



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

Date: May 20, 2008
Project: Taylor Park Site Master Plan
Community Meeting Date: Monday May 19th, 2008
Third Public Meeting Held: Andersen Center

Minutes of meeting

1. Mr. Gary Balling, Executive Director of the Park District of Oak Park opened the meeting. He spoke about the overall planning process and gave background on the work to date. He 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 Citizens Committee who were in attendance
2. Mr. Balling then handed the meeting over to Mr. John Mac Manus and Josephine Bellalta of Altamanu Inc. who facilitated the meeting, Mark Jirik and Julie Smith of Altamanu Inc. who took notes. Mr. Mac Manus gave an overview of the meeting discussions to date including the concepts for potential redesign/improvements for the park.
3. 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.
 - A lot of people who did not attend the previous meeting are in attendance. A large majority of the people live alongside the park.
 - What is the use of the prairie/meadow? Right now a lot of spontaneous play occurs in that area, and how would the meadow interact with that.
 - It would be a short grass area, not a tall grass area.
 - Look at options and be clear if you are supporting a natural space that you view and enjoy but don't play on or if you want a space people continue to use in spontaneous activity.
 - Every day of the week there is a t-ball team / AYSO practice going on at the foot of the sled hill.
 - John suggests a compromise saying the meadow could occur on a portion of the hill.
 - Maybe there could be a small patch of prairie but leave it as it is? (The comment came from a woman who plays ultimate Frisbee in that location.)
 - The magic of this park is the open space which allows spontaneous play.
 - There is concern about the existing garden at Lindberg Park, regarding its lack of use and care.
 - Park District staff stated that the gardens were originally a trial for that area and the public were involved in the maintenance but people move away or lose interest and the Park District ends up maintaining it. .

- The prairie would be professionally managed, and that plugs would be used to establish the area. For the first 2 years some spot use of herbicides would be needed for invasive species you would want to eradicate and then in the subsequent years the area could be burned.
- Each burning would cost approximately \$3,000
- What is the current cost of maintenance? (Answer is that it is fairly low and that the meadow would be an increase in cost).
- The drawings are very powerful; they show how little the area is for the open play.
- In concept 3 you have a separate area of meadow to the north, I was wondering if that was a big enough area to be worthwhile.
 - It is conceptual at this stage; you can provide open space and a meadow.
- I love the concept of this, I'm wondering if there is a way to add that to the third drawing and extend it north.
- Perhaps you could throw the meadow along the path and leave a flat area open.
- Attendee draws the area where he believes the prairie/meadow should go on an overlay.
- Can you share for a minute how we should approach looking at the mature trees that we see on the drawing? Another thing I'd like to hear is more about transitions and what would be built this year or in a few years.
- Josephine: One of the things we've tried to do as we developed any of these plans is to preserve all the trees. When we get to the final plan, we will develop it more than any of these and will then understand better what the grading would be and what needs to happen to (protect) the trees. We have a master arborist viewing the site and when we give him the intended plan he will give us his advice regarding the trees.
- Some of these trees are 60/80 years old. Dutch elm disease is prevalent in this area. Emerald Ash borer is moving in and many of these trees may go away. Some of these trees are Hawthorns and are heirlooms and are being removed yearly. A factor to focus in on is when you are designing a park you are sometimes designing it for your grandchildren. You have to recognize these trees don't last forever.
- Let's face it, the condition for this prairie is not right and the tax players will pay for it. There is nowhere else for children to play unorganized soccer in the park.
- You should select species of trees that don't grow too high, because they can crash down and fall.
- Few of the attendees present continued to support the installation of a prairie after this discussion indicated by a show of hands.

A potential shelter was discussed, roughly 22x22' post to post, open but with a storage area in it.

