicated volunteers.

The committee was all in favor of the proposed Special Events schedule. Member Knaack requested a car show – if our schedule and staff time allows.

**a) Discussion of proposed Recreation Programs for 2022.**

Coordinator Blank shared a variety of recreation ideas:

- Tennis/Pickleball – paid program
- Yoga in the Park – free program subsidized by the Village
- Disc Golf Clinic – could be paid or free program
- Soccer – awaiting proposal from Steve Jones. This will be structured like HAC or Homer Stallions.

After some discussion, the committee was in favor of having recreation programs in the park that participants paid for. They were not in favor of a program like Yoga in the Park where the Village paid for an instructor and offered the program for free. In that case, they are OK with offering free programs if the instructor is volunteering their time.

The committee also agreed that the more the Village can have the outside organizations (like HAC/Stallions/Soccer) manage their own programs, the better. The committee is not interested in being a de facto park district.

**9. Old Business****a) Discussion regarding the use of Village parks for special events hosted by outside organizations.**

When the Committee last discussed this topic, this is what was determined:

1. Does the committee agree to allow non-Village sponsored special events on Village property (specifically the Village parks) – **YES**
2. Who is allowed to apply for special event usage? – **Non-profits, schools, and businesses and they are all to be treated equally. Private rental of the park is not allowed.**
3. Are the pavilions rentable? – **NO. All pavilions are first-come, first-served.**
4. Can outside organizations charge an entrance fee? – **YES**
5. Will the Village charge a rental fee? – **NO**
6. Allowed – **small pop up tents.**
7. Not-allowed – **grills, inflatables, large signs (that need to be staked), large tents, amplified sound, alcohol.**
8. The Village staff does need to be involved in some capacity. Staff needs to work with the outside organization to determine the set-up/clean-up plan. It was agreed that a fee or a deposit to cover these costs could be required.

Superintendent Robinson stated the importance of NO STAKING at the park – so as not to interfere with water/utility lines.

After discussion regarding the previous determinations, the committee agreed that they are open to charging a fee for renting the park and definitely would like to include a deposit for



any activities in the park. Coordinator Blank said that she would work with Coordinator Steilen and Superintendent Robinson to update the Village's current ordinances to include a fee structure and deposit for rentals. The committee would also like the ordinance to clarify that private rental of the park for private parties or events is not allowed.

**b) Update on park signage.**

Coordinator Blank shared the cost estimates she received from three sign companies. She had requested wooden signs that mimic what some of the Village parks already have. Two of the companies said they no longer make wooden signs and suggested HDU as an alternative.

The committee would like to stay with wooden signs. They asked Coordinator Blank to get two more estimates for wooden signs so they have the required three estimates for a project. Since the total cost of the signs will be in the \$50,000 range, they would like to purchase the signs that are needed in smaller quantities over time.

In addition, they would like park rules/safety signs to be placed at all parks immediately. These would be smaller, less costly, metal signs with the park name, address, emergency phone numbers, and rules of the park.

Superintendent Robinson said he would get a sample of this type of sign created and bring to the next meeting for approval.

**10. Reports and Communications from Staff**

None

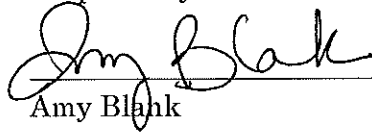
**11. Committee Member Updates**

No committee member updates.

**12. Adjournment.**

Member Kman made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Member Cryer. The motion carried. The meeting was adjourned 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:



Amy Blank

Communications & Recreation Services Coordinator