

Parks & Recreation Committee

Minutes of the Meeting on
September 20, 2021

**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 Rose Reynders, Co-Chair Nicole La Ha, Members Regina Robinson, Russ Knaack, Ed Cryer, Dale Janssen, Marty Pavlik.

Also Present: Village Manager Matt Walsh, Communications and Recreation Services Coordinator Amy Blank, Superintendent of Parks and Facilities John Robinson, Homer Township Supervisor Steve Balich.

Arrived late 6:05 p.m.: Member Dan Kenney

Members Absent: Bob Kman

4. Approval of Minutes.

a) July 19, 2021

Co-Chair Reynders made a motion to approve the minutes of the July 19, 2021 Committee meeting; seconded by Member Pavlik. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Approval of Amendments to the Agenda.

a) No amendments to the agenda.

6. Public Comment.

- a) Andrew Rodeghero - Introduced himself as the Homer Athletic Club President and in regards to item 9a wanted to make himself available for any questions. HAC has been servicing the community since 1959. Spring, summer and into the fall operate baseball and softball on the Township fields. HAC takes care of all routine maintenance. Lawn, fertilizing, vandalism, concession stand (electricity and water), 3 porta-potties.
- b) John Walters – Is in support of the Village acquiring the Township Parks. Thinks it makes sense to have one park department in Homer Glen and that the parks logically belong to Village.
- c) Matt Hosteny – Agree with the idea of the parks being acquired by the Village, but is concerned with the cost. What will it take to maintain the

parks? Also, wanted to let everyone know that he really enjoyed the last Farmer's Market and the addition of the State Trooper. Thank you!

- d) Carl Holzhauser – Requested that the lights on the pickleball courts get turned on in the morning. Superintendent Robinson commented that the lights are set by ordinance, so the Board would have to change the ordinance to put the lights on in the morning.
- e) Steve Balich – Supports what Mr. Rodeghero said. The Township has had a very good relationship with HAC and they have been easy to work with.

7. Reports from Co-Chairs.

- a) Co-Chairs said they would report during the topics presented in New and Old Business.

8. New Business

- a) Discussion and motion regarding the installation of the Little Lending Library at Heritage Park.

Coordinator Blank shared that the Homer Township Public Library has a Little Lending Library that they would like to have installed at Heritage Park. The Library is willing to “maintain” the Little Library in so much as checking on it for vandalism and supplying books to it.

Superintendent Robinson suggested that if the Committee agrees to install the Little Library at Heritage Park, that they leave it to staff to determine the best location, dependent on where the ground is clear of underground electric/water pipes and where the location is visible on the security cameras. Also, would like to make sure that the Little Library is water-tight.

Co-Chair La Ha made a motion to install the Little Lending Library at Heritage Park. Member Knaack seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

- b) Discussion regarding removing Parks and Facilities Maintenance from the Public Works Department.

Co-Chair Reynders provided some background on this topic. At this time the Parks and Facilities Maintenance is under the umbrella of the Public Works Department. Prior to the Public Works Department, Parks and Facilities operated independently. Co-Chair Reynders feels like Parks and Facilities should continue to operate separately from Public Works and be a stand-alone Department – “Parks and Recreation Department.” As Heritage Park grows, as the Village acquires new parks, and as the Village adds more events and recreation, Co-Chair Reynders feels like it is necessary for the Village to have a Parks and Rec Department.

Co-Chair La Ha would like to protect our parks and the funding for our parks. Creating its own department would add protection for the parks.

Manager Walsh shared that the current park fund is healthy. Over the past few years surplus funds were transferred to the park fund in anticipation of development of Heritage Park.

Member Knaack shared a little of the history of the Village parks and recognized that while it was slow in the beginning years, our parks and associated maintenance and programming is growing very quickly, especially considering item 9a. Member Knaack also recognized that compared with similar population and demographic towns, Homer Glen falls short when it comes to parks and infrastructure. Member Knaack would like to keep trail development as a priority for the Parks and Rec Department.

There was a question/concern about the Motor Fuel Tax, which funds the parks, on whether that revenue could be transferred to another fund. Manager Walsh shared that the MFT is its own fund and cannot be used for anything else but park expenses. Last year, the MFT did not cover the entire parks expense and the Board had to decide how to cover the shortfall. This year, the MFT looks like it will be more than last year. The idea that that money would be used for Public Works is unrealistic.

Co-Chair La Ha motioned for a recommendation from the Committee to remove Parks and Facilities Maintenance from the Public Works Department. Member Kenney seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

9. Old Business

- a) Discussion on the Village acquiring the Homer Township parks and sports fields.

There are six parks including the Township Sports Complex. Country Woods park is now not included. The Country Woods HOA voted to take it and the Township agreed to donate it to the HOA.

Coordinator Blank shared Member Kman's park visit notes. In summary, he believes taking over the Township parks is a great idea, but understands that there are a lot of repairs that need to be made (some immediately, some more long-term) and that there is a cost to those repairs and continued upkeep.

Superintendent Robinson shared his park visit report. Before any decisions are made, he suggests we do a report on the Sports Complex so the Village knows what repairs or upgrades are needed.

Andrew Rodeghero shared that the bathrooms at the concessions are usable, but need some TLC.

Superintendent Robinson said per his report there are some repairs that will need to be done immediately and some that can be done over time. Gorham Park needs to be visited by engineers for drainage because it is holding water. Since that doesn't affect playground safety, it can be addressed at a later time.

In regards to the department, Superintendent Robinson said that yes, the parks can be maintained, but it would require additional staff and equipment. He suggests the Township maintain the parks for the remainder of the year and the Village can pick them up in the beginning of the spring, when our budget begins May 1.