- It would be located at the NE corner of the tennis courts in the location selected by the public at the last community meeting.
- Is it like the one in Field?
- Yes it would be
- Isn't there shelter inside the existing structure (rest rooms)?
- A storage area that would go with the shelter would not necessarily be a large storage area
- Could you show us pictures of what this would involve?
- Do you have a list of functionality of what the shelter would provide?
 - Mainly storage

- Shade and a center for day camps.
- Viewing the games
- How tall will it be and what would it be made of?
- Due to cost it is likely that it will be chosen from a catalogue
- And made of steel so that it can't be burned down
- As someone who lives on Elmwood I don't want to see more traffic brought to the area.
- I like the idea of an open shelter, my problem with turning it into storage is that instead of looking through the structure you would see a hard wall.
- How is the existing building going to be rehabbed?
- The location of the existing building is too far away and doesn't provide necessary connections to other areas of use. (i.e. the upper fields)
- As someone who lives on Elmwood, that is the view out my front window. My vote would be to have something low that backs up to the tennis courts that doesn't change our view of open green space. Move it further west, and have it very low, just have a storage cabinet, no big shelter.
- An alternative, you could do a fully open shelter with no storage wall and do low storage elsewhere.
- I have a comment, when I look at that, the first thing I think of is that people are going to congregate, teenagers will get together in that structure.
- How about an awning that comes out and could be expandable and non permanent.
- Josephine: When designing for the park district you have to expect that any moveable parts or things that have to be taken off or taken down don't work, they break.
- Preferably the structure would be permanent or don't do it at all.
- Sometimes soccer teams will bring their own 10x10 cabana, so there are flexible things that happen like that way in the park all the time. I don't mind the shelter.
- Police Officer speaks: My point is that they are all going to congregate there anyway, they stick to the darker areas, and if there is a shelter, at least we will have a way of seeing them and knowing where they are.
- The shelter that we just installed in Field has been in use for the past year. It does have a light in it, very high up, and we haven't had any problems yet. There is a very steep roof on it to prevent people from climbing on it.
- There is a comment speaking to the proposed area for the shelter. From my experience because the tot lot is there, and because it is sheltered by the fence and evergreens, young families congregate in the grass there. It is sheltered on all these sides and is a perfect little glen of an area. It is unique within the park, it works very well as it is.
- The shelter could be used by people at the play ground
- Given the location being proposed and its intended use, I'm not sure the money is best spent on that.
- Gary: This shelter is very important for our summer camp programs.
- So if you can find an alternative location for the storage, what is the purpose for a day camp?
- The shelter would provide a focal point and a place for the kids to be out of the elements.
- Right now when we have a camp but they use the school area (more than the park).
- Is there a way to see a diagram of it or an image? I hate to say this, but pulling something out of a catalog doesn't sound very appealing.

- There are thousands of different ones. If you go to Field Park it will start to give you an idea. It's hard to imagine without seeing it.
- In a Jensen park I wish we could have a Caldwell structure but we just can't do that here (it would be very expensive).
- It would be helpful if you could give a dimension and find out what exactly needs to be stored in the structures. Then maybe we could see it sited in a couple of different places.
- What would also be helpful would be to have a picture of that corner with the grove of trees and how it would work.
- I would not be as opposed if it were on the East side. I don't want to see it sticking out from the north end of the tennis courts.
- My house is looking straight at that.
- Well this is not (just) your park.
- Currently the Park District is involved in a master planning process and that we have to keep within the scope. (detailed architectural work is not included in a conceptual master plan)
- If it were something along the lines of the red brick structure of the current bathroom area, that would be more acceptable.

The playground area is then discussed.

- I liked last week when she talked about how we could spread out the play area, but I did not envision it spreading out so far across this park. I see some of those climbing structures as too much.
- The consensus is that people don't like the play areas moved to the northern area of the park.
- There are areas of the park that are used intensively. My recommendation is take parts of the park that are underutilized and find ways to put activities there.
- You were not at the last meeting where people stated that the unused areas of the park are just beautiful places to look at and that is fine.
- Beautify the unused areas; I want to see more flowers and more bushes.
- That NW corner is a main entrance to the park; I see people everyday continue to use it.
- It's so nice after you walk with your dog past the tennis courts, past the soccer fields, and see that corner peaceful and unused. Leave it alone.

