PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE

DATE: **November 12, 2009**

CALLED TO ORDER: **5:09 p.m.**

ADJOURNED: **5:47 p.m.**

ATTENDANCE

Attending Members
Susie Day, Chair
Monroe Gray
Janice McHenry

Absent Members
Vernon Brown
Mike McQuillen
William Oliver
Mike Speedy

AGENDA

Update from Department of Parks and Recreation- Stuart Lowry, Director

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE

The Parks and Recreation Committee of the City-County Council met on Thursday, November 12, 2009. Chair Susie Day called the meeting to order at 5:09 p.m. with the following members present: Monroe Gray and Janice McHenry. Mike McQuillen, William Oliver, Mike Speedy and Vernon Brown were absent.

Stuart Lowry, Director, Department Parks and Recreation, thanked the council for coming to Watkins Park Family center. Mr. Lowry stated that Brightpoint wants to partner with Indy Parks to help one of the Key Family Centers, and Watkins Park Family Center was chosen. Mr. Lowry introduced Brandon Gillard, Watkins Park Family Center Manager. Mr. Lowery asked him to talk about what was done and how it has affected the community. Mr. Brandon Gillard stated that the biggest improvement was the gymnasium. He stated that they dusted, painted and wallpapered all the walls and they brought in electricians to fix the lifts for the basketball courts and the exhaust fans. Now everything in the gymnasium works. Mr. Gillard stated that they brightened up the auxiliary room, made it a nice green color, painted the fitness room orange and black and added fitness equipment that was stored in the basement. They are also in the process of getting estimates on repairs and may be purchasing some new equipment. Mr. Gillard stated that they also got new basketball courts and softball fields, and that the kitchen got a new double oven that will really help with the Thanksgiving dinner that they have every year where they serve dinners to sick and shut-in person or whomever needs it from on Thanksgiving Day 11-4. The computer lab has four slightly used computers with internet access. Mr. Lowry thanked Mr. Gillard for being patient, because many of the repairs have been on the list for a long time. Mr. Lowry stated that Brightpoint is committed to coming back and helping in the computer lab, he stated that all the ceiling tiles got replaced and new landscaping was done in the front of the building. He said that all the work was done within a week and they had a really big turnout from Brightpoint. They are very proud of the partnerships and the upgrades.

Mr. Lowry introduced Ashley Richards who is in charge of the 106 neighborhood parks. Ms. Richards is helping with gathering data and doing inspections on what the neighborhood parks are in need of, particularly looking at mulching and safety issues with playground equipment. Ms. Richards stated that they are really excited about this because a lot of the neighborhood parks are like people's back yards and a lot of the equipment needs to be replaced…Ms. Richards showed some pictures of some new playground whirls that they are interested in putting in parks because a lot of the whirls that they have in the parks are dangerous. Mr. Lowry stated that they are taking the whirls out of the parks for safety issues and have spoken of getting new tile for the playgrounds, like the ones at Rhodius Park.

Mr. Lowry introduced Cheryl Newsom,Senior Manager at Thatcher Park. Ms. Newsom spoke about the $600,000 in renovations to improve and repair Thatcher Park. Ms. Newsom stated that they are replacing the revolving garage doors, adding a climbing wall for pools, painting, renovating the bathrooms and adding new office/changing areas. They spoke of having to close the center down during renovations because of safety issues but they moved a lot of the classes to Krannert Family Center. Ms. Newsom stated that Thatcher Park Family Center should be open by January, after some much needed renovations.

Mr. Lowry said the parks department has created teams to work together on programs. Mr. Lowry introduced the staff of Garfield Park, Tom Weidenbach and Lynda Burrello. Ms. Burrello spoke about the importance of the teams, and how they have come up with some outstanding programs. Mr. Weidenbach spoke of the plans that they have for the future and showed a presentation of some of the programs that they have had recently. Linda and Tom spoke of Christmas at Garfield with Santa and Mrs. Claus in attendance and even the chance to make toys with Santa elves. December 12th 11am to 1pm.

