



FINE ARTS ROOM FOCUS GROUP E MEETING NOTES

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Park District of Oak Park Ridgeland Commons (R.C.)

Date/Time: Monday, January 28, 2008, 3:00 PM
Location: Hedges Administrative Center
Attendance: Focus Group
Camille Wilson White, Executive Director, Oak Park Area Arts Council
Charity Piet, Administrative Assistant, Oak Park Area Arts Council
Citizen's Committee Representatives
Dick McKinlay
Park District of Oak Park (PDOP) Staff
Gary Balling – Executive Director
Bonestroo Team Members
Steve Halberg, Bonestroo

Agenda:

Introduction - Gary Balling
Overview of Process – Steve Halberg
Formal Discussion by Focus Group E Team Members - moderated by Steve Halberg

Meeting Notes

January 28, 2008

Introduction

Gary Balling, PDOP, introduced the participants and others present. Gary then proceeded to explain the Park District's Mission Statement, summarized the Existing Conditions Study, outlined the Ridgeland Common Master Planning Process, purpose of the focus groups and finally the role of the Bonestroo Consulting Team. Gary explained that Ms. Wilson-White was uniquely qualified to represent the interests of the arts in this planning process. Gary turned the meeting over to Steve Halberg of the Bonestroo Team for the remainder of the meeting.

Overview

Steve provided a brief overview of the rules of the focus group which is simply a download of all personal input and opinions regarding the Ridgeland Common Facility.

Formal Discussion

Introduction of Representative for Group E – Fine Arts Team - Oak Park Area Arts Council (OPAAC)

Ms. Wilson-White

Representing:

- Fine Arts

Comments:

- The OPAAC is a local area agency for the organization and funding of arts related activities and groups in the tri-river area of Oak Park, River Forest and Forest Park.
- In 2007, OPAAC provided more than \$62,000 in grants.
- Also awarded five \$12,000 scholarships for tuition and training expenses for arts related programs.
- OPAAC is one of the most active arts organizations in the state.
- The OPAAC currently uses the Ridgeland Commons Comstock Room for brunches and various meetings but had no other reoccurring needs for space or facilities. There is interest by a number of groups in town for space and performing arts facilities but not necessarily at Ridgeland Commons.

The following comments were provided during the formal discussion of Group E – Fine Arts Group

Question Number One: What You Like Best about Ridgeland Common?

- 1) Youth baseball programs
- 2) Swimming facilities
- 3) Youth sports camps
- 4) Overall mix of activities
- 5) Central location
- 6) Proximity to OPRF High School

Question Number Two: What Do You Like Least about Ridgeland Common?

- 1) Concession stand
- 2) Dog Park
- 3) Pool
- 4) Locker Rooms
- 5) Rink needs improvement
- 6) Lack of accessibility

Question Number Three: What Would You Like to See at Ridgeland Common?

- 1) Present mix of activities: pool, ice rink and baseball fields is essential
- 2) Larger more accessible multi-purpose room capable of handling parties and catered events – departure of banquet halls in community has left a void

Additional Questions: How would the needs of OPAAC and the arts community best be met at a new Ridgeland Common?

- 1) A small flexible space with no more than 100 seats would be useful for a wide variety of needs including dance, jazz and other musical performances as well as lectures and meetings.

Additional Questions: Would the OPAAC be willing to pay for improvements?

- 1) The group is not organized to provide any capital funds but arts organizations may be able to support the facility through rental fees. They would need to be affordable fees.

Additional Questions: Is there any need for outdoor arts related space or facilities?

- 1) Space for murals was always welcome. Local art fair arrangements are currently satisfactory at other locations.

END