

Welles Park Advisory Council
May 10, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Call to Meeting at 7:00 pm by Aaron Durnbaugh

(Meeting conducted via Zoom due to COVID-19 concerns and restrictions)

Roll Call Aaron Durnbaugh (WPAC President), Bethany Simmons (WPAC Vice President), Adrienne Roe (WPAC Secretary), Sarah Dandelles (WPAC Treasurer), Becky Kliber (Welles Supervisor), Bill Bergfalk (Welles employee), Sherry Skalko, Coral Negron, Sue Smock-Lawson, Scott Michaels, Gene Schulter, Rosemary Schulter, Dan Boszhardt, Emily Holdway (WPPA), Sheila Garg, Julie Ericson, Colin Challender, Mary Oellrich, Alex Hernandez (Block Club Chicago)

Introductions

Executive officers, PAC members, and first-time attendees each introduced themselves.

Meeting Minutes

Sarah gave a spelling correction and asked for clarification about the stones requested by Scott for the Gazebo. Bethany will make these corrections to minutes.

Minutes from March 9, 2021 were approved.

Treasurer Report – Sarah

Sarah presented the current financial report. Our balance is currently \$54, 922.22 and only one check for reimbursement was made since our last meeting. The reimbursement was for our WordPress fee and the purchase of stamps.

There was also a reminder to everyone that we have blank cards to use for Thank You notes, etc. Becky has many in her office and Bill has some in the art room as well, should we need any.

Park Report – Becky

Becky offered several park updates:

1. Summer registration begins tomorrow, May 11 online. There are more programs this year but there are still a lower number of participants allowed than usual. This year Welles will have 75 campers and usually there are 350.
2. The pool will be closed this summer due to a shortage of lifeguards nationwide. It will most likely close June 24th. Beaches are the first priority for hiring lifeguards, then outside pools, then inside.
3. Email from Chicago Park District informing us that we may now hold outdoor PAC meetings. However, we are still required to provide a way for people to participate if not comfortable or able to meet in person. This may be tricky outside.

- Gene offered that his foundation could fund a meeting being held in the Dankhaus should indoor meetings be allowed by our next meeting in July.
- Many meeting attendees showed interest in meeting in person if we find a way to do so.

Committee Reports

Greening Committee- Sue

There were two workdays to add mulch to the NaturePlace. Sue thanked all those that were able to help, especially the volunteers that Jeanne Mervine of the Greening Committee was able to recruit.

Sigrid held two bird walks so far (the Mother's Day walk had to be cancelled due to rain). They saw a great variety of birds on the May 5th date. Additional dates in May include the 12th, 15th and 22nd.

It's Your Park Day will include the Loose Parts-A-Palooza this year, where we will prepare loose parts for the NaturePlace. Bethany will be leading the event. Here is the registration link: [Welles Park - It's Your Park Day + Pitch In for the Parks 2021 Registration, Multiple Dates | Eventbrite](#)

Pitch In For the Parks days will also be done monthly from 9am-11am, led by at least one member of the PAC/Greening Committee. Sue asked for a volunteer to lead June and Sarah offered to help. Aaron reminded everyone that there will be supplies at the field house to use for each day and Becky reminded us to wear our WPAC aprons. Bill will be at the park at 8:30am to let us in to get supplies.

- Pitch in for the Parks dates at Welles
 - o June 26 – Sarah
 - o July 24 – Bethany
 - o August 28– Jeanne
 - o September 25– Sherry and Adrienne
 - o October 23– Sherry

Bill and some Greening Committee members will be planting new plants in the large pot on Montrose and other pots. They hope to include natives and perennials where possible this year.

Bill is designing tributes to be added to two benches in honor of Trudie (Cubs theme) and Marcia (plant theme), two deceased WPAC members.

Greening hopes to purchase a new mud kitchen this is locally made. In addition, they hope to purchase two Gorilla Charts to help with workdays. Plants for pots will also be purchased. They requested up to \$2000 to make these purchases. Aaron moved to approve, Sarah seconds, motion approved.

Swim Team - Sherry

Sherry asked Becky about park district pools and Becky clarified that all Chicago Park District indoor pools will be closed this summer. She is not sure about the Fall yet.

Gazebo

Becky is planning on the park having 4 concerts this summer in July and August. If the current group restrictions remain, we will need to social distance and each concert will require 3 volunteers to help park staff with this effort. If the city group size increases to 500 then we won't need to social distance and we won't need volunteers.

Aaron mentioned that hopefully we will have a WPAC member at each concert this year.