Mr. Lowery introduced Paula Freund, Public Information Officer (DPW). Ms. Freund said that a forum was held on October 22nd and was sponsored by the Indianapolis Star and Friends of Holliday Park.(Information from the forum is attached as exhibit A) Ms. Freund stated that at the forum they talked about volunteer advocacy, and the public had questions regarding how to get involved with their parks. The main reason the forum was held is because Indy Star chose to do year-long campaign on Indy Parks and the parks system. Due to the publicity, a lot of people came out to the forum. The two main goals for the forum were to engage the public and to place awareness on how people can get involved with their parks. At the forum, they also discussed programming, maintenance and capital. Ms. Freund stated that there are additional comments, questions and spreadsheets on www.indyparks.org. She said they are looking to plan another forum for late January, 2010.
Councillor Gray referenced on (exhibit A) that stated that there was "upset regarding Monon Trail and Kroger." Councillor Gray asked what some of the concerns were and who made the comments.
Cathy Marx, Indy Parks Senior Manager Sports, stated that the comment came from the public, but she is not aware of the specifics. Councillor Gray stated that he would be interested in hearing and seeing the results and solutions of the forums.

Mr. Lowry introduced Mike Moore with Brightpoint, who was very instrumental in getting the renovations organized. Mr. Moore stated that every year, Brightpoint reaches out to the community and non-profit organizations to help. This year, as part of their Brightgreen commitment, they wanted to reach out to a park to see if they could do something from an environmental standpoint. After viewing

several parks and given the limited budget, Mr. Moore felt that Watkins Park was the right size park to persue. Indy Parks and Brightpoint formed a partnership to create a project plan on what could and could not do be done, then reached out to vendor partners that serviced Brightpoint to create an approach to this project with the help of those partners, Mr. Moores's $75,000. budget turned into an estimate of over $120,000. worth of improvements to Watkins Park.

Mr Moore recognized the leadership of Stuart and Brandon with a plaque from Brightpoint for their tremendous leadership, creativity and dedication to the Brightpoint value of community project.
Mr. Moore concluded that Brightpoint feels that they put on the best week of caring, but that they need to take it to the next level. He said that they appreciate the relationship that they have with Indy Parks and in January, they will start a mentoring program at Watkins Park for the kids and their parents.

Mr. Lowry stated that he is glad that Brightpoint helped Indy Parks get their house in order and that they are staying a part of the family.
Councillor McHenry thanked Mr. Lowry, Brightpoint and all the volunteers for their work.
Ruth Hayes, Nora Northside Community Council congratulated Watkins Park Family Center on the beautiful improvements. Ms Hayes asked Mr. Lowry for help in expediting a request that they made to receive all the records regarding the Monon Trails consent purchase and agreement. She stated that it has been four months and they still have not received it. Mr. Lowry agreed to check on it.

There being no further business, and upon motion duly made, the meeting was adjourned at 5:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Susie Day, Chair
Parks and Recreation Committee

SD/kln

Exhibit A

Community Forum on Indianapolis' Parks

Co-sponsored by The Indianapolis Star and Friends of Holliday Park

Oct. 22, 2009

About 100 people attended and participated in the first Community Forum on Indianapolis' Parks, part of a yearlong Indianapolis Star Editorial campaign to promote and increase awareness of Indy Parks & Recreation.

Co-sponsored by The Indianapolis Star and the Friends of Holliday Park, the Oct. 22, 2009, the Community Forum was hosted by Holliday Park Nature Center, 6363 Spring Mill Road. The public was invited to learn more about Indy Parks & Recreation and give input on the parks system. After a brief introduction by Indy Parks Director Stuart Lowry about Indy Parks and the evening's structure, participants departed the large auditorium setting for smaller breakout sessions covering a variety of topics. The topics included the value of parks, education/outreach, advocacy, park amenities, park issues and revenue.

Through the breakout sessions, all participants had the opportunity to express how they value their city parks, share their thoughts on the parks system, and advise on how we might work together to discuss pressing issues for Indy Parks and find solutions. The 90-minute forum concluded with a Q&A session with Directory Lowry assisted by parks staff and moderated by Indianapolis Star Editorial Page Editor Tim Swarens.

