

CITY OF TRENTON

Parks and Recreation Board Meeting

MINUTES

MEETING PLACE: CIVIC HALL - 11 EAST STATE STREET

October 10, 2023 – 6:00 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Hill called to order the regular meeting of the City of Trenton Parks & Recreation Board at 6:01 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Recited

ROLL CALL

Mr. Leichman conducted the roll call. The following people were present: Mr. Hill, Ms. Hale, Mr. Perry, Ms. Smith, Mr. Melloh, Ms. Osuna, Mr. Croucher.

The alternates in attendance this evening were Mr. Nichols and Ms. Paulson. Ms. Lucas had an excused absence.

PRESENTATIONS

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion to approve the minutes from the September 12, 2023, Regular Parks Board meeting was made by Mr. Perry and seconded by Mr. Croucher. All were in favor. Motion passed.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Discussion of a Memorial for Local Veterans.

Mr. Hill recognized Councilman Agee, 812 Barrington Court, was in the audience this evening to discuss the possibility of constructing a memorial for our local veterans. Mr. Agee stated that he had discussions with Vice Mayor Perry regarding the fact that Trenton currently does not have a memorial for our veterans. It was decided to bring this to the Parks Board for their ideas and consideration. He stated that the city had set aside \$150K from the ARPA funds, as a place holder for this project. Mr. Agee stated that while he thought this was a large amount of money, he believes we can come up with a project that would fit within this budget. Mr. Agee stated that while we have beautiful parks in place, he would like to see this placed in a highly visible location for all to see. He mentioned he would like to see the Fire and Police Departments included in this memorial as they also put their lives on the line daily. He stated that we need to decide on the location and cost of the memorial, but he also wanted this project to be completed as expeditiously as possible.

Mr. Hill opened the discussion to the board.

Mr. Croucher stated it should not be placed in the roundabout as people could drive over it. He stated it should be placed in a safe and secure location. He stated where we can place it so that it can be seen and remain safe. Mr. Croucher stated he thought Founders Park would be a good location for it rather than Community Park.

Ms. Osuna asked about the vacant lot on East State Street in the downtown area.

Mr. Melloh commented that he thought this lot had a waiting period in place on it and we should check into this. Ms. Hale agreed with Mr. Agee's comments and thought we needed this as well. She agreed including our First Responders as well.

Ms. Osuna mentioned that Fairfield Township had an amazing Veterans Memorial that we should check out.

Mr. Perry stated that he thought the council's intent was to sell the vacant property on East State for development of the downtown, but he didn't believe a memorial was off the table.

Ms. Hale asked Mr. Leichman to reiterate what the expectation of the Parks Board was as far as contributing. Is it just ideas or making a recommendation to council that we proceed? What exactly is out charge?

Mr. Leichman read the email request from Mr. Mesisklis. The email stated that "Councilman Agee brought up an idea that was echoed by the remainder of Council, that Trenton should have a memorial of some sort to local veterans. Although city staff could coordinate such a project, you all are the residents who have grown up in and know the community. Therefore, being entrusted with the programming and enhancement of city parks, we would like to empower this board to brainstorm and issue direction as to the type and specifics of the memorial. There are several Veterans' parks in the surrounding area that the board may draw inspiration from."

Mr. Hill asked about the funding for this project. He wanted to know if these these funds were specifically earmarked by the city for this project. Mr. Leichman stated that they were. He stated that our Finance Director, Mathew Mesisklis had stated that this was a capital item purchase from the ARPA funds and had set aside \$150,000 for this Memorial project.

Mr. Hill wanted to mention that this project was not even mentioned in the 2050 parks master plan as a priority. As such, he wanted the public to understand that we weren't taking away from the recommended priorities for each park but rather this was an additional stand-alone project that was being added and had its' own separate funding mechanism.

Mr. Hill stated that he had a local Veteran reach out to him and specifically ask that we do not place the memorial in Founders Park as it was too hilly for them to climb as they were disabled. Mr. Hill suggested we consider the accessibility of the memorial as a factor.

Mr. Hill stated that he didn't think a final decision on this could be made this evening. The board would need time to consider all its' options.

Mr. Croucher asked Mr. Leichman for his opinion on where it should be placed regarding accessibility to water, electricity, etc. and where it should go. Mr. Leichman suggested the board first look at the current parks master plan for each of its' parks and see what has been recommended be placed in each one and build upon those ideas.

Ms. Hale stated that she personally was not ready to make the decision on what it should look like and where it should go. She stated that if we are charged with being good stewards of the city's funds, it should take time and consideration.