Upper field/multipurpose field.

- The existing soccer field has a crown towards the center, and slopes down almost 5 feet to the NE, makes it hard for people to see each other from one side to the other.
- An attendee doesn't believe there is a need to fix it.
- Jamil from Terra addressed the problems with the drainage of the park
- The regarding would start from the parkway and sidewalks and everything would be micro engineered due to the large number of mature trees. If this area needs a drainage structure, then this is what we will do. The challenge for the grading will be with the trees.
- I am in favor of this additional path, (a proposed path on the eastern side of the upper field) clearly people are already walking there, let's put it there and take it(the path) out further down and have green space.
- Then we lose the beautiful protected pathway which I love when you move away from all the action going towards the west.

- Can you do both paths, put one in and leave the other.

Artificial turf.

- No public support for artificial turf on the upper field

Picnic Grove

- The picnic grove sits in the local edge which is closer to the street and houses and the path is deep into the park. This brings outsiders up against the residents and into the local edge. It (the picnic grove) should be in a more regional area of the park.
- The situation should be reversed. John shows the rendering of the path coming closer to the street.
- If you were going to do something like this, it would be nice to have trees that encourage climbing? My five year old loves going around the fringe of the park looking for trees to climb.
- Various locations for the picnic grove were examined. The Police Officer commented on the picnic grove:
 - Burying it into the NE corner would create problems with us viewing the area on patrols. You won't see them until you come back later that night when you get another call. I have to be able to see all the gathering areas at least somewhat. Lighting is also an issue, just so I know where people are and if they are gathered. Right now there is a whole string of bushes along Berkshire and that you can't see through.
- The location close to the upper field could create conflict between people at the soccer games and people who have permits (for the Picnic grove)
- The picnic grove is part of the problem, but there are more.
- In our experience, moving paths closer to the street, will make the space behave more like a sidewalk. People who park their cars aren't as comfortable anymore parking there.
- Would a picnic area across from the shelter be redundant?
- The only concern with a picnic area near the soccer field is that people from all over the community come in for the picnic area, and groups buy a permit for that which creates a conflict.
- I live across from the picnic area, and anything would be an improvement.
- Is the west location a problem for the soccer folks?
- My concern with the picnic area being moved to the left is that there would be a conflict from the spillover with fans and the soccer area.
- The middle one would be fine if you moved a few bushes so you can see things going on from the street.
- Attendees were in favor of moving the sidewalk towards the road on the northern edge of the park and moving the Picnic Grove slightly further into the park...

Dog Park

- Originally we looked at two locations but at the last meeting we decided that if there is to be a dog park it should be in the NE corner.
- Park District requires that the Dog Park wherever it may be situated should be at least 125ft from homes.