Visit www.indyparks.org for a complete list of questions and comments offered by participants during the first Community Forum on Indianapolis' Parks, which was free and open to the public.

The forum succeeded in jumpstarting a continuing conversation between Indianapolis residents and Indy Parks & Recreation on finding the best ways to support a world-class parks system. The next Community Forum on Indianapolis' Parks is being planned for January 2010.

Community Forum on Indy Parks

Hosted by Paula Freund Compiled by Jean Deeds

The Value of Parks, breakout session October 22, 2009

Jeff Miller: There has never been a political champion for parks throughout the past four city administrations. No one puts parks up there as a top priority. Staff is overworked, underpaid, underappreciated.

Indy Parks is Indy's best idea. We must resist the pressures on the department. How can Indy spend $6M on the stadium but the dollars aren't available for parks. More people use the parks system each year than attend games at all the pro sports stadiums combined.

Mary Ann Reugger: Lives in Arden, near Holliday Park. Arden is "in the heart of the parks." Her daughter is going to school near JTV Hill, MLK Park, the Monon. Parks are such a wonderful resource for children. Need more partnerships between/ parks and schools; kids are users and need to also give back—do maintenance, etc. Parks provide stress relief—just driving by them.

Kids need to appreciate the outdoors.

Dana Williams, IPS teacher. Takes her students to Garfield twice/week. The school goes to Garfield once/year to clean up the park. Her school kids use Garfield after school, in the summer. A wonderful resource.

At Peace Learning Center at Eagle Creek Park, staff sees kids who have never seen a deer or raccoon. The park introduces them to nature.

Church groups need to help with maintenance.

Parks provide a venue for wild flowers, bugs, water, snakes. This lady has a sense of awe at what you can see in a city park. Nature is right here in the city.

Notes from Team 2
Education/Outreach

Hosted by Jenny Evans Compiled by Allen Wente

Oct. 22, 2009

- Representatives from Indiana Native Plant and Wildlife spend a lot of volunteer hours removing invasive species and planting native species and wildflowers. They would like:
    - More volunteer opportunities in the parks, know when plantings are planned in different parks.
    - Make a calendar on the web or in a newsletter that can be accessed by the club and distributed to its members regarding upcoming volunteer opportunities.
    - Partner with the INPaW, they have a speakers bureau that will come and present at different programs/events
- Some group members expressed disappointment in the current Indy Parks Website
    - Cannot look up what to do on a particular day throughout the system. i,e: it is a beautiful day outside and the family wants to get out, but the only way to find different activities in the parks in open the huge Fun Guide .pdf.
    - No Maps on our website to tell individuals what parks are close to them
    - Not a system website, you have to know what park you want to look at, and most park sites are generic and not a whole lot of information about what is happening in their park.
- A concern was brought forth that the phone numbers to our parks are not listed in the phone book.
- Printed media
    - People would like to see the fun guide in more places like coffee houses
    - The distribution cycle for the fun guide throws some parents off, because each book covers a different number of months. Suggestion is to put the availability of the next fun guide in several places throughout the current fun guide
    - People that use a particular park expressed interest in the Fun Guide supplements that several parks make. Easier to find the information then having to go through the entire fun guide, easier to keep with them too (Purse, binder).
- Other Suggestions
    - Hook up with other list servers/publications, i.e. Sustain Indy, Indy Child
    - More outreach at Farmers Markets
    - Reach out to Homeschool groups
    - People will be more committed to our programs if they actually pay a small fee vs. being free.
    - People like it when there is a family price for a program, vs. per person, when possible, as schedules always change.
    - Highlight our bargains

Notes from Advocacy group break out session

Hosted by Ashley Street Compiled by Allen McClendon

Oct. 22, 2009

This group engaged participants in dialogue and workshop exercises.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Indy Parks should make recreation centers available free of charge for meetings etc., to generate public interest in specific parks.

Indy Parks should engage more Boys and Girls Scout troupes to become involved in the parks.

Indy Parks should engage the public through more park-specific neighborhood clubs such as a gardening club.

