



City Commission Work Session Minutes

July 28, 2022 at 1:00 p.m.

City Hall, Commission Chambers
401 S. Park Avenue | Winter Park, Florida

Present

Mayor Phil Anderson; Vice-Mayor Todd Weaver; Commissioners Marty Sullivan, Sheila DeCiccio and Kris Cruzada; Assistant City Manager Michelle Del Valle; Deputy City Clerk Kim Breland.

1) Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m.

2) Budget Presentation - Parks and Recreation

Director of Parks and Recreation Jason Seeley explained the department's organizational chart, responsibilities and key performance indicators. He listed major projects and accomplishments including re-accreditation. He said the budget increase was due to the acquisition of the Winter Pines Gold Course, but anticipates revenue will offset those increases. He reviewed strategic goals and objectives for 2023, capital projects and costs. He responded to questions stating that the personnel budget increase was largely due to the acquisition of the golf course and renovation the golf course. He stated that there are still some plumbing upgrades to be made but beyond that there are no plans for further upgrades at this time.

3) Discussion Item(s)

a. Parks and Recreation Department Capital Improvement Projects

Mr. Seeley responded to questions regarding the Swoope property land swap. He explained that \$1M from the sale would cover the cost of the maintenance facility improvements, but the city would have to fund the columbarium improvements. He noted that there is money in the Cemetery Perpetual fund to cover the costs. He reviewed the list of capital projects that are in progress or completed and upcoming projects.

Mr. Seeley presented the Howell Branch Preserve Conceptual Map design and explained that grant funding only allows work to be done at specific areas near Lake Waumpi (northeast section) and Temple Colony (east of Temple Trail) and the west of Temple Trail (at the rear Temple Colony and Dommerich Cove). He stated that there is funding available for trails and conservation and any reallocation of the funds would have to be approved by the state. He said the focus of this meeting should be on proposed

improvements to the Lake Waumpi Trail System and the connector, invasive species removal and reforestation in the northwest quadrant of the Preserve near Howell Creek. Staff is seeking direction on whether to focus on building trails on Lake Waumpi with phasing in the rest of the improvements as funding becomes available or use the funds toward conservation work.

Commissioner Weaver addressed emails the commission from residents concerned about the proximity of trails to residential homes. He proposed an overlook with a small observation deck off the trail at Lake Waumpi, as opposed to a boardwalk, and changing the trail route near Howell Creek (near Public Works).

Mr. Seeley stated that he didn't receive many complaints from residents about a kayak launch, but did receive questions on whether a launch is necessary since it cannot be accessed at certain times during the year. He pointed out potential locations for kayak launch points and stated there would be an increase in boat traffic, but none of the access points would impact residents. He added that he did receive emails from residents near Lake Waumpi and Lake Howell (mostly from Seminole County) regarding concerns about increased boat traffic.

Mr. Seeley advised that the Fire Department has expressed concern about the proximity of the kayak launch near the north end of the Public Works compound to the proposed firefighter training facility. Ms. del Valle added that city stores equipment and supplies in this area, but with the fencing and security it would be possible to have a launch in that area. She noted including those elements would add significant costs to the project.

Commissioners spoke about resident concerns and ways to alleviate those concerns. Commissioner Sullivan suggested resident only access to Lake Waumpi. He spoke about resident concerns regarding improvements or redevelopment and supported improvements to the area, but questioned whether the city should move forward with anything other than environmental restoration.

Commissioner Weaver agreed and said he feels that the Dix-Hite plan is too expensive and too expansive. He feels the city should concentrate on the section of the Preserve that follows the creek southwest to northeast and not consider the other links except to the connector near Public Works facility.

Commissioner Cruzada said he feels improvements should be made since there is grant money available. He supported Commissioner Weaver's suggestion of moving the trail away from residents and off of Lake Waumpi, but wondered how the trails would be connected over time. He asked whether the funding could be split between wetland restoration and trail work considering there is opposition to the trails. Mr. Seeley stated that the city would have to ask the state how to reallocate the funds. Discussion followed on how the funds would be reallocated for improvements and reforestation.

Mayor Anderson said he sees this an opportunity to create a Florida native tree canopy and that residents would support that effort. He spoke about ways to add a riverwalk and how ways to achieve connectivity to different neighborhoods. He is hesitant to fund the northeast drop off point if there is no plan or funding to get access to it. Discussion was held on how much area would be needed for a riverwalk experience.

In-depth discussion followed on a plan to provide public access in the southeast area, connectivity, kayak launch locations, adding a loop trail near Lake Waumpi, parking and uses for the grant money.

