



Park District of Oak Park

Maple Park - 4th Community Meeting Carroll Center - 1125 S. Kenilworth Oak Park, Illinois Monday, September 10, 2007 at 7:30pm

Minutes

The meeting began at 7:35pm

Executive Director Gary Balling introduced John MacManus and Josephine Bellalta with Altamanu; Kara Gillespie with Terra Engineering; Mike Grandy, Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds; Yanie Myvett, Business Operations Assistant; Diane Stanke, Manager of Communications; Mark Gartland, Park Board President; Christine Graves, Commissioner; Lise Valentine, Commissioner; and Jessica Bullock, Commissioner.

Gary noted the dates of the Focus Groups and Community Meetings that have been held:

- Three Focus Groups in mid-June to collect information on safety and security, buildings and grounds, passive space, sports and creative play. One of which was with Park District Staff.
- Community Meeting #1 – June 18, 2007 to gather information regarding the current and future use of Maple Park.
- Community Meeting #2 – July 16, 2007 to collect additional community input.
- Community Meeting #3 – August 6, 2007 to present park concepts.

Mark Gartland, Park Board President, introduced himself, Commissioners Graves and Valentine. He noted that Commissioners Bracco and Bullock could not attend the meeting (Commissioner Bullock arrived later in the meeting). Mark discussed his background as an Oak Park resident with his family. He stated that the local park for his family would be Stevenson Park, but they use Maple Park extensively. Mark stated that the Parks are for everyone in the neighborhood. He explained that during the Dogs in Oak Park Planning process three locations were sited for dog parks – Taylor, Ridgeland Common, and Maple, with Maple Park being slated for construction in 2009. Mark commented that the Park Board is very accessible through their Park District emails and Park District phone numbers. Mark stated that he and other Board members had received inappropriate calls at their homes late on Friday evening. He stated that the Board responds to messages within 24-48 hours as much as possible.

John MacManus reviewed and discussed the draft consensus plan. Items discussed included:

- existing conditions of Maple Park
- Village to handle parking issues
- Interconnecting meadows
- Continuous chain of trees
- Continuous pathway around park (.7 miles total distance)
- Male Ginko trees to be planted along Harlem and eventually a fence
- Raised tables for safety to slow traffic at Harvard & Fillmore
- Tennis courts moved to south end of park by gas station to open up park
- Contentious issue regarding dog park
- Reviewed “Dogs In Oak Park Plan” recommendation at Maple Park
 - Originally in middle of park
 - Last meeting resident recommended corner of Harlem & Lexington

- Pushed along Harlem & widened at Maple end (13,800 sq.ft. / .31 acres / 4.4% of park)
- To create separation trees were added, new mound added to current one
- No pathway near dog park – suspect a desire line will develop
- Dog park about 126' to first house on Maple (1000 S. Maple) from eastern fence of dog park
- Dog park would be ADA accessible, double gated, water provided, trees protected
- Playground well loved
 - Current playground is not ADA accessible
 - More light, thin bushes
 - New playground to be moved away from Harlem
 - Closer to restrooms and Maple
 - Youth climbing system between ball fields
- Expand and clean up restrooms
- Improve baseball diamonds
- Existing tennis courts –are in bad shape and need to be torn up to fix lights.
- New location for tennis courts at south end of park
 - Plan shows an open space between tennis court and fence at south end of park to save tree.
 - One large mulberry would cause mess on court when fruit drops
 - Open space could cause safety concerns
 - Two courts instead of three at new location
 - District to talk to Police, Risk Management, and Village to assess risk of open space.
 - New courts will be well lit, sound dampening on Harlem at gas station.
- Harlem side entrances moved – off set from Fillmore & Harvard

Gary discussed phasing of Maple Park Project. (*Phasing is tentative and more planning needs to be done*)

Items included:

- Applying for OSLAD grant July 2008
- \$425,000 set aside for Phase 1
- \$50,000 set aside for dog park
- Portions of project slated to begin 2009
 - Move tennis courts to south end of park
 - Remove existing tennis courts and concrete pads
 - Landscape area where courts and pads removed
 - Portion of connecting pathway
 - Dog park
 - Plant additional trees
 - Fencing at south end of park
- If Park District receives OSLAD grant items to begin in 2009 include:
 - T-ball fields
 - Finishing connecting pathway
 - Youth climbing system between ball diamonds
 - Additional trees
- If grant is not received, the four items listed above would become Phase 2 and would be done when funding is available.
- Phase 3 items would include:
 - Moving the playground away from Harlem when funding is available
 - Fencing along Harlem – possible IDOT grant (longer term)