Bill mentioned that the park was approached by Porchlight Theatre Chicago and that this could be one of the concerts. They received a \$500 donation toward their cost, so Welles would pay the remaining \$700. Becky explained that this is comparable to what she will pay other artists this year.

Gene suggested we look into the DePaul Orchestra as well.

So far the dates are tentatively:

- July 6
- July 20
- August 3 Porchlight Theatre
- August 10 Toddlers, Tunes and Turtles by the Chicago Park District

Old Business

Pickleball

- We were asked over a year ago by some community members about adding Pickleball courts due to so much interest.
- The PAC wrote a letter to the Park District to ask for a study to be done.
- The plan that developed was to update the horseshoe pit area to include Pickleball, horseshoe and bags. Becky has a tentative design.
- We had hoped that those that asked for the courts would help with fundraising for Pickleball and the WPAC could fundraise for the horseshoe and bag updates. If there is anyone that is passionate about Pickleball and wants to take on fundraising, we welcome their help, otherwise the project is on hold.
- Gene asked what the charge would be for the project. Becky did not have the details on hand, but she believed it was around \$50,000 for each half of the project, so \$100,000 total.
- Becky mentioned that she requested lines for Pickleball be painted on some of the tennis courts and she is waiting to hear when that will happen.

Baseball/Softball Field Lights Proposal

- Aaron reviewed what we did since the last meeting.
 - o We made a survey to receive community feedback.
 - o We helped lead a community meeting with the Alderman's office.
 - o We held a Special Meeting but decided to not take a vote on our position at that time.

- o We compiled the concerns brought to us by the community and sent a letter to the WPPA and Alderman – available at www.wellspark.org
- Becky also shared what she knows about the status of the proposal.
 - o Original proposal has basically been declined for lights on all the fields.
 - o A new proposal is being developed.
 - o Park District is looking into feasibility and logistics. They would have to bring in electrical.
 - o Park District wants a letter of commitment to foot the bill before they consider the proposal. They have allowed the WPPA to started to fundraise to see if they can make that commitment.
 - o The grant the WPPA is seeking does not guarantee approval by the park district.
 - o Still no support from Alderman as he awaits answers to questions as well.
- Aaron reminded everyone that the WPAC does not make the final decision, it is the Park District's decision – they take our input into consideration. Until we get an updated proposal and detailed answers, we won't take it up as a point of action as a PAC.
- Gene wanted us to know the history of this topic. As the former Alderman he helped WPPA expand and add fields and then they asked for lights at Welles. He wanted to keep a balance for the community and keep parking balanced for other cultural aspects. Welles is a unique environment and many other parks do not have lights. He feels lights will hurt the business community as there will be a surge for residential parking that will in turn hurt the local businesses. Gene thinks neighbors should get a chance to have a voice at meetings and suggested in person meetings in the summer. He offered that the Gene and Rosemary Schuler Foundation could pay for mailings.
- Sheila agreed that it has been difficult, and felt meetings were only led by WPPA. She feels the discussions have been biased and one sided. Aaron agreed that the first meeting was led by WPPA, but at the second meeting we tried to share the feedback we had received from the community and be neutral.
- Colin agreed with Gene and wanted to come to our meeting to share these views. He had not heard of WPAC before and is happy to be involved.
- Sherry suggested that Gene bring his points to the Alderman's office. Gene mentioned that the grant would be from the Chicago Cubs. Gene has met with Alderman Martin and emphasized that the Cubs will look for the Alderman's support for their grant.
- Sheila asked if the proposal not being approved yet is in the grant application. Becky responded that we do not know what the WPPA put in their grant.

- Emily explained that the WPPA was originally going to go to the Cubs for two separate funding amounts. Now they are only requesting one sum for 2 diamonds.
- Colin asked about who is paying for the lights maintenance. Aaron mentioned that the WPPA annually give funds to Welles each year and the idea is that costs would be folded into this gift.
- Dan thanked us for allowing a forum to find out any information about this topic.
- Adrienne asked people to spread the word about this topic and share opinions with the Alderman.
- Sarah pointed out that the park is a public space and is for anyone in the city to enjoy.

New Business

Membership - Aaron

- Our bylaws explain WPAC membership – www.wellespark.org
- Members Need to fill out an application annually through the Park District [Advisory Council Membership Application | Chicago Park District](#)
- To be a WPAC member in good standing and vote, you need to attend 50 percent of the meetings in the last year or two of the most recent meetings.
- Gene and Rose Schulter and Dan Boszhardt have turned in applications for membership and attended the last two meetings. At our next meeting they will be considered voting members.
- Emily will also be our representative from the WPPA for meetings.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:35pm.