

URBAN COUNTY COUNCIL

SPECIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE SUMMARY

April 21, 2009

The Planning Committee was convened at 9:02 AM. All committee members were present with the exception of Vice Mayor, Gray.

I. Parks Master Plan - Stinnett

Jerry Hancock, Director Parks & Recreation presented highlights and recommendations from the Parks Master Plan. He told the committee about recommendations in programming assessments such as core services, need for more participation in leagues, health & wellness programs among others. He covered the budget analysis, which revealed LFUCG Parks is behind the nation's average of 34% for cost recovery. He gave a few examples of development recommendations such as large community parks, downtown parks, community centers, indoor facilities and golf courses. Hancock said there is a need to have conversations about a number of specific issues in the plan, but is asking the council to look at the master plan as a body of work.

CM Gorton asked for questions and opened the floor to discussion:

CM James asked about accreditation and requirement for legislative approval of the master plan, stating she was not sure about council's role. She wanted to know the history behind bringing parks master plan before council. She talked about budgeting for parks using a 10 year master plan, and how to accommodate for changing needs of the public. She asked if an adopted plan is binding over time and for councils in the future. She was not clear on why we adopt a master plan stating she would like to see a flow chart spelling out the council's role. James remarked about marketing and advertising and encouraged finding creative ways to increase favorability of certain programs.

Hancock replied saying accreditation does require approval of a master plan with respect to budgeting. However, the master plan is more of a catalog and set of guidelines used to manage themselves. Hancock said he did not know how the process of presenting a master plan to council began. Hancock acknowledged over time needs do change and asked for assistance with finding ways to move forward and implement the plan. He said the master plan consists of totally new ideas, none of which have been implemented yet.

CM McChord talked about changes in the economy and shortfalls of meeting the criteria for the master plan. He mentioned issues he would like to see coming

forward from the plan, mentioned specifically Safe By Design Program. He added he did not feel parks received the priority it should and would like to see details on how they take in revenue.

CM Blues spoke about council responsibility regarding parks master plan and stated their main purpose is to look at funding and funding approval via the budget process, adding the main thing is to change the funding environment. He said government and the community need to look at ways to change and ways to find and promote funding.

Motion by CM James to establish an ad-hoc committee to work on economic and various funding mechanisms for parks and recreation, seconded by: CM Feigel passed without dissent.

Discussion on the motion:

CM Blues asked for more specific details on goals of the proposed ad – hoc committee and the anticipated report date.

CM James suggested a time line.

CM Beard asked what methods of funding would be explored and recommended if it involved questions about taxing, wouldn't it be more appropriate to refer the matter to the Budget & Finance Committee.

CM James said an ad- hoc committee would come back with specific recommendations that could eventually be referred to B&F.

CM Feigel stated the focus and function of the ad-hoc committee would be just on parks and promoting methods of funding.

CM Gorton asked Mr. Hancock about forming a committee to address several personnel recommendations included in the master plan.

Hancock said establishing a sub committee to address the administrative piece of the master plan would serve to gain a greater understanding of the plans goals. Commissioner Cole added, the budget could be reflective of the proposed changes and recommended presenting them to the General Services Link.

CM James asked Mr. Hancock if he sat down with other directors for ideas on the roll out of the master plan.

He replied he and other directors spent more time on the recommended personnel changes, vacancies, and filling retirement positions.

Motion by CM Blues asking the General Services Link to look at Parks & Recreation Master Plan's personnel and administrative recommendations for reorganization, seconded by CM McChord, passed without dissent.

Discussion:

CM Feigel asked if this budget currently included those recommendations and the answer was it did not.

CM James cautioned on the motion to insure any changes to personnel, cost of equipment or any cost associated with those changes are not added to the master plan.

Hancock stated the recommendations require eliminating some positions, re-classifying others, creating and funding new ones. He felt this could be an overall savings.

2. Hisle Park Master Plan - Stinnett

Jerry Hancock, Director of Parks & Recreation covered framework for designing a plan for the Hisle Farm property. He told the committee, public meetings were held to discuss potential use of the property. He presented a map of the property, which is 280 acres, located on Briar Hill Rd. and would serve the northeast corner of the county. He covered details of buildings located on the property and talked about desired features and design elements coming from the public input process, such as: preservation of farm character, trails, bird sanctuary, archery course, etc.