Councilman Agee, 812 Barrington Court, spoke to the board from the audience and asked if the vacant land in the downtown area that the city currently owns could be utilized.

Ms. Hale asked the board if they knew of any additional properties that the city owned that could be utilized.

Mr. Leichman advised of the lots, just East of Whitey's Tavern on East State St. that were recently purchased, between Burke and Third Streets. He stated he believes these homes were scheduled to be demolished this year and would leave some visible vacant ground in this area.

Mr. Perry suggested, with the council's blessing, we make the vacant land across from First Financial Bank, a Veterans Park. We could place a Veterans Memorial in it, along with space in the back for a Food Truck and smaller events.

Mr. Agee just wants to see this progress move forward.

Mr. Hill mentioned the possibility of acquiring a grant to match our funding. He stated we should do something nice as this would last 20-30 years. He suggested that Mr. Perry gather information on the vacant land so that the Parks Board would know what can or cannot be done with the property.

Mr. Melloh mentioned that he remembers a restriction on the land that requires this property remain vacant for a designated time to avoid reimbursable fees to the state.

Mr. Leichman displayed several photos of various memorials on the screens to the board for discussion.

Mr. Hill asked Mr. Perry to reach out to city manager Nichols to see if he would contact the folks who did the Parks master plan and see if they had design recommendations and pricing costs.

Ms. Smith stated local colleges may have architecture/design programs that might be willing to collaborate on this.

Mr. Hill asked how the board felt about gathering input from the general public.

Mr. Agee stated that personally he thought this would end up kicking it down the road even further. He believes the board should come up with a plan and move forward. Find out where you want to place it, what it costs, find out what fits in the budget and move forward. He stated some of these monuments are too large to be placed on

the vacant property. We may have to scale it down a bit. He stated, don't lose sight of the end goal and keep it moving.

Mr. Leichman suggested including veterans in this discussion. He stated that parking and accessibility are important. Water and electricity should not be a problem for any of these locations.

Mr. Perry suggested that rather than for a committee, he would rather put out an invitation to Veterans to attend a Parks Board meeting to voice their opinions.

Mr. Hill stated that the two action items are; Mr. Perry gather information for our next meeting and Mr. Leichman will make sure that the Veterans are invited to the next meeting via social media.

Ms. Osuna asked if we could utilize the digital reader board to advertise this as well.

REPORTS BY THE BOARD OR CITY ADMINISTRATORS

- Future Park Ideas – Matt Hill gave a handout to the board to look at. He stated that he wanted other board members to get an idea of what other communities are doing in their communities.
- Piano's – Emily Smith
Ms. Smith stated the piano project has been a success! All of the piano's are scheduled to be removed October 24. She will take an inventory of the existing piano's condition in order to place them again next year. She stated she will begin taking new piano donations again in the spring.
- Updates – Rob Leichman
Mr. Leichman advised the Board that the company that installed the Pour in Place surface for the new playground equipment in Community Park will be coming back in the Spring to replace the entire surface under the large piece of equipment. He also expressed his disappointment with the performance of the surface. The public will be notified of the closing of this equipment prior to commencing the work. Mr. Hill asked if we had discussed the completed removal of the surface, at their expense, to allow us to do mulch? Mr. Leichman stated that he did not ask them that exact question. He stated he expected the surface to perform better than it has so far.
Mr. Leichman wanted to express how much he was looking forward to participating with the Veterans Memorial.
- Fall Fest – Mr. Hill read a statement from Sharon Leichman.
Wow! A lot of positive comments and feedback. The band Southerland's road manager stated that they have never had a photo autograph line that long!
She is very grateful to the Parks Board and her boss, City Manager Nichols, for giving her the autonomy and support to bring the best events we can to our residents. Thank you to Mandy Lee and the amazing ladies from Molson Coors who handle our beverages and the beverage stations. A special shout out to the volunteers and Public Works who show up with a get it done attitude.
The Christmas Tree Lighting, scheduled for November 25th from 5:30 PM to 7:00 PM. We will have a Santa Sleigh that we are requesting be filled with local Toys for Tots. There will be hot beverages and cookies from State Street Coffee again this year. Goody bags for the kids! We are super excited to kick this event off for the Christmas season!
Mr. Hill thanked everyone for their support and help!
- Mr. Agee stated that he would prefer to have a larger Christmas tree this year. Mr. Hill advised it would be larger.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

November 14, 2023, at 6:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Perry and seconded by Mr. Melloh. All were in favor.

Mr. Hill adjourned the meeting at 7:17 p.m.