

Parks & Recreation Committee

Minutes of the Meeting on
February 28, 2022

**Village of Homer Glen
14240 W 151st 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, Co-Chair Reynders, Members Russ Knaack, Dale Janssen, Dan Kenney, Bob Kman.

Also Present: Communications and Recreation Services Coordinator Amy Blank, Superintendent of Parks and Facilities John Robinson, Director of Planning and Zoning Melissa King.

Members Absent: Marty Pavlik, Ed Cryer, Regina Robinson.

4. Approval of Minutes.**a) January 24, 2022**

Member Kman made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 24, 2022 Committee meeting; seconded by Co-Chair Reynders. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Approval of Amendments to the Agenda.

No amendments to the agenda.

6. Public Comment.

No public comment.

7. Reports from Co-Chairs.

No Report from Co-Chairs.

8. Old Business**a) Update on Park Signage (Park Entrance Signs and Park Rules Signs)**

Coordinator Blank shared that she has received four estimates for entrance signs. The signs were priced individually and all companies were given the same specifications. An important change to note is that the specs are for HDU signs. After further research it was determined that HDU is the industry standard now for entrance signs and is a more long-lasting, cost effective solution. Coordinator Blank also shared that the signs are going to be modeled after the illustration she supplied to the companies for the estimate.

There was some discussion as to whether or not the slogan “Community and Nature ... In Harmony” can be kept on the signs. Coordinator Blank shared that through the branding project the Village approved a new tag line for the Village was created, “You Know You’re Home.” Superintendent Robinson pointed out that the “Community and Nature...” slogan is still used on the Village seal. The committee feels that the current “Home” tagline isn’t appropriate for the parks and prefer to use the “Community” tagline on the park entrance signs.

Member Knaack asked if the first letter of each word can be larger. Coordinator Blank said yes, that is a stylistic choice and she see how it looks and check if it is in the guidelines to do so. Member Knaack also was curious to know what the HDU was going to look like. Coordinator Blank explained that it will mimic the look of wood. The illustration that was presented is just an illustration. The actual sign will have the texture of wood and the sign will be “carved” into the HDU.

Coordinator Blank said she is going to have Superintendent Robinson take a close look at the estimates and they will proceed with ordering as many as we can get within this budget cycle. Coordinator Blank will keep the committee updated along the process.

In addition, Superintendent Robinson is going to order Park Rules signs for each park – including the newly acquired parks from the Township. An illustration of the proposed sign was included. The signs will be 18x24 inches and are vinyl prints affixed to a metal board.

Member Kman asked if we were still going to put a QR code on the sign. There was some discussion in the past regarding adding a code that links to the new Village mobile app. Superintendent Robinson said he spoke with our IT Tech Sean McKee and that after some thought about it, they thought maybe it would be better not to include something like that on the sign – in case the link doesn’t work in the future or we end up using another app. Coordinator Blank said we can consider linking a QR code to our website, if we wanted. Member Knaack thought that if a QR code is to be used, perhaps it can be a separate little sign, so it isn’t included on a sign that we want to be permanent and long-lasting. Superintendent Robinson prefers we don’t include a QR code at this time.

Coordinator Blank shared that the rules and times of each sign will be specific to each park (some parks have tennis courts/lighted courts, etc.)

While on the topic of courts, Co-Chair La Ha asked what is happening with the re-stripping of the Stonebridge courts. Superintendent Robinson said that as soon as the weather turns warmer we will be re-stripping/repairing the tennis courts and if we want to add pickleball lines too, we can do that.

9. New Business

a) Library Connection

Director King shared that the library is doing an expansion on their property and as part of this the Library would like to build a connection on the north side of their property. The Library has offered to pay for everything. There is a question of the crosswalk. Director King and staff agree that if this connection goes in the Village should have a crosswalk at that point (with crosswalk signs). Superintendent Robinson said the Village can easily do that ourselves, if we so choose.

Member Kman motioned to recommend approval of the Library connection. Co-Chair Reynders seconded. Roll call was taken:

La Ha – Yes
Reynders – Yes
Knaack – Yes
Kenney – Yes
Kman – Yes
Janssen – Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

b) Heritage Park

1. Veterans Memorial

Superintendent Robinson started the discussion by saying that he is not in favor of where the Veterans Memorial is currently proposed (directly behind the Village Hall) because in the event the Village Hall ever needed to be expanded, it would have to expand into the (expensive) Veterans Memorial.