Indy Parks should partner with community high schools to see how the vocational programs could help contribute to Indy Parks' capital needs.

Indy Parks should do a better job soliciting ideas and opinions from the public.

Indy Parks should invest in more signage to make the public aware of forums, projects, and events within the parks.

Park Amenities – Team 4

Hosted by Andre Denman Compiled by Leslie Power

What do you want in your park?

Programming, Maintenance, Capital

1) What programs are you aware of now and what would you like to see?
2) How often do you see activity in your park?
3) Envision a perfect park, what does it have?
4) What do you think are the top maintenance needs of parks?
5) What organizations in your neighborhood could help with programs in parks?

Capital

- Fix the Conservatory in Garfield Park – rebuild to historical structure (Indianapolis Historical Society)
- New Building SEW
- Restrooms parkwide with partners – neighborhood schools, churches, library
- Youth facility year-round programming
- Interconnected parks/neighborhoods with greenways and sidewalks
- No new projects until we maintain what we have
- Trails/Playgrounds draw people
- Upgrade playgrounds – redos and add new ones that lead to having Friends groups for each park
- Put dog litter bags near parking lots of parks

Programs

- Utilize students for education – high school, college, universities
- Pocket parks – security may be a concern – use as nature centers, wildflowers, etc.
- Youth programs
- Facility and programs all year round for youth
- Urban gardens – smaller parks, community involvement, partner
- Bring in outside groups but may cause insurance issues, liability
- Development of friends groups
- Friends groups can share information
- Seek grant funding
- Walking trails
- Bike rentals
- Increase variety of types of recreation i.e. futsal (indoor soccer)
- Winter programming – paint, music, fill void that schools do not provide

Maintenance

- Fixing roads and trails make parks safer
- Increase Forestry staff to take care of trees
- Invasive species
- Friends groups can help
- Discussion of the importance of cost, use and maintenance of sports fields
- Adding parks without adding money to maintain them
- Install , clean and maintain restrooms
- Fix barbed wire and gates off the trail at Eagle Creek Park

Park Issues – Team 5

Oct. 22, 2009

Hosted by Jeff Ward Compiled by Jenny Coffin

Indy Parks EE Administrator Jeff Ward: Please take a moment to think about your best park moment/experience.

- Love Holliday Park but too much activity at night
- Eagle Creek – wildlife
- Downtown landscaping and well-maintained playgrounds
- Diversity of parks – skate park, nature lovers, golf, but not enough parks/open spaces

Jeff: Average taxpayer = 7.8 cents per day = $31 per year per person

How does that compare to other cities? Columbus, OH, $50 per taxpayer; out west $100

Question: Do you have a long-term master plan for parks?

Jeff: Yes, on file; IDNR will revise in 2014.

Question: Does it rank plans and goals?

Jeff: Yes, and we say we want a certain acreage of land but we want to increase it even further. Think about passive vs. active use of land.

Question: Is the Comprehensive Plan funded?

Jeff: Master plans look at specific improvements for each park; the comp plan is the big picture/theoretical.

Suggestion: Do a better job of sticking to plans that are developed through public meetings. You have these meetings and then it never happens.

Question: Marott Park parking lot has broken glass and car break-ins. Why aren't these being investigated?

Jeff: Any crime that happens in a city can and will take place in a park. We try to educate the public and IMPD patrols the parks. Remember, we have 206 properties in 400 square miles.

Questions: Eagle Creek Park's trails and maintenance, nice dirt trail, now IPR is putting gravel down. It is difficult to walk or run on. We understand erosion and the need, but it is being put on trails everywhere. There are places that are supposed to be rustic. Don't over-maintain. Maintain the wild/rustic state. Can't please everyone every time. Soccer fields do not belong in Eagle Creek Park. No such thing as a perfect park. There needs to be parks for different purposes. The perfect park system should address everyone's needs, but not really have all at one park. City complains that no one recycles. Well then,

there should be recycling containers out in the parks. Or, signs that encourage park users to recycle their trash themselves.

Jeff: Indy Parks spends $1 million in mowing, and more than that in trash pickup.

