



Gary F. Balling  
Executive Director  
Park District of Oak Park  
218 Madison Street  
Oak Park, IL60302



**Date:** June 5, 2008  
**Project:** Taylor Park Site Master Plan  
**Community Meeting Date:** Monday June 2, 2008  
**Fourth Community Meeting Held:** 7pm, Andersen Center, 824 N. Hayes

### Minutes of meeting

1. Mr. Gary Balling, Executive Director of the Park District of Oak Park, opened the meeting and introduced the members of Altamanu Inc. and Terra Engineering, who were to facilitate the meeting, Park District Staff, members of the Park District Board and members of the Park District Citizen Committee who were in attendance
2. He spoke about the overall planning process and gave background on the work to date. He discussed the consensus already achieved through this process and then spoke about the decision process that will be used to address the proposal for a dog park on the north side of the Village.
3. Mr. Gary Balling stated that “The 2004 Parks & Recreation Comprehensive Plan identified a need to have one or two dog parks. (Later, he explained that the park guidelines accepted by the Park Board recommend 1.9 dog parks).  
A Dog Park is included in the Maple Park master plan accepted by the Park Board in 2007 located in south Oak Park.  
A Dog Park location is being sought for the Northern half of the community specifically at Taylor Park or Ridgeland Common  
Currently a Dog Park will be recommended to the Park Board by park planners and the Executive Director in site plans for Taylor Park and Ridgeland Common, with the intention of locating a dog park at one of the two sites.  
Both plans will begin to be considered by the Park Board in July.  
Meetings of the Park District of Oak Park Board of Park Commissioners in July are:  
a) Committee of the Whole Meeting – Thursday, July 10 at 7:30pm at the \* Oak Park Conservatory (*no public comment*)  
b) Regular Board Meeting – Thursday, July 17 at 7:30pm at the \*Hedges Administrative Center 218 Madison (*public comment welcomed*). Please note that meeting locations may change.
4. Mr. Balling stated that residents could contact him by email or any members of the Board as they all have Park District Emails.
5. Mr. Balling then handed the meeting over to John Mac Manus and Josephine Bellalta of Altamanu Inc. who facilitated the meeting and Mark Jirik and Julie Smith of Altamanu Inc. who took notes. Mr. Jamil Bou-Saab of Terra Engineering LTD also took part in the meeting.

6. Mr. Mac Manus gave an overview of the meeting discussions to date including the concepts for potential redesign/improvements for the park.
7. The following are the comments recorded as they were made at the meeting and their order has not been revised. Comments in brackets are inserted to assist in clarity.

**General Statements made by the public included:**

Potential Structure

- The L shape shelter structure appears smaller than the other ones, is it sufficient for the needs?
  - We likely made it too tight in order to have less visual impact on the park.
- Are there any gates on the Eastern side of the tennis courts connecting tennis to the shelter?
- The tennis courts will be rehabbed. We can add them.
- It seems to me as long as the shelters are not some primary playground color, they won't be eye sores. Natural earth colors such as forest green and brown would be nice. I like Option A on the left, it seems more flexible for usage. (Shelter to the NE of the tennis courts)
- I like Option A as well, at all cost we should save those crabapples. I also like the connection the proposed path is making from one corner of the park to another. (SE to NW of tennis)
- It seems like Option B would put one side of the shelter up against the fence, negating the typical open air feeling of park shelters. Being up against the fence is not a welcoming sight. Also can the roof be more horizontal and not as tall as the shelter in Field?
  - John says this location has direct access to tennis, and the Park District staff dislikes the low prairie style roofs on other park buildings as kids get up on them and vandalize them.
- What would be wrong with kids climbing on a shelter, then their mom/dad would have to bail them out of jail and the city would receive tax dollars.
- How many people is the shelter designed to hold? Is this for children or for parents as well?
  - The shelter is to be shared.
- Matt, from the Park District, addresses the need for the summer camp to have a base to work from. The camps generally run from the end of school through mid August. (see the meeting presentation on the web for details)
- Is the proposed structure going to be enough to cover these kids (and others) if it rains?
  - John answers that we'd have to look at this in detail to make it so.
- Are the structures which you showed photographs of prefixed to a certain size and dimension or can you change them?
  - Answer: We don't even know if we are going to include a structure as this point, but they make different sizes in most models.
- My only comment is that it needs to be larger; if it's the size of the one at Field Park then it is too small.
- By adding a low wall to sit upon underneath overhangs, you can expand the coverage by the design.
- The general feeling of the meeting attendees is that we will have a shelter; it will be aesthetically appealing and a sufficient size and located to the NE of the tennis courts.