- I have a lot of respect for the approach and process which you have done in undertaking this study. One criticism I have has to do with meeting minutes from previous planning processes. Given that this particular site was eliminated in 2006, why is it on the table again?
 - It was a suggestion, times have changed and there are now different people in the room.
 - The drainage was considered a problem but now we have Terra onboard to deal with it
- What type of material would the dog park be (i.e. fencing, surfacing, etc)? The one currently at Ridgeland is vinyl coated chain link; the idea would be to get it to disappear into the landscape.
- We could use a more natural looking fence (like at the proposed Fen)
- I would like to hear the Park District's response to the previous question regarding the decision in 2006 that stated that this particular location was an unsuitable situation due to drainage and distances, why is it back on the table?
- Placing the dog park to the east of the tennis courts was suggested due to existing fence and because at the time the moving of the play ground was considered.
- I recall the discussion at that time regarding a location for a temporary dog park at the NE corner of the park or alongside the tennis courts. There was no determination or attempt to determine where a permanent location would be placed in the park site. Point of fact, the temporary dog park was placed at Ridgeland.
- I get that people want a place for their dogs, but I look at our park that is lush and green and a lot of spaces are right now completely used. It has 2 streets for parking, and I look at a park like Lindbergh. Why is this dog park not being proposed for Lindberg? To me it (Lindberg) is a huge park with 3 streets with available parking. I don't disagree that if the community wants a dog park, the community should have that. It feels that our park is jam packed (already).
- When we did the study and we decided on the 100' and 125', (we found that) the distances weren't available in Lindberg without disturbing some of the fields. Taylor Park was proposed until we could get in and really do the detailed study and take a look at everything with a fine tooth comb.
- My points, first of all I am not sure there is community consensus that there should be a dog park, they did a study where 27% of the people in that survey said they wanted a dog park, which was far from a majority, behind priorities such as neighborhood parks, walking paths, natural areas, playgrounds. At Ridgeland Commons, 360 license were available, 290 is roughly 500 or 600 people that means 1% of the people in Oak Park have signed up to use the dog park. I think having a dog park is not a bad idea; it is just the wrong place. This is a jewel, and should not be turned into a dog park. (Many of the people in agreement with the speaker live on Berkshire or Ridgeland).
- John read an email from a gentleman who lives on Berkshire who wasn't able to attend the meeting and wanted to say he is totally in favor of the dog park.
- Who ultimately gets to decide? Is the Park District predisposed to having some sort of dog park in one of the northern parks. Why do you have to find a spot for the dog park?
- The Park District had 330 permits available and restarted with a higher number as of April 1st. We did an extensive planning process with meetings all over the community and their recommendation was to have one south and one north.
- Could you tell me which parks are we narrowed down to for a dog park?
- At this point Ridgeland Commons, Maple, and Taylor. Stevenson is out of consideration.

- I'm a regular user of the dog park (at Ridgeland Commons), I live on Taylor, I am in the north quadrant, and I would prefer things to stay at Ridgeland. Apparently the Village has decided that Ridgeland is not going to be a location of a permanent dog park.
 - That's not true, it hasn't been decided yet. The way it is set up there is dog park plus and we are the only place in IL that does it. We let dogs run out (on the park) at certain times, and share with other areas.
 - We feel that at some point people will put a stop to that.
- As far as the location in Taylor, that seems to be a secluded area (NE corner) that won't affect other uses that people have. There is a drainage problem, but the real concern would be parking. Ridgeland Commons has a lot of areas for parking.
- Please don't confuse people doing illegal uses with their dogs with the people who use the dog parks.
- The park board will make the final decision.
- The plan is to have one (dog park) north and one south. The board makes the final decision.
- How many people are on the board, and do they get elected?
 - There are 5 and they do get elected.
- We are here as supporters for the dog park master plan, which was to evaluate Taylor Park for a dog park.
- I recognize that there are a lot of people who live facing the park and have powerful attachments and emotions regarding the park. But what is frustrating to me is that is a special interest group (too), if people living on Berkshire regard the park as their front yard, that is a special interest. The park must serve all our (community's) needs.
- I understand that it is a convenience issue. I believe that Maple Park has enough space for a dog park.
- I've lived around that park all my life; I am over 80 years old. When I had dogs, I walked that dog. I think that looking around this country there are people and dogs that both need exercise. I think that this dog park is not for this park, I think that the dogs will create a lot of commotion in that area and that the dog can get exercise in that spot.
- I realize there are a lot of special interests, the more we compartmentalize our parks and put fences up, and the more areas get disturbed. I think it will diminish the value of my home.
- I don't think Taylor Park is for a dog park, it isn't appropriate. I walk to the park for the serenity of the park. I think it's inappropriate.
- I think that with the character of the park, it's not really a good fit for the size and scope. I'm interested to know the results of the poll online. Diane says 118 or 120 people responded and that it is about 50/50 for and against.
- The gentleman from the Park District made a comment about the increasing number of permits issued, I could see over time, that being more noise. One of my concerns would be over time the Village increases the number of permits, and would there be an enlargement of the area?
- Out of the 325 permit holders, there has not been a day when 325 dogs have shown up at the dog park. It is spread out 365 days a year from dawn to dusk this (potential dog park in Taylor) would dissipate the use of the dog park. On a regular day if you sit at the dog park, it's only a handful of people.
- I don't have children so don't kill me and I'm willing to pay taxes for your kids to play sports, see them throw their trash on the ground, hear them cuss. Dog's don't make as much of an impact as kids do. If I can tolerate the children surely you can tolerate the dogs.
- I believe that corner is incredibly peaceful and would be ruined by dogs.