Questions: Smoking in parks should not be allowed 100 yards within area of the playground, quality of life issue. I volunteer at Eagle Creek Park but we do not have good communication from Indy Parks on volunteer opportunities. The Web site is lacking information. There is no way to communicate needs on a large scale or a calendar.

Jeff: We need to use our volunteers. We have looked into a way to communicate better.

Questions: Security – Having a caretaker at the yacht club who lives on site has reduced crime 90 percent. You need to find some people who would live in a trailer to do security for a park. Mowing less – habitat restoration group looking at this issue.

Jeff: There is a generational gap with some citizens expecting all parks to be mowed and trimmed. We have already removed one acre out of every 11 from mowing.

Question: Conservation and Restoration – Opportunities to look at DPW projects to add green and sustainability issues in regards to CO2. Bring in goats or grazing animals to reduce emissions. Seems like all we've talked about are little issues and we need to get back to the topic. Focus on the core issues, not nitpicking.

Question: No one wants to talk about the park system. It is only "their" park that people are interested in.

Question: I moved here in 1984, did Boy Scouts, never heard about parks, never knew about Indy Parks.

Question: Web site is a letdown, can't find information.

Question: Can we get facility/amenity guides?

Question: Funding issues: What are we doing? Contact local groups and businesses. Signs, naming rights, small but limited.

Jeff: We are looking at strengthening our relationships and cultivating more partnerships – i.e. Bright Point, Citizens Energy, Home Depot.

CONCLUSION

Largest issues: Security, funding, more land, communication, pack in/pack out trash, how can we get political support for parks.

Community Forum on City of Indianapolis Parks System
October 22, 2009
Holliday Park

Revenue

Indy Parks reps: Elaine Dillahunt, Cathy Marx
Friends Group Rep: Mark Bowell (Friends of Garfield)

In our group representatives from the following groups participated: Eagle Creek, NESCO, Riverside, Holliday, IUPUI, Hawthorne, Crown Hill, Pike Township, Nora, Butler Tarkington, Clean Stream Team, Pogues Run

Comments:

- City resource allocations need to change from Sports (Pacers, Colts) to Parks, families and the poor- Priorities are skewed
- Parks Budget
- Increase revenue at grass roots
    - Parks gets reduced every year
    - Per capita spending low
    - Mayor needs to be part of equation
- These are our Parks. Gov't doing all they can do. These parks needs our help
- Upset regarding Monon Trail and Kroger
- Garfield Park "Raise Awareness, Raise Cain" It is a political matter
- Assets are in the Parks
    - Superbowl Legacy
    - Teen Summit (George Washington HS)
- State Conservation Corp
    - All Teen Project, trading labor in the Parks for access to the Parks

Fundraising

- Girl Scout cookies idea
- Tom Geisse- holding meetings and utilizing the Foundation to be the keeper of the funds
  Carnivals, Grants, Charge kids more money to participate
- Professional Athletes "Adopt a Park" $ not asked, just name recognition, Park Clean Up

Awareness

- Park Advisory Boards- Master Plans- in conjunction with Mayors Office
- Meetings need to be held with the Neighborhood Districts. Give them ownership, even office space in the Parks building so they are more connected.
- On the Gas Bill, let there be an option where they can donate to Parks.
- At Polling Places, have an Indy Parks Booth
- Holliday Park, Latino groups utilize this park. They have an entire spread and the whole family is here at the park. Recognize groups that use the Parks
- Mt Bike Trail- This gentleman works on the trail, but it not on staff with DPR. He is an advocate though for the Mt. Bike Trail. It provides a service to the park that the park can't afford. Maintaining the trails.

Partnership

- Elaine explained Corporate Partners:
  - Brookside- Citizens Gas
  - Watkins – Bright Point
  - Ivy Tech- Lifeguard Scholarships, Improvements to Barton Park
- Holliday Park good example,
  - Grass roots $ = Public Private Partnerships
  - Lilly = Greenways
  - DPR is not selling property = Privatization
  - Louisville good example
  - Funding is a challenge

    Selling bricks, grants, Homecoming Dance for Garfield Park, "GAPS" Program