- Let's get a citizens committee together for the tot lot and the shelter (to work with the designers).
- How is the shelter related to the new picnic grove?
  - It is located at the opposite (South) end of the field.
- Josephine discussed playgrounds. We have been asked to expand the playground design for older children. She discussed the play equipment proposed for the smaller and older children.
- That sounds terrific. What do you envision the groundcover material to be in the area that is all blue there and in the reddish (artificial climbing) boulder area?
  - Josephine says we need to keep the play areas as maintainable and safe as possible and adhere to the current standards. We try as much as possible to use the rubber surfacing. In this instance we are trying to keep it as natural looking as possible. It is poured in place rubber, it is hot when it goes in and goes to whatever shape you want. Where the boulders are put in, we are considering putting in mulch. We are following the national standards.
- The whole area is real green right now; you are eating up almost all of it. We keep saying how limited park space in Oak Park is in general and now we are putting more structures in.
  - One of the things we were hired to do is increase the playground size.
- Was the color of the rubber surfacing deliberate at Field Park?
  - At Field Park it was deliberate. We chose the surface material because of the preschool and surrounding school. We will not replicate that here. This is a very different site.
- What age groups will these play areas be for?
  - The range is from 2-12 years old. The boulders will expand that range as they can be used for older kids as well.
- It looks like in all these plans the bunker is removed. What was the bunker for?
  - It housed the compressor for the air raid siren, wiring for the Park lighting, and the irrigation system. These will be replaced with new technology.
- I'm wondering, how many of these proposed play equipment pieces are currently located at Hatch Elementary School. Are we duplicating things that are over there?
  - There are some swings and playground equipment at Hatch Elementary. The problem is that when the school is in operation, the teachers get very territorial about strangers coming onto the site. There is reason for the separation between the two entities which is why we put the play center where it is at Taylor over 20 years ago. Trust me there are never enough swings.
- If you have children of different ages you need a place for all to play at the same time.
- I like it!
- Will you plant pine trees so that during winter time we have some "green"?
  - We have to be careful with evergreens for security issues; they can block views into the park but we will certainly use them.
- Josephine addresses the trees in the park, stating that currently there are 309 trees in Taylor Park, including the ones that did not make it through the last year or two. This plan shows 93 new trees, 20 are shade, 73 are ornamental/flowering. There are 7 diseased pines which we should remove. We are talking about relocating five trees. We will relocate a 4 inch Gingko which is very moveable. Along the edge of the tennis court on the west side we recommend

that the 4 new (recently planted) trees are still small enough to move (to give space) for spectator seating. No trees are being removed due to our design. The pine trees need to be removed because they are diseased. We have not defined which shrubs we will be removing along Elmwood's parkway but we will remove some for security issues as they are very overgrown.

- There are quite a few groupings that are at least 5' tall, which pose a safety issue in a park this urban. Moving the sidewalk over on the West side by the tennis courts would also provide space for spectator seating.
- What does spectator seating mean?
  - We would move the existing benches to the other side of the path closer to the tennis courts and add more benches.
- Are these diseased pines a typical occurrence in the village? Do we have some sort of epidemic?
  - Good question, we do not have the answer but we have seen it at other places in the parks at Oak Park. The arborist thinks these trees are too far gone to be saved.
- How about the stuff you are planting, is it more disease resistant than the previous stuff?
- Yes we will use disease resistant trees but nature is selective; She goes around and comes back again. Some of the species that Jensen planted would not be planted today as they are weak or prone to disease.
- You mentioned you are going to redo the drainage? Was there anything subsoil?
  - We were concerned that Ridgeland was still underneath the park, but when we looked at the park in detail we found an 8" ridge going through the park that is holding back the water. We are hoping the idea of adding the fen will help and we can grade down towards it.
- Would there be double benches along the tennis courts?
  - No, the benches would be moved to the other side of the sidewalk.
- Will the community have an opportunity to contribute to the trees being planted, i.e. memorial trees?
  - Absolutely. You can start now
  - There has already been a bench donated
- Are there any trees that flower during the summer?
  - We are very interested in the layering of color, so that it can continue throughout the seasons. However, the majority of trees flower in the spring and early summer.
  - And of course there is always fall color
- Along the lines of four seasons, will there be consideration given to pines and spruces, presuming they won't interfere with security? I enjoy when snow rests upon them.
  - We'd love that too, it is a selective process. We must be careful to not use too many as pines aren't native to this area and they can look somewhat out of place.
- Does the master plan that Jensen drew up still exist?
  - It does, and we have a copy of it. He originally had the entire hill covered with shrubs and small trees, which we couldn't do today. Don't forget that at that time he designed the park they were arguing if motor cars should be taxed according to horsepower, very different days.
- Would the proposed woodland environment have different plantings than the rest of the park?