He also shared that he has military connections and can possibly find something for the Village that would be a historical centerpiece of a memorial (like a gun).

Co-Chair La Ha and Reynders agreed with Superintendent Robinson about the location. Co-Chair Reynders suggested putting the memorial back in the north area of Heritage Park – somewhere easily accessible to the parking and walking trails.

Co-Chair La Ha gave some more background information to this discussion. She shared that it is her understanding that the Homer Glen Foundation is disbanding and they want to give away (now) all the money that they have collected for a veterans memorial (\$42,000).

Regarding location, Superintendent Robinson reminded the committee that where the memorial is located needs to have electricity for the American flag to have light.

Member Knaack thought it would be nice adjacent to the grant area, since that area is in a quiet, preserved area. He also would like a fountain - something serene. Superintendent Robinson said a fountain is not easy to do in that location.

Member Knaack shared that one of the best memorials he's ever seen is at the Lansing airport. (The committee was shown a photo of what is there.) He added that he believes the person that created that memorial is a Homer Glen resident.

The committee did not feel strongly about moving forward with the Veterans Memorial that was originally proposed.

Co-Chair La Ha said she believes that the Homer Glen Foundation would be satisfied with a letter of intent that included our idea, an estimated time frame and a location.

The committee asked Member Knaack to reach out to the Homer Glen resident that designed the Lansing Memorial to see if he has a suggestion or some advice for us to move forward with this project. Superintendent Robinson said he would be willing to meet with him to get some ideas. Superintendent Robinson said he is willing to spearhead this project.

2. Other

Co-Chair La Ha began this discussion by saying she would like to see more playground equipment in the Active Core area. The committee was aware of the history of why a playground was not placed there originally. The committee also understands that a playground was intended on the south side of Heritage Park near the Village Hall and proposed splash pad.

It was determined that there is space on the north side of the Active Core next to the swings to build and that location makes sense as the "nature play" area is there. Co-Chair La Ha reiterated that while she understands the original intent of the park and the Active Core, we have now lived with that area for almost 3 years and what the residents are asking for is play equipment for children. Co-Chair La Ha believes it is our responsibility to be flexible with the plan based on what the need is in the community.

Superintendent Robinson suggested a 1200 sq. area with a 2-5 and a 5-12 play area, both with all-inclusive equipment. The committee would like to see two more swings (bucket swing, mother and child swing) for smaller children/children with disabilities also included.

Member Knaack encouraged the committee to approach this idea and all ideas for Heritage Park with a long-term approach and believes we need someone (the committee?) to spearhead this project and create a vision for the development that considers 5, 10, 20 years in the future.

Co-Chair La Ha would like the next committee meeting to focus on the development of Heritage Park.

Superintendent Robinson reminded the committee that in addition to "development" the committee also needs to consider "maintenance" of parks. He would like the

committee to look at all of the current parks and plan for restoration, repair, maintenance of those parks.

Superintendent Robinson said the oldest three parks are Kingston Hills, Stonebridge, and Evelyn's Gate. Stonebridge is not weathering well. Kingston and Evelyn's is still in good shape. Goodings Grove park is also in bad shape – but that is due to vandalism, not age.

Member Kenney asked about how the parks budget is organized – in regards to maintenance and new development. Superintendent Robinson said we do have a line item for maintenance in parks – but that is really meant as annual maintenance, it isn't going to cover the cost of a complete renovation at the park. That kind of expense needs to be thought of as "new development" because it is a larger expense (capital improvement) and would come out of the Parks Development budget.

Member Kenney shared that he doesn't care what "phase" happens next at Heritage Park, he would just like to see something happen. He feels that the Village lost momentum in the development (and excitement) of Heritage Park and would like that to be reestablished. Heritage Park goes behind parks/play equipment, this is an identity for the Village – a place that could put us on the map – the crown jewel of Homer Glen.

The committee would like to start by looking at the plans that were already created and going from there.

Superintendent Robinson shared that the problem with the plans/schematic designs that were done for the Village are not the Village's property. We cannot use the plans with another architecture firm. We have to be very careful about what we use – if we aren't using the plans that were already done.

Co-Chair Reynders said she thinks our first order of business is to look at the plan and re-draw the plan.

Member Knaack said we need to first take ownership of the project. Then, look at the plans that were already done and discuss what we like and what we don't like.

Superintendent Robinson suggested the committee decide what they want to do with the park, then present their idea to the Board for approval, then hire the company/experts that will actually do the work.

