

**PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE**  
**November 28, 2006**  
**3:30 P.M.**

Chairman Gaines called the meeting of the Parks and Recreation Committee to order with Councilman Benson, Bennett, Rico, and Robinson present. Councilwoman Rutherford and Councilman Franklin joined the meeting later. City Attorney Randall Nelson and Shirley Crownover, Assistant Clerk to the Council, were also present.

Others present included Rick Wood, John Lyons, Daisy Madison, Larry Zehnder and Dan Johnson. Matt Lea joined the meeting later.

**TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND APPROPRIATION**

After Chairman Gaines had called the meeting to order, she turned it over to Adm. Zehnder. He explained that the South Chickamauga Creek Greenway was to be developed and that he had talked to Attorney Nelson about the best way to get this accomplished; that money would be funded from the Parks and Recreation Capital Fund to the Trust for Public Land, and he was here today to provide an update and to advise the Council of the procedure. He explained that the section was complete near East Ridge and Camp Jordan, and the part we are talking about today is in the middle; that we have the money and are now in the process of getting this started. He stated that he had asked Rick Wood to come before the Council to review the procedures.

Mr. Wood presented a map showing the section that Adm. Zehnder was referring to. He explained that the Riverwalk was complete, and this would tie in South Chickamauga Creek through East Chattanooga to Shallowford Rd. and the Brainerd Levee. It will go from Camp Jordan to the Brainerd Levee and all the way to the River, which is 14 miles of trail. He explained that we have money to build Phase I in the middle, which is the Waterhaven Development, and we need to go ahead and start building. He explained that they had \$200,000 of private funds to be spent on the trail and that they would pair this with City money from Parks and Recreation and would be able to build more than a mile. He explained that negotiations were underway to get an easement and build the trail, which we can do.

Mr. Wood went on to explain that Trust for Public Land is a private non-profit organization and that they will handle working with the contractor on-site. Both private and public funds will be used to build the trail, and it will take 30 days to get ready and 60 days to build. He reiterated that they were ready to move forward in Phase I and were asking permission for this process; that Parks and Recreation would transfer funds to the Trust for Public Land and with the help of private money, they would build this trail and convey it back to the City of Chattanooga.

Mr. Wood went on to explain that in the next Phase, the City would administer a \$1.7 million dollar federal grant to build more of the greenway; that Lyndhurst would contribute \$200,000; that we would connect to the Riverwalk next, which may take us to Shallowford Rd. He stated that this was an exciting project, and they were ready to start to break ground.

Councilman Benson asked if they were talking about off of Camp Jordan and the stream next to the Concord Golf Course? He also asked if we were talking about Audubon Acres. Mr. Wood responded in the affirmative, with Councilman Benson sharing that Audubon was in a bad shape financially. Mr. Zehnder added that this would help get more canoes and make it more navigable. Mr. Wood stated that they had been in conversation with Audubon, with Councilman Benson reiterating that they were going under.

Mr. Wood mentioned two canoe launches along the lake—one on city property and one where South Chickamauga and the River come together. He stated that this would provide easy access.

Councilwoman Rutherford stated that she and Mr. Zehnder had talked about a canoe landing at the Brainerd Recreation Center; that we need to connect the Recreation Center to the levee and creek. Mr. Wood mentioned a problem with a sewer line. Mr. Zehnder added that this would be the next Phase of the Brainerd Recreation Center and would connect the Levee to the Center and that it was still a Plan. Councilwoman Rutherford asked if it would be in “our” lifetimes? She went on to say that the other two launches were wonderful but that the Brainerd Recreation Center should have access to water, and we had talked about this for 6-8 years.

Councilman Rico asked why we were starting in the middle with this trail. Mr. Wood responded that first, it allowed us to get started as fast as we can, and secondly once you build this, you will have a good three mile stretch, where a new neighborhood is being built already.

Councilwoman Rutherford asked about a “red dotted line” on the map and was told that this is a “dream”—it is Billy Goat Hill, and we will eventually work with the National Park Service on this.

Councilman Benson mentioned that there was some contention with Waterhaven and asked if we would get involved and wanted to know if everyone wanted this. Mr. Wood responded that the developer and neighbors want this; that people want more trails, mentioning a family from Vail, Colorado. Mr. Zehnder stated that this would be on next week’s agenda, and he just wanted the Council to know the process. **On motion of Councilwoman Robinson, seconded by Councilwoman Bennett, this will be recommended for approval by the entire Council.**

**CHATTANOOGA RIVERBOAT COMPANY**

Adm.Zehnder explained that the Chattanooga Riverboat Co.'s Lease with the City goes to 2018—long-term; that this was done in respect to the Waterfront Development; that he had asked Vince Vita to be here to talk about their Plan. He stated that he had been advised that we don't need a new Lease by Mike McMahan, and this was the advice that he was bringing to the Council. He reiterated that Mr. Vita was not here but that he had asked him to come in.

Councilwoman Robinson stated that this came before CDRC and that she had asked the question if this would be a casino. She was told that it is a docking barge for the Southern Belle and would not be a casino.

Councilwoman Rutherford stated that it would be illegal to have a casino. Mr. Zehnder acknowledged that this had once been used as a casino. Councilwoman Robinson noted that it appeared to have a paddle wheel and that the barge would be tied up and used to load and unload passengers. It will also be used as a meeting room. Mr. Zehnder added that they would be leasing out the second floor to businesses, and it would have to go before the Sign Appeals Group.

Councilman Benson asked if food and drink would be served? Mr. Zehnder responded “yes”—it would be in this facility because it has accommodations for this. He noted that this replaced the old barge but is more beautiful and bigger. He stated that he was doing his duty by bringing this to the Council.

Councilwoman Robinson was in favor of this if we took the word “casino” out.

At this point Mr. Vita, who is the Captain of the boat, arrived. He passed pictures around to show the work they were doing, stating that the knew they needed to upgrade and had been looking to see what they could do and had seen this boat in St. Louis; that it had been stripped of all its gambling appurtenances, and people had been living in it; that they decided that they could convert this into an operating center and banquet facility and had been working on this feverously. He mentioned a 2000 sq. ft. kitchen and gift shop, noting that 300 people could get inside and out of the Southern Belle. He emphasized that this is a barge and not a boat—that it has no engine; that they bought the barge end of it, and it looks like a boat, but it is really a barge with no propulsion.

Mr. Vita explained that all operations will be on the main deck; that there will be an elevator and second deck mezzanine; that it will seat 350 people in a banquet style setting with room for a band and dance floor. He went on to say that the third floor is 6300 sq. ft., which he was not addressing and explaining—that there would be lease options. He did state, however, that he did not think a restaurant would work because it is fragmented, but it is kind of unique.

Councilman Franklin wanted to know where the barge was found in St. Louis. Mr. Vita explained that it was called the President Mississippi Casino Boat and was near Alton.

Councilman Benson stated that this was a big investment, with Mr. Vita agreeing that it was way more than they thought.

**On motion of Councilman Benson, seconded by Councilwoman Robinson, the Council gave their agreement to this arrangement.**

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 P.M.