- Yes, we are still developing the idea.
- Has consideration been given creating an area near the fen to speak to the Jensen Legacy and historical nature of the park?
  - John explains that most people were moderately interested in Jensen's legacy; they are just interested in keeping the natural look.
  - Josephine also states that the park district has been asking for interpretative/educational signage in the parks and we added it to Field Park.
  - We think it is a great idea to make the park's history come alive.
- Is it possible to place the tennis spectator benches on the side near the play area (East side)? They could be dual use and you wouldn't be putting that path way closer to the street. One nice thing about walking in Taylor Park is the feeling of being in the park when you walk around the trail as opposed to feeling next to the street.
- I would just like to maintain some kind of buffer from the street to the sidewalk; otherwise there wouldn't be a difference between walking around the block and walking in the park.
  - It wouldn't be moved enough to feel like that. There are trees which we can't get any closer to. It would move roughly 6' over. The reason the sidewalk is close to the street north of the tennis courts has to do with fitting in the soccer (multipurpose) field.
- I'd like to preserve the sidewalk in that area as much as possible. A lot of people appreciate walking in the park.
- I would like to encourage you that as paths are replaced, materials other than gray concrete are chosen. Perhaps exposed aggregated, color can be considered, and would enhance the park with a more natural aesthetic.
- The East side of the tennis court is the only place in the park where you can put a blanket down and sit with your child. It provides a space to sit in the grass and watch the play lot. Too much activities stuffed into that place would ruin it, making it a destination.
- John shows that green spaces are being kept in the area. He also states that after the comments tonight, redesigns will be made. At previous meetings, everyone wanted an adventure playground integrated into the landscape.
- I don't want all those different things (play equipment). You will make it a destination and bring more people.
- Well I want the play lot, I want the destination, my kids would love it, and this gives kids a place to play once they have outgrown the tot lot.
- I think the play lot is encroaching on some valuable green space.
- I think climbing a simulated tree isn't climbing a tree.
- I've lived across from Taylor Park for about 20 years. My children grew up playing in that park the way it is now. I like it the way it is. I love walking around the park and meeting new people.
- This is a no win situation, there are tons of us that have kids, and a lot of people with different needs. I'm looking at the big picture, and granted it will take away some nice secluded green space, there will have to be a balance.
- The issue of the dog park is broached and comments were made about it being another fenced-off space.
- John explains the location and criteria for the dog park location.

- There is to be a dog park on the North side of the Village. This dog park will be either at Taylor Park or at Ridgeland Common. The decision will be taken by the Board of Park Commissioners, who have been following this process.
- John reread the slide to make sure all of the attendees understood and knew when and where the meetings of the Park Board will take place.

“The 2004 Parks & Recreation Comprehensive Plan identified a standard which states Oak Park should have one or two dog parks.

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\* *meeting locations subject to change*

- Can you speak to the type of fencing which will be used at the dog park?
  - Usually it is vinyl coated black chain link fence. We’d want to do something fancier, such as a black ornamental fence or a wood style fence with wire netting. Besides the fencing, we’d have shrubs, flowering trees and canopy trees, creating a layer of interest.
- What kind of ground surface do you envision?
  - A large area is required for a turf/grass dog park. With our size limitations, we’d be looking at a variety of materials such as woodchips, granular stone surfaces, and concrete.
- Will there be a concrete wash down area such as the one in Maple Park?
- Yes there would be
- I will be out of town during the meeting in July? How can I get my feelings across?
  - You can email the park board and we forward any emails on to them and/or you can send them to me at [Garyb@oakparkparks.com](mailto:Garyb@oakparkparks.com)

**This ends Altamanu’s presentation**

- John thanks the audience for their continued involvement. Gary explains how the meeting should proceed. He would call out the names of those who signed up to speak. Upon being called they should come up to the front of the room to speak. Each speaker has 3 minutes to speak.

**The following are a condensed version of citizen's comments (unfortunately we do not have the correct spelling of the speaker's names):**