Co-Chair La Ha asked if we had a full staff now, how many more staff members would the department need to maintain the additional parks? Superintendent Robinson estimated one additional full-time staff and one additional part-time staff. Total staff would be:

- Superintendent Robinson
- 4 full-time staff (we currently have) plus one additional full-time (for Township parks)
- 3-4 seasonal employees (we currently have one)
- 1 part-time custodian (un-filled as of now)
- 1 part or full-time horticulturist (un-filled as of now)

Superintendent Robinson said they have had a very hard time filling full and part-time positions.

Co-Chair La Ha asked Supervisor Balich what will the Township do if the Village does not take the parks? Supervisor Balich said he will reach out to the Forest Preserve District and offer the properties to them.

Superintendent Robinson said the Culver Park pond was inspected by the Village's pond/native landscaping expert and it was given a good report.

Member Pavlik asked Supervisor Balich how the Township parks are currently funded. Supervisor Balich answered that it is funded by property tax and as far as he remembers, the amount for the levy is approximately \$280,000.

Superintendent Robinson suggested the Township work with the Village on Trantina Farm. Supervisor Balich said he has an idea for Trantina and will speak with Superintendent Robinson about it at a later time.

Member Pavlik asked for a cost analysis to be done. Co-Chair La Ha would also like to see a cost analysis of what it will cost to repair the Township parks. Superintendent Robinson said he will put together an estimate by next meeting.

Member Knaack said we as a Village need to have park design standards and we should do that first before making any changes to the parks.

Superintendent Robinson said that most of the immediate repairs have to do with the wooden borders around the playgrounds. The Village standard is concrete, in the interest of expense, the recommendation is to just repair for now and slowly expand/improve over years.

Supervisor Balich added that if the Village takes over the parks now, if there are some repairs that Superintendent Robinson can recommend doing now, the Township will do its best to make repairs by the end of the year.

Andrew Rodeghero added that there are a number of repairs that need to be made at the Sports Complex. The user agreement that the HAC has now is that the HAC is the primary user and responsible for all general maintenance and repairs. If safety netting can be taken down and stored that would be a help/savings for HAC. The only regular maintenance that the Township does on the Sports fields is cutting the grass on the football fields.

Member Kenney asked how would the Village pay for the parks? Would we increase the levy?

Manager Walsh agreed that funding is something that needs to be explored. The Village's intent is not to raise taxes, however, as previously stated the MFT we take in for the current parks does not cover our current park expenses.

There was discussion that there are other options for the parks including the Village could chose not to take all of the parks and/or the Village could choose to sell some of the land to wetland mitigation.

Member Knaack feels strongly that all of these parks are needed and should not be sold off.

Manager Walsh shared that the current budget for the Village parks is \$500,000 and we currently spend more than that on park maintenance.

Co-Chair La Ha asked the committee for a recommendation. Would you recommend that the Village take on the Township parks? The general consensus of the Committee was that taking over the parks is necessary but there is concern about the cost and where the funding is to come from.

Member Knaack asked Supervisor Balich if the Township would be willing to continue taxing residents the same amount they have been for the next couple of years and transfer it to the Village with the express purpose to cover the costs of park maintenance. Supervisor Balich said his Board is expecting to be rid of that portion of the levy this year. They are willing to maintain the parks for the remainder of this year and will try to fix what can be fixed now.

b) Update on resurfacing tennis courts at Stonebridge.

Superintendent Robinson shared that he has been unable to secure a contract for this work. Per Village policy, we are to obtain 3 bids for any work to be done and after multiple attempts with a variety of vendors, Superintendent Robinson has only been able to meet with one contractor and that contractor hasn't given a bid. As this is a weather dependent project it looks like we may have to postpone this until the spring when the weather turns warm again.

10. Reports and Communications from Staff

- a) Superintendent Robinson reported that he is extremely concerned about the bucket truck that is set to be given back to the Road District as part of the IGA. It is currently owned by the Village and is used in a variety of ways around the Village. A third of the Holiday Light Display can only be installed with the bucket truck, which has a lifting wench. The bucket truck that the Village's Public Works department has does not have a lifting wench. Superintendent Robinson's preference is that the Village keeps the current bucket truck and lends it out to the Township when they need it, rather than the other way around. Supervisor Balich said the Village can borrow the old bucket truck anytime the Village needs it. Superintendent Robinson said the Village uses it fairly regularly and if the Board agrees to give it away it will be an inconvenience to the Village.
- b) Communications and Recreation Coordinator Blank shared that there are some Events coming up – Spooky Park, Scarecrow Walk, Trunk or Treat and Homer for the Holidays. More information to follow at the next meeting.

11. Committee Member Updates

- a) Member Knaack brought forward the discussion of the need for soccer fields in the Village. We currently have no soccer fields. According to our Parks Master Plan we are not meeting even the bare minimum. Supervisor Balich said that the Township has three fields and would be willing to talk about giving the fields to the Village. Member Knaack agreed that may be an opportunity, but even if we were to acquire three fields, that would still not be enough for the demand here in Homer Glen. Member Knaack is not proposing a "Hassert Park" in Homer Glen, but something that will address the extreme demand for soccer. Andrew Rodeghero disagreed and thinks Homer Glen could benefit from a "Hassert Park" because soccer leagues typically are traveling leagues that need multiple, large sized, well-maintained fields to be useable.

12. Adjournment.

Member Cryer made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Co-Chair Reynders. The motion carried. The meeting was adjourned 8:18 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:



Amy Blank
Communications & Recreation Services Coordinator