- I would like to have visibility to the park.
- The dog park isn't just about dogs, dogs need to run, but actually that is not the principle reason that we enjoy the dog park. We make friends, people we met there, we have something in common with our dogs, and we find out a lot about each other and we become friends. It enhances the social fabric of your life. The Park District provides activities to provide a locus for this social fabric. Don't lose site of the fact that this is about people, not just about dogs.
- I am concerned about aesthetics, and believe it should be tucked away by the rail road at Ridgeland.
- I think a dog park there would have benefits; it would mitigate dogs being loose in the area. Complaints about the increased traffic would occur; I currently drive to Ridgeland, and could walk to Taylor. It would help the environment.
- The aesthetics at Ridgeland are horrible, but it is just a temporary park. I don't think Jens Jensen wanted that park for dogs, he wanted it for people.
- People are saying this is a park for people, I agree, and I like to go there with my dog. I like Taylor Park because it is a beautiful park. I resent the fact that my activities should take place (be confined) against the railroad tracks. I want to take advantage of the beautiful parks in Oak Park. Also to go back to the questions about the fact that this is not going to be aesthetically pleasing, I would hope this would be designed to be a lot nicer looking than what is there(at Ridgeland Commons).
- In regards to the noise issues that many people brought up, I was in Taylor Park last weekend and walking my dog there were other dogs being walked. Half a dozen dogs were there and none were making noise. A couple of kids were playing in the tot lot, and they were yelling and screaming and there was a soccer game going on with screaming kids, coaches and parents. I thought oh my god I would hate to live next to that. People in parks make noise; sometimes it's a barking dog, sometimes its screaming children.
- The aesthetic issue has been raised since the beginning. People have wondered how we would design a dog park that fits with the park.
- I'm wondering whether we could hear more specifics about the park. What is the surface, what is the cost of maintenance, etc? I'm wondering if before a final decision is made, there could be more decisions in regards to the space. I want to know what it would really look like.
- We certainly would landscape and have a natural looking fence. The issue of the surface is tricky because there will be the expense and maintenance. There is a whole range of materials we could use but it will come down to expense and practicality.
- To make it a non-muddy surface it will be an artificial surface. Grass will not take the wear.
- This is a polarization point and can return with a lot of animosity. We are dealing with a 12 acre park that is a home for all of us. My kids played at Taylor though we lived down by Rheim. You are all neighbors to one another and we have to live in this jug, and we have to live with people living in an area with a small amount of park space. We are trying to follow national and local trends. The Park Board will end up making a decision for the entire population. They get a lot of abuse and people yelling at them who don't realize that this is their next door neighbor. I've heard people kick around property values. I live across from a school, kids tramping over the grass, but people live across from a school so our kids could go there. People will buy a house to live across from a park (and will have to deal with the issues of doing so).
- Why not (put a dog park at) at Ridgeland Common?
- Ridgeland Common is only 6 acres and has limited space, which is "the" issue of our whole community.

- What is the budget for this park?
- This is a long term master plan, it all happens incrementally. The charge (direction to the designers) for the next meeting is future costs.
- Our budget is \$650,000 set aside for this park. We hope to go for an additional \$400,000 OSLAD grant.
- The timeline is \$650,000 will be spent in 2010 (for Phase 1).
- The number of phases depends on the plan.
- I think that what would be really ideal is maybe the board would come with specifics for a Ridgeland park where we could squeeze more room out of there and work out a compromise.
- We've had a show of hands for the ideas on the table can we have the same for this dog park?
- A majority of the people present were not in favor of the dog park.
- Mr. Balling stated that the hour was getting late and the discussion could continue at the next meeting on Monday June 2, the fourth community meeting.
- He 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