- I think a dog park would be a very bad thing for Taylor Park. The current location (in Ridgeland Common) is perfectly situated away from neighbors and children's areas. The real reason the park district is requesting a dog park at Taylor is that they want to use the land at Ridgeland for something else. We need to have citizens committees! It's the park vs. recreation.
- I grew up in this town and lived here, played in these parks and have played on equipment generations back through the current era. Maple Park was exactly the right place to put a dog park. I wish you well; Altamanu did a good job at Field Center but I don't see why you put in a Bocce court, old people will not use it with all those kids.
- I think some of the changes we've seen proposed for the park are great. I think the whole shelter idea is great, and I trust you will use balance when deciding upon that. A lot of people believe that Taylor Park is a treasure. This park is already overused and lacks parking areas. I don't think this is the place which can sufficiently accommodate a dog park. I do agree with others that Ridgeland Common is perfect.
- I support a dog park, where it goes I don't know. The dogs that are running loose in the park are not the ones that would use the dog park. People who use the dog parks don't leave little treasures. I do support a dog park.
- I am opposed to a dog park, I just feel like we are compartmentalizing the park. My opinion is that we should keep the treasure that we have.
- I'm new to the area, I've been in Oak Park about a year, and I've lived in MI, OH, NJ, and now IL. I have been to dog parks in every single place I've lived at. Some were good, some were bad. Some were concrete and were horrible. Anytime you make stuff fake I think it can take away from the park that you have. I have never experienced cleanup as being an issue in the dog parks which I have used. Ridgeland Park does poop patrol 5 minutes before close at the park. I agree when you have dogs walking around outside of the designated area they should be on leashes. That's not going to change, loose dogs are a concern for everyone. I'm for the dog park and I think it can be done right, I think it should protect the neighbors from views and noise. Like the balance with everything else, keep the balance of nature.
- I would be right across from the dog park. We have enjoyed the view of the park for 19 years. We love it every season of the year. We tolerate large groups of people when we can't park in front of our house. Sometimes there is a lot of noise. That is ok, people are outside enjoying this wonderful park. I am a little afraid of big dogs, and I am concerned about having a dog park directly across from our house. I am concerned about the noise from dogs and additional people. Parking around the park is limited already, and this intersection is very dangerous. If

there is a dog park it will attract people from a lot of different places who will bring their dogs in their cars and require parking.

- Saturday afternoon I took a drive near the park as I ran errands throughout the day. There was nothing really going on, but there was no parking. I noticed how bad it was for the people who live on the park, both sides of the street were parked up for the soccer game. There were vehicular circulation problems. I think that keeping all the activities together at Ridgeland is a better idea than putting a dog park at Taylor Park.
- I want to say thank you to Altamanu, I think we are all passionate. A couple of points I would like to make is that I am a dog owner who is against the dog park. So much of the green space is being eaten up by the citizens' demands on the park. I believe the dog park would best be left at Ridgeland Common. I did hear concern of Elmwood's view of the structure, but what about the neighbors' views of the dog park?
- I've lived here for 10 years, and I wanted to say some quick things. I love the plan, you guys did wonderful job. I want to clarify misconceptions. By having a fenced area for dogs to run, it reduces the option to let dogs run loose since you have an area for the dogs to go. If you regulate the hours during the day and night, it would keep the noise to times when it would least likely bother people. I see people have legitimate concerns with stuff; if you are against a dog park at Taylor, support one at Ridgeland or on the North side. Don't be a no person; help me and my dog out.
- At every second of these meetings, I've seen what I really like about Oak Park. We have thought out opinions and we speak our minds. I think we need to maintain our open space and the natural beauty. I appreciate the balancing we've done along the way. We've figured out how to help soccer players and not put in the Astroturf. We've expanded the tot lot and hopefully will compromise on the green space. I'm worried we won't find the compromise for the dog park as it won't maintain the openness that we want. The materials are uncertain as yet. I do support a dog park in Oak Park, it's important for our K9 and humans to have that option. I'm not convinced that Taylor Park is the right spot for the dog park.
- I feel strongly about Taylor Park. I feel that wherever you put a dog park, it should be in the ugliest area within the Oak Park Park District. Taylor Park is the only park that is not perfectly flat. You'll be looking down at an ugly dog park with brown things in the middle. I challenge the members of the Park Board to think about their legacy. Do you want to be the guys who took the most beautiful park in Oak Park and turned it into an eyesore? Choose Ridgeland or a flat park for the dog park.
- I really liked when Taylor Park had the Jens Jensen babbling brook with bridges and pools and natural stone.
  - John mentions that the brook was not part of Jens Jensen's original design of the park. It was installed later on, and was removed after the polio epidemic arrived.
- I've lived at Taylor Park for all my life. I've had 2 dogs my whole life, I live at the fourth house from the corner, and this would make it (the dog park) right in front of my house. I like my view. The dog park would bring so many people here. We are only 3 blocks away from Chicago. I feel like a fourth of the park is playground, and half of the open space is already gone. I'm totally against the dog park. I feel that Ridgeland is a good compromise. This park will be a huge draw for people from the Chicago Area.

- Mr. Balling thanked the attendees and closed the meeting

END OF MEETING NOTES

This is our understanding of what occurred at the meeting. If you wish to add or change these notes please do not hesitate to contact us at (773) 528.7492 or by Email at [John@altamanu.com](mailto:John@altamanu.com)