Member Knaack and Co-Chair La Ha agreed that the project needs to be spearheaded by this committee.

In terms of adding play equipment in the Active Core, both Member Knaack and Member Kenney had some hesitation about making that decision right now. They both thought it would be wise to look at the plan overall before making any decisions – though they did agree that if nothing was planned for the proposed space (north of the

swings) and it is a “blank space” then it likely would not be detrimental to the overall plan to put play equipment there.

Coordinator Blank retrieved the map of Heritage Park for all to see and Superintendent Robinson explained again the water/sewer situation – where a splash pad was planned for and why (the sewer does not reach the Active Core). He also explained the reasoning behind the parking plan – where additional parking lots were expected to go because of the widening of 151st street and the loss of the front lot.

Member Knaack agreed that the proposed location for the play equipment is quite far from where the play equipment on the south end was proposed – so it is justified.

Coordinator Blank suggested to the committee to direct Superintendent Robinson to put an RPF together, if they agree to adding play equipment to the Active Core.

There was discussion about how much the Village should say the budget is, in the RFP. Superintendent Robinson suggested \$200,000-\$250,000 because even though the play equipment will be smaller (less expensive) than Glenview Walk, for example, the pour-in-play ground cover adds considerable cost to the project over something like plastic chips.

Member Janssen asked if the Co-Chairs thought the Board would be receptive to the play equipment plan (and the further development of Heritage Park in general). Co-Chairs La Ha and Reynders agreed that the parks budget already has funds available for the play equipment idea, so they were confident the Board would be receptive. For a more detailed (expensive) development plan for Heritage Park Co-Chairs Reynders shared that raising money through donations could help the cause.

Co-Chair La Ha asked if there was a motion to direct Superintendent Robinson to put an RPF together for a 2-5/5-15 play equipment area (with an inclusive swing and as much inclusive equipment as possible within our budget; pour-in-play ground) not to exceed \$225,000. Member Kenny motioned and Member Kman seconded. Roll call was taken:

La Ha – Yes

Reynders – Yes

Knaack – Yes

Kenney – Yes

Kman – Yes

Janssen – Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

Continuing with “Heritage Park – Other” Superintendent Robinson brought up the topic of the cul-de-sac road. 155 parking spaces are planned for that area. An additional plan for adding more parking along the ring road (to widen the road to accommodate double parking, where it currently is only one row of parking) has also been proposed.

Superintendent Robinson voiced his support for the cul-de-sac road. It not only adds needed additional parking spots to the park, but also is a needed turn-around space for traffic flow and safety within the park. The cul-de-sac road would be a great help and a necessary safety addition to our current and future events (like a future car show that has been proposed). Superintendent Robinson shared that his concerns were shared with Board members.

Superintendent Robinson explained that while the cul-de-sac road may not be popular we are already contractually obligated to it - of which we have already been invoiced for \$225,000 of it - and we have been awarded a grant to pay for a portion of the project (\$750,000). For concerns regarding drainage and the proximity to the 319-grant area, Superintendent Robinson explained that all of the roads already in Heritage Park drain into that "protected" area and that that is the purpose of that area – to accept drainage and clean the water before it flows into the water base. That is what it is designed to do.

Co-Chair Reynders explained that she is under the impression that with the grant award the Village can change the scope of work. Superintendent Robinson said he understands that no, that is not the case, the Village would need to reapply for the grant. Co-Chair Reynders wanted the committee to weigh in on this discussion so that if the scope of work is to be changed, the committee is aware of the decision and in support of it.

Superintendent Robinson is in support of adding more parking. But if the choice is between the cul-de-sac road vs. adding more parking to the ring road, he is in favor of the cul-de-sac road because it addresses more of the issues with our parking/safety/traffic flow than the ring road. Personally, he believes that parking is extremely important and while, not glamorous, parking is utilitarian and should be put in before other amenities are added. If we were to decide to build an amphitheater, for example, with the desire to book big name bands and have great music in the park events – it will be a problem because we could not accommodate the number of cars that would want to attend that event.

Member Kenney added that not "any parking" is "good parking". The cul-de-sac is more parking spots that is "good parking" because it solves a flow issue.

There was some confusion at the committee as to why we are talking about this issue. Coordinator Blank explained that the Co-Chairs were looking to the committee for their support of either the cul-de-sac road that was already approved and we have already invested money in or do they support losing the investment that was already made in order to go with a different parking plan – like the expansion of the ring road.

