

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE
September 23, 2008
4:15 P.M.

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

Others present included Richard Beeland, Daisy Madison, Larry Zehnder, Gary Hilbert, Lee Norris, Jim Templeton, Dan Johnson, Jerry Stewart, Dennis Malone, Rick Wood and Mayor Littlefield.

PARKS AND RECREATION AGENDA ITEMS

Adm. Zehnder was present and went over **Resolution (h)** on tonight's agenda that authorizes a Lease Agreement with Sergeant David Frye for a house located at 406 Brown Road, in consideration of \$100.00 per month in rent and Sergeant Frye's security services at Brown Acres Golf Course and Brainerd Golf Course. Adm. Zehnder explained that this a Lease Agreement with a police officer to rent a house in return for security—this is a reduced amount on rent; there will be a number of hours that the officer has to maintain on both courses. He went on to say that one of the issues was the Fair Labor Standard Act, and the attorney had worked out an arrangement to take care of this point.

Resolution (f) on next week's agenda authorizes the acceptance of a permanent easement of approximately 5.03 acres located at 2735 Kanasita Drive from Encore Medical, LP d/b/a Chattanooga Group through The Trust for Public Land, to be used as part of the North Chickamauga Greenway.

Mr. Rick Wood of the Trust for Public Land explained that the Chattanooga Group owns a piece of land and by donating this easement along the edge of the creek, it allows us to connect the dots to land that we already own; that they had been talking to Clear Creek Church of Christ about an easement, which would be about a four acre donation.

Councilman Page expressed that this was great and asked if there was any other property that we need? Mr. Wood responded that some had already been given to us with an Agreement with TWRA.

STRINGER'S RIDGE

Mr. Wood stated that they had a signed agreement for Stringer's Ridge—that they now actually have an agreement with a land owner for 92 acres of land. He stated that three of his Board members were present today—Mike McGauley, Greg Vital, and Russell Frieberg. He explained that they had an option to purchase, and he was here to make a “pitch” to the Council on how to purchase the land. He showed aerial pictures, stating that the Ridge is there. The picture showed four peaks, and the first peak has a Civil War site on it. Mr. Wood stated that this Ridge had been this way a long time, and we wanted to keep it this way and conserve it and let the people use it for biking, hiking and bird watching. He stated that this involved quality of life for Chattanooga. He went on to say that their budget for the project is \$2.5 million dollars, and the purchase price is based on market value, and the \$2.5 million includes the purchase price. He stated that today they had \$650,000 in line from local foundations and would have another one-half million in the next few weeks--\$140,000 from a local board. He stated that they had not gone “public” with this—that the first thing was to come to the Council quickly. He stated that the request to the Council is to consider a one-half million dollar purchase agreement with The Trust for Public Land over a two-year period. This will be a Lease Purchase with The Trust for Public Land and paid back in next year's budget.

Councilman Rico asked who would pay for the upkeep? Mr. Wood responded that the Trust for Public Land would have some responsibility, and then it would become a city park. Councilman Rico noted that we are strapped for funds, and it would be hard to sell this to his constituents. Mr. Wood stated that this would not be a manicured park but a natural one, which would require less maintenance.

Mayor Littlefield stated that unless we settle this matter, it will continue to come up; that it was troublesome in the 70's and was a no-man's land; that he was confident that with this purchase, it will settle it once and for all; that it might be a City-County responsibility and could perhaps be added to Moccasin Bend because of its Civil War heritage. He urged to settle this before it becomes troublesome.

Councilman Benson stated that it would be a wonderful investment but would be a tremendous pressure on the City financially. He wanted to know what the County, State and Federal government would contribute?

Mr. Wood responded that they were asking the State for acquired funds and partnering.

Councilman Benson stated that he did not think he would be for making a contribution unless there were matching funds.

Councilwoman Robinson stated that there was a lot of development now on Moccasin Bend, and they were leaning heavily on private donors; that this was a site, and Councilwoman Bennett could attest to this, that nearly went to condos; that the downtown belongs to all of us, and we cannot take our vista for granted; that we need to do something (act of faith) to say that this is worth preserving, and we need to take the first step in order to say this. She reiterated that we almost lost it and would have lost it if we had not had the big problem with shale—that it would have been gone. She stated that we could not sit around and wait for another catastrophe.

Councilwoman Bennett stated that Garnet Chapin was here from the neighborhood—that people are responding with confidence to move forward; that there might be some ability to do some “sensitive” development, but it needed to be beautiful, beautiful.

Mr. Garnet Chapin spoke, stating that he was a representative of the Neighborhood Association and also the Design Committee; that another neighborhood association was getting organized again; that the neighborhood supported The Trust for Public Land 110%--that this was a great opportunity, and we needed to get input on the front end; that they were very positive and optimistic about this; that if any development was held to high standards, they would support this 100%.

Mr. Chapin took this opportunity to mention that a group had been talking with Larry Zehnder about plaques on the Walnut Street Bridge and a fund of money left over; that this same group would meet Wednesday to make an official proposal to Mr. Zehnder and the City—that they wanted to open up the sale of plaques again; that they originally sold for \$100.00 each and these would be \$125.00 each, and they would take only 20% for overhead. He noted that there were 24 planks, and the money raised would go in to support for Parks and Recreation. (Councilwoman Bennett reminded him that we needed to focus on Stringer’s Ridge today). Mr. Chapin maintained that the sale of the plaques was germane to Stringer’s Ridge.

Councilman Page expressed his gratitude that the plaques would be sold again, stating that he was disappointed that he did not buy a plaque the first time around—that this was a great idea, and he would beg to question. Mr. Chapin explained that the plaques would be made of epoxy and bonded to the planks.

Mr. Wood thanked the Council for their time, stating that they had set a deadline for October 10th on pledges for Stringer’s Ridge and were asking the City for \$500,000—that they were putting in \$2 million.

Mayor Littlefield stated that this was a good deal.

Councilman Page asked if they were depending on the City’s part by this date? Mr. Wood stated that they were working on a Lease Purchase Agreement and would like the City to pass a Resolution of Support.

Mayor Littlefield stated that the City had found \$150,000 and could commit to the rest.

Mr. Wood stated that they needed the City of Chattanooga involved.

Councilwoman Robinson stated that we would be saving the best part of our community, where people live, work, and play.

Mr. Zehnder stated that a Resolution would be coming before the Council in a few weeks, and he wanted to make sure the Council was aware of this.

Councilman Benson wanted to know if we would be asking the County to match the funding? He stated that he could not vote for this unless the County is asked to match.

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.