During the discussion Commissioner Cruzada noted that the commission received an email stating more than 100 residents oppose any development of the trail. He suggested combining the trail with an observation point to show what wetland restoration and reforestation look like as an educational point and attraction.

Mr. Seeley stated that adding a trail connection at north side of the property (North of Temple Trail) would be approximately \$320K and a connection at Drum Street would be significantly less at approximately \$50K. Ms. del Valle noted that at one time the residents in the Dommerich Cove neighborhood were organizing against this plan because of concerns with traffic and parking in the neighborhood to access the trail. She stated that the city would work with the City of Maitland in coordinating any potential connectivity from the neighborhood.

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Chairman Michael Perelman talked about issues related to walking and kayak access, the overall plan and individual elements of the plan. He offered suggestions for access points and connectivity and parking. He feels the city should find out if funds can be reallocated for reforestation and look into grants for connectivity. Discussion followed on a parking/vehicle access option on Drum Street.

Mayor Anderson said he could not support vehicular access through an existing neighborhood and feels access to the back area of the Preserve can be through the Public Works compound to the south, paralleling the Police Training Facility to the north, or using the existing Howell Branch Preserve parking as primary access.

In-depth discussion continued on public access options and boardwalk maintenance concerns.

Mayor Anderson said his motion would be to dedicate the grant funding to reforestation and tree canopy, and petition to expand the geography of the grant for environmental restoration, with other items (Howell Branch Preserve Park improvements, creation of a riverwalk and kayak access, retention pond improvements and parking near the kayak drops) phased in over time from private, grant or CIP funding. Discussion followed on the timeline to use the grant funds and restoration plan.

Commissioner Weaver feels the only area to provide public access with a kayak launch and parking is the parking lot near the Public Works facility and suggested budgeting for fencing. He stated that he is not opposed to making a public access area off of Drum Street. Discussion continued on public access options.

Mayor Anderson stated that if there were going to be two motions, the main motion would be to create a road off Drum Street to a kayak launch and loop trail (as suggested by Commissioner Weaver), and an amendment to the motion to have no bridge. He said he can support the loop trail but not the road off Drum Street or a bridge.

Commissioner Weaver suggested an alternative motion to fund a connection between Drum Street and the parking lot (near Public Works) and modified loop trail near Lake Waumpi. Mr. Perelman supported access via Drum Street and suggested adding a small gate for local access at the back of the Dommerich Forest neighborhood. Mr. Seeley recommended setting time for any Drum Street access point to be open/closed to prevent loitering at the park.

Commissioner Weaver clarified that the motions were presented only for discussion and direction to staff to explore options. Ms. del Valle summarized that direction from the commission is to:

- Move forward with grant funds to design a Lake Waumpi loop trail.
- Use the remaining grant money for restoration and reforestation.
- Evaluate development of an access point from Drum Street with parking and a trail with connectivity to the creek, walking path and circle. Funding for the Drum Street access point and connectivity will need to be privately funded, derive from new grant funding, or compete in the CIP.

There was no consensus to add a gate for local access at the back of the Dommerich Forests neighborhood.

Mr. Seeley gave an update on the MLK Park renovations. He explained that the unity corner timeline has been pushed forward and is moving at quicker pace than the rest of the project. He is hoping that the hardscape is in place by January and noted that the statue will take 12 to 14 months to complete. Final conceptual plans are anticipated to be provided to the commission at the second meeting in August. He explained that the projects for the fields, Unity Corner, Denning/Morse nodes for sidewalks connecting the library to the playground at the park are all on budget and anticipates the completed project to be around \$5M.

Mr. Seeley spoke about funding sources to complete work around the lake and along the ponds along Denning and Morse and anticipates needing between \$500K and \$1M to complete the project.

Mr. Seeley gave an update on the Mead Garden projects and funding and five and 15-year Capital Improvement Plan with the funding to be addressed by the Commission.

Lastly, Mr. Seeley addressed Winter Park Sports Complex and conversion of two fields to synthetic turf. He said the cost increased and presented options to complete the project: spend more money to turf the fields which makes them more resilient to weather conditions and play during cooler months but does not offer added capacity or leave Field B grassed but fix to ensure proper drainage, turf Showalter East 1 and the two adult softball fields and then convert one of those fields to multi-purpose fields which allows for another grass field and 800 additional hours of field capacity. Consensus was to move forward with option two.

Mayor Anderson stated that he would like to have an update on the non-recurring budget when it is time to discuss the MLK budget.

4) Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:58 p.m.

Mayor Phillip M. Anderson

ATTEST:

City Clerk Rene Cranis