Gary and Mike Grandy discussed the tree situation and Maple Park

- 216 existing trees
- 158 new trees to be added

- 20-21 trees in Maple Park are in poor condition and will go within the next 2 years
- Damaged/diseased trees will be replaced with native trees with the exception of the male Ginkos
- Al Davis put in a lot of fast growing trees in 1980 and they die fast
- Some existing pines have been damaged by someone cutting off the top
- A Mulberry is coming out at the North end of the park

Public Comment

Virginia Shorey, 1040 S. Maple, stated that a dog park is a dumping place for animal waste. She knows people who live near dog parks. She stated that Maple is in a very residential area and the park is too small for dogs. Ms. Shorey commented that dog owners don't follow rules now. She is concerned that the dog park will attract more dogs and become dump for dog waste. Maple Park is for children to play in the area, volleyball and soccer, kids to roll around in the grass. Having a dog park would be unsanitary. She commented that Chicago horses have "poop bags". She stated that she is not against dogs, just not here.

Frank Villari, 1104 S. Maple, stated he has lived in Oak Park for 48 years. Commented he has had good vibrations in Maple Park except for 10 years ago with the basketball issue that has since been cleared up. He stated that he believes money would be better spent if the tennis courts, playground, and pathway were revamped. He stated that the dog park was not is favorite thing. He questioned how it would be maintained and monitored. He commented that the plan as a whole was a great plan but he is not interested in dog park.

Barbara Kulatowsky, 800 Woodbine, thanked the Park District for extensive, thorough and transparent planning process with Maple Park. She stated that the design was great and user-friendly. She stated that she uses the Parks sporadically to walk dogs for exercise and to socialize with the community. She commented that the existing Maple Park is not great for walking because there are no paths. She stated that she understands the concern of waste and smell that can come with dog parks. Ms. Kulatowsky suggested taking a tour of the temporary dog park at Ridgeland Common. She explained that it is clean and wrong doers are corrected when they do not clean up their dog waste. She stated she was appalled at the incident Mark relayed.

Sarah Skinner, 1034 S. Maple, stated she was a dog owner who is opposed to the dog park in a residential area. She stated that people should not be awakened by noise in the early morning from people talking, and slamming car doors at Maple or Taylor Park. She explained that a dog park at Ridgeland Common would be good because it is not near people. She stated she is not worried about dogs, but people. She commented that she was sorry about what happened to Mark.

Norb Teclaw, 1101 Wisconson, stated he had spoke with Dick McKinlay as a supporter of the dog park. He was provided dog park statistics. Mr. Teclaw stated that he went to the Ridgeland Common temporary dog park and there were puddles of water and dog poop bag hanging on fence. He explained that he spoke with a new resident from Rogers Park who stated she didn't think she'd bring her dog to the dog park because of the smell and cleanliness. He stated that these conditions were not in the style of Oak Park. Mr. Teclaw stated that unless the dog park is kept up to Oak Park standards there should not be one. He stated that his granddaughter is on drill team and has to walk around dog waste on the Ridgeland Common field. He commented that the dog park must be appropriate or there is no place for it here.

Dick McKinlay, 1020 N. Euclid, FOOPD member, stated he agreed with Norb Teclaw that the Ridgeland Common temporary dog park is not what is should be. He noted that it was not designed by Altamanu. FOOPD wants dog parks that benefit community. He explained that this amenity is for responsible dog owners. He explained that there are guidelines to be followed to use the dog

parks (i.e. registered, current vaccinations, healthy dogs, \$39 fee). Mr. McKinlay stated that FOOPD and Park District staff will maintain parks. He explained that the parks are for all Oak Park residents. He stated that Maple Park is ideally suited for a dog park. He explained that the dog park hours could be controlled and maintained.

Mike Farley, 825 Woodbine, Director of FOOPD, thanked Gary Balling, Park District staff, and the Park Board for the process on all parks and the dog park process last year. He explained that dog parks should be geographically balanced. He stated that the temporary dog park was to be built immediately in Maple Park, but was never done. It was to be held off until Maple planning process. He stated this was the right thing to do – a better use of taxes. He stated that this resulted in an ideal plan that turned out okay. Mr. Farley explained that a dog park is important for big dogs for exercise.

Lynn Thomas (on behalf of Heidi Spoor), 1145 Wisconsin, stated she was concerned with the relocation of the tennis courts and losing one court.

Carolyn Righheimer, 1039 N. Marion, stated that she supports the dog park. She commented that dog parks help develop better socialized animals, better for all, especially kids. She thanked Altamanu, Park District and Board for a great plan and for putting up with the community. She stated that the incident with the Park Board member was unconscionable.