He said some public concerns were noise, lights, a railroad crossing, crowds and traffic congestion. He discussed three different use plans by section of the property, which included parking, trails, vegetation plan, public areas etc. He added feedback was not in favor of mixing horse and mountain biking. He talked about the equestrian trails being planned saying the first year of development would take care of fencing issues, replacing a bridge on the property, defining vegetation zones, adding public access, parking and renovating ponds at the farm's entrance.

CM Feigel asked about public restroom facilities since there is no sewer system there yet. She also asked about the railroad, and how, when the crossing is used.

Hancock replied there are railroad crossing issues to address, adding funds required to replace that crossing would be an estimated, additional cost of \$200K.

CM Stinnett asked for a copy of the presentation and about a financial package and estimated cost projections. He asked if this plan would be implemented all at once or in stages. He also asked if parking would be gravel or paved.

Hancock told the committee \$6.4 million is the estimate to develop the entire Hisle Farm property as a park. He predicts things like public access would be worked out first. Hancock said he thought parking surfaces would be paved to accommodate ADA. He added there will also be parking for RV's & campers.

CM Blues said he'd been thinking about how we would pay for this. He said we need to look at the idea of reviving a dedicated tax for parks. He asked Hancock about the possibility of looking into having such a tax.

Hancock agreed saying the way we are doing things is a bit outdated, spending is approx. \$10-\$15 million and still have lots to do. He said we need to ask citizens if they are willing to get behind a tax or ways to fund parks.

CM Beard asked about various park programs planned for Hisle and what the need for staff looked like.

Hancock said a director will be needed but seasonal staff is all that is planned for now. He said he did not have a specific answer at this time regarding the need for permanent staff.

CM James asked if other entities have been approached about investing capital or has he asked for any outside help with funding. She recommended and encouraged conversation with others to participate. She asked if any of the parking was off-site and wanted to know the total parking spaces. She wanted to know how the plan insured how many parking spaces were adequate, and mentioned an ordinance against parking on grass.

Hancock said there is no off-site parking per say. There are 45 parking spaces and another 30 for RV, campers. Hancock said the number of parking spaces was determined by the consultants and he could not speak to the criteria used. However, he is comfortable with the numbers given.

Hancock told the committee operating cost would not be ready to discuss until 2011 and when asked about a business plan and sustainability, he said there are no plans at this point to charge admission. However, he added he does not believe the park will pay for itself due to the nature of its use. He was also asked for a list of how much it will actually cost and responded it will take time and might be available by next budget year.

McChord said there should be discussion with citizens concerned with preservation of farmland and suggested their involvement.

CM Ellinger wanted to know if any funds were in this year's budget to get started on this park project and expressed concern about future potential financial impact.

Motion by CM Ellinger to accept in concept the Hisle Park Master Plan, seconded by CM Beard, passed without dissent.

Discussion on the motion:

CM Feigel mentioned the need for flat park land for athletic fields and wanted to know if it might be possible to move activities from other parks to this park in an attempt to free up flat land.

Hancock replied he did not think that was possible.

CM Blues asked for clarification of Ellinger's motion and what it entails and was told the motion is to send it to the full council for review.

Hancock explained he would be asking for approval of council as a whole and would interpret it as intention to proceed with plans.

CM James asked how he would address questions about the need to fund this park when other parks are also in need of funding.

Hancock replied much of the \$100 million need identified in the last parks master plan is still there and getting bigger all the time. He said he does not think we should stop growing and feels Hisle development is not taking funds away from other parks, since the property was given as a donation.

CM Gorton asked about the bridle tax and if the equestrian community responded.

Hancock said he would like to see council give Parks & Recreation authority to pursue opportunities for funding, adding he did not want to focus on the bridle tax just yet.

CM Gorton asked about council having the authority to put a parks referendum on the ballot.

CM Stinnett responded he thought council does have that authority, adding they might need to seek a legal opinion for clarification.

CM McChord commented he looked forward to CM Stinnett bringing information back to council regarding a tax referendum for parks. He added we need to start looking at real priorities instead of increasing taxes.

3. Items Referred to Committee

This agenda item was not addressed at today's meeting due to lack of time.

Motion to adjourn by CM Blues, seconded by CM Beard, meeting adjourned at 10:59 am.