Member Knaack asked for further explanation and when heard that by not moving forward with the cul-de-sac road the Village was to lose \$1 million dollars (in grant money and money already contractually owed) he expressed that, in his opinion, that would be a poor political move for the Board. He also asked what the cost of the ring road expansion would be. Co-Chair Reynders shared that we do not know for sure, but that Commissioner Porfilio did a preliminary study and suggested it would be less expensive (\$750,000).

Superintendent Robinson shared that the Village engineer also looked at this idea, and knowing what we know about the infrastructure of the park – where the electricity is, the fire hydrants, water mains, drainage, controls for street lighting, etc. – our engineer placed the project at an estimated cost of approximately \$1 million.

Member Kenney pointed out that the development that has already happened in the park was based on a plan. So, now, the committee is in the position that any changes we make to that original plan have consequences that affect the entire park – its infrastructure and design.

Co-Chair Reynders asked the committee if there is a motion to recommend approval of moving forward with the cul-de-sac road, as is?

Member Janssen made that motion. Member Kenney seconded. Roll call was taken:

La Ha – Yes
Reynders – Yes
Knaack – Yes
Kenney – Yes
Kman – Yes
Janssen – Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

c) Park at 143rd & Golden Oak Drive – concept plan

This agenda item was skipped in the interest of time. It will be discussed at a later time when more information is known about what is happening at the Villas of Old Oak. Member Kman made the motion to table this until the next meeting. Co-Chair Reynders seconded the motion. All were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

d) Park Benches

Coordinator Blank shared that Co-Chair Reynders asked to put “benches” on the agenda. At the same time, Coordinator Blank got word that a project had been approved by the Ability Awareness Committee and was supported by the Environment Committee and the Parks and Rec Committee to do a “Friendship/Buddy Bench” in Heritage Park. Coordinator Blank was a little confused about what was what. Co-Chair La Ha clarified that someone at the AAC meeting came up with the Friendship Bench project and some at the AAC meeting thought it was a good idea. It is a recycling project that gets the community involved. One of the AAC members took it upon herself to say that the project was happening. In addition, the Homer Glen Junior Woman’s Club also agreed to work on this project and caps have already been deposited at Village Hall.

Co-Chair La Ha also clarified that her and Co-Chair Reynders had privately spoken about a bench fundraising project to have people sponsor benches in Heritage Park.

Superintendent Robinson and Coordinator Blank shared that the Village already did a bench sponsorship project along the trails. The benches plus installation cost approximately \$4,000 and the Village sold them for \$2,000. He shared that if we were to put more benches in the parks, we likely wouldn't have to spend as much as we did on the installation for the trails – because that was on ComEd property and came with its own set of guidelines – so we could save some money. However, the cost of the bench likely wouldn't be much less, because as a public park we are required to use certified equipment that meets certain requirements.

Co-Chair Reynders asked if benches are needed in Heritage Park and Superintendent Robinson said at this time, in his opinion, no. At least in the Active Core and around the trail we have plenty of benches and places to sit. Superintendent Robinson was not in favor of using the benches as a fundraiser. He suggested that the committee may want to consider bricks as fundraisers if that makes sense for the Veterans Memorial.

Co-Chair La Ha said she would address the bench idea at the AAC meeting the following evening.

Coordinator Blank suggested that the committee consider placing benches in some of the other Village parks, if a location is needed for a bench.

For clarification Coordinator Blank wrapped up the conversation by saying that at this time the committee is not moving forward with any fundraising efforts including benches, and that if fundraising is desired in the future the committee may look into benches and other options, like bricks, as ways to fundraise. In addition, regarding the Friendship/Buddy Bench idea, at this time the committee is not committed to anything as we do not have enough information.

10. Reports and Communications from Staff

None

11. Committee Member Updates

Member Kman requested that the committee meet in a park during a warm month (June or July) to have a park inspired meeting. The committee liked this idea.

Member Knaack would like to look at recommending to the Board updating the policy regarding park contributions from developers. Co-Chair La Ha shared that Director King

is already looking at this as part of her code update project. Superintendent Robinson said we should look at the comparable communities list that was approved by the Board and see what they do in terms of parks contributions. Member Knaack would also like to look at the comparable list that is mentioned in the Master Parks Plan.

12. Adjournment.

Member Kman made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Member Kenney. The motion carried. The meeting was adjourned 8:39 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:



Amy Blank

Communications & Recreation Services Coordinator