Bob Egan, 823 S. Taylor, stated he liked the plan as presented other than the dog park. He stated that he has been a T-ball coach and is a parent. He commented that he was concerned about losing one tennis court but was willing to give it up for all the new amenities. He stated that he enjoys the temporary dog park at Ridgeland Common. He thanked all for plan.

Pam Stringer, 1010 S. Maple, stated that she would like to clear up neighbors misconception that if there is a dog park, dogs would not be allowed in the rest of the park. She explained that this was not true. She stated that noise was a concern and she fought for 10 years with Mohr regarding early morning noise. She explained that she was worried about people coming very early in the morning making noise and she doesn't think this has been addressed. Ms. Stringer stated that a dog park belongs in an area that is non-residential. She commented that the plan otherwise is lovely and looking forward to the changes.

Bill McClung, 622 Woodbine, stated he was in favor of the dog park as an owner of two dogs. He stated is a Director of FOOPD and owner of K9 Cookie Company. He explained that thousands of his customers want dog parks. He commented that Oak Park is land locked and there is no where for dogs to run. He stated that you will always get people who abuse this but most Oak Park dog owners are responsible. He explained that the trees around the dog park would help with noise control. Mr. McClung stated that the dog park would be great for kids to grow up with dogs. He thanked John, Josephine and Gary. He stated he hopes that the Board will approve the plan.

Jane McAtee, 238 S. Scoville, stated she is in support of the dog park. She stated she is a member of FOOPD and uses the temporary dog park at Ridgeland Common six days a week. She stated that the dog park serves different clientele. She explained that she has no vested interest in a location but just wants a state of the art dog park in Oak Park. Ms. McAtee stated that she commends whatever plan is developed. She stated that she also uses Montrose Beach dog park two times a month.

Adrian Fisher, 1031 S. Home, stated she was attracted to the park planning process because she heard about the dog park. She stated that the original plan was ill planned. She explained that the plan is now elegant, logical and safe. She stated that she was happy to see a park with safety issues addressed, especially the kids on the street by the tennis courts. She explained that she has no opinion

about the dog park but if there is to be one the northwest corner is the best place for it. She commented that through this process we have done well as a community.

Greg Finlayson, 1145 S. Elmwood, thanked those involved in the process, especially those who participated this summer. He stated that he has two dogs and no kids. He supports the dog park and stated that he needs recreational facilities that support his family. He explained that he reviewed notes of previous meetings and he is impressed with the process. He stated that responsible dog owners will keep the dog park nice.

Mike Doman, 946 Home, stated he was not decided on the dog park. He explained that people walk their dogs past his home everyday and leave dog waste all the time. He stated he was concerned that there will be dog poop no matter how responsible people are. Mr. Doman stated that people against the dog park live in the community and people for the dog park are not in town. He explained that he did not understand why any crossing curb would be provided on Harlem. He questioned if there would be an armed guard at the dog park. He explained that there is a need for more T-ball and baseball diamonds in Oak Park. He stated that he agreed with noise concerns and the need for some regulation to enforce dog park hours.

Vai Medina, 1000 S. Maple, stated she supports the dog park and came to the meeting because she heard how horrible the dog park would be. She stated she has lived here for nine years dealing with the noise from Mohr and would prefer to hear dogs. She explained that her only concern is with the parking issue. She stated that her experience with dog parks is slim because she can't take her current dog. She stated that more activity in the park would bring less welcomed activity like homeless people, riff raff, drugs, and tagging. She stated she was concerned about losing one tennis court.

Matt Weldon, 1128 S. Maple, stated he has lived here for ten years. He explained that he is a dog lover but is not a dog park user. He stated that a dog park is social outlet for dog owners. Mr. Weldon commented that he is neutral on the dog park situation. He stated that the design as developed is brilliant. He stated that he has safety concerns about the current tennis courts. To address these concerns he would like the trees along Maple pulled out and temporary concrete pads installed until the tennis courts are moved. He would also like stop signs installed at Harvard. He commented that he was not happy about the dog park but he understands that people want to socialize with their dogs.

Gary closed the meeting informing the community, the Maple Park Plan will be discussed by the Park Board at the Committee of the Whole meeting on Thursday, October 4 at 7:30pm at the Conservatory. There will be no public comment. The Park Board is tentatively scheduled to accept the plan at the October Board meeting on Thursday, October 18 at 7:30pm at 218 Madison. There will be public comment allowed at this meeting.