

THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
OF THE BELLEVILLE PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT  
MARCH 8, 2023

The Regular meeting of the Board of Trustees for the Belleville Parks and Recreation Department was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Ms. Marge Belt.

Roll Call Board Members (Alphabetical Order) Ms. Marge Belt, Mr. Brennan Hartin, Mr. Mike Heisler, Mrs. Teresa Hessel, Mr. Scott Lanxon.

Roll Call Staff Members (Alphabetical Order), Mr. Craig Maue, Ms. Emma Martin, Mr. Jason Poole. Mrs. Stephanie Perry was excused from the meeting.

Previous Minutes

Ms. Belt asked if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes for the February 8, 2023 meeting. Mrs. Hessel made a motion that the minutes be placed on file, the motion was seconded by Mr. Heisler. All members voting aye. Motion carried.

Introduction of Guests and Public Participation

Guests at the table were, Alderman Phil Elmore, Ward 7, Belleville Mayor, Patty Gregory, Belleville Police Chief, Mr. Matt Eiskant, Alderman Chris Rothweiler, Ward 6.

Alderman Mr. Phil Elmore, Ward 7 thanked the parks board members for serving on the volunteer committee and the recommendations they send to council. Mr. Elmore stated he is aware they will be making recommendations regarding the proposed Dog Park at Ever & Anon Park. Mr. Elmore stated he was instrumental in getting the Rotary Dog Park and Ralston Purina was active in funding that park. Mr. Elmore stated he has heard comments regarding the size of the proposed park being too small, however Ralston Purina is the national headquarters for Nestle Purina and their dog park is approximately the same size. Mr. Elmore stated he feels that it will be a great addition and he spoke to several downtown businesses, and they are also in favor of the proposed dog park. Mr. Elmore stated he did feel the 7–8-foot fence would be too extreme and he believes a wagon gate could be useful for anyone wanting to rent the space for a private event. Mr. Elmore wished the board good luck and thanked them for their service.

Maggie Eubanks informed the board that she lives near the proposed dog park area. Ms. Eubanks stated she loves animals, and she loves Rotary Dog Park because of its size, membership and the rules requiring proof of inoculation. Ms. Eubanks stated the small dog park in Rotary Dog Park she believes is three times the size of the proposed dog park at Ever & Anon Park. Ms. Eubanks stated she has lived in Belleville for thirty years and she is bothered by the process that has transpired regarding this situation. Ms. Eubanks stated that she heard there is an anonymous donor for the project. Ms. Eubanks stated that she feels that this process has not been transparent, and she feels that it is better when all citizens are informed.

Mayor Gregory stated she would like to make a clarification of what was said by Ms. Eubanks. Mayor Gregory stated she had been contacted by several of the downtown merchants as well as several homeowners from Abend Street about the situation. Mayor Gregory stated that there was also a meeting held with the downtown merchants where the donor, who was not anonymous, was in attendance. Mayor Gregory stated at that time discussion was held with regards to what to do about the situation at Ever & Anon Park. Mayor Gregory stated it was at the meeting that St. Clair County Chairman, Mark Kern offered to pay for the dog park, lights, cameras and 25 additional cameras to be placed downtown. Mayor Gregory stated it is her job to listen and get the correct people to do the job and nothing has been done behind anyone's back.

Alderman Chris Rothweiler, Ward 6 stated he scheduled a town hall meeting in January that had to be postponed due to weather. Mr. Rothweiler stated the meeting was then rescheduled for February 28<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Rothweiler stated if the intent was to hide the issues, he would not have had a meeting and he made attempts to notify everyone through social media and by walking door to door with flyers. Mr. Rothweiler apologized if

there were people who did not receive the notifications. Mr. Rothweiler stated there are residents that are not happy with the situation at Ever & Anon Park and something different must be done. Mr. Rothweiler stated access is going to have to be restricted to the park, it cannot be left open.

Mr. Carl Gilpin stated as a real estate developer he feels the dog park is a great idea. Mr. Gilpin stated walking communities are the future to walk to dinner, walk their dogs and not have to drive. Mr. Gilpin stated from a development standpoint it will draw more young people to the area and more developers for more apartments and more restaurants. Mr. Gilpin stated as it currently stands it is working in the opposite direction to attract people. Mr. Gilpin stated it is a great idea and please do it.

Ms. Julie Herr stated she lives approximately three blocks away from Ever & Anon Park. Ms. Herr stated she would prefer to see the area remain as green space. Ms. Herr stated you can change this small section, but it is not taking care of the problem, it is just dispersing it. Ms. Herr stated long-term solutions really need to be looked at.

Ms. Melanie Stiff from the West End of Belleville. Ms. Stiff stated she has a child on the Autism spectrum and one of the things they enjoy doing is driving through the downtown area and the historic district. Ms. Stiff stated that sometimes it just includes driving and living on the West End they have easy access to the highways and they will go to St. Louis because she feels the downtown Belleville area is not at its potential. Ms. Stiff stated when she read the issue on Facebook she felt it was an opportunity to come and suggest to leave it as a green space. Ms. Stiff explained different areas in St. Louis that she has visited and their development ideas that could be used for the space in downtown Belleville. Mr. Elmore asked Ms. Belt, President of the Board to advise Ms. Stiff about Bicentennial Park and Bellevue Park. Ms. Belt informed Ms. Stiff of the adaptive playground at Bicentennial and the new playground coming to Bellevue Park. Ms. Stiff stated it was not about adaptive but more about being where there are restaurants while also having something else to do. Ms. Stiff stated she was aware of the other parks in the area.

Ms. Kathy Mordini stated she has been attending meetings regarding downtown since 1998 and she has heard a lot of ideas and suggestions. Ms. Mordini stated she feels this is a public green space downtown and she wants it to be taken seriously. Ms. Mordini stated she believes it could be used more as a community green space that is not fenced off. Ms. Mordini states she understands the issue and the dog park. Ms. Mordini thinks there are other ideas that are out there and need to be seriously looked at to better downtown. Ms. Mordini stated she did a survey on Facebook and had 18 replies with nobody liking the dog park idea. Ms. Mordini stated you want to enrich your community not just put a fence up and say this is the best use because there is so much more that could be happening.

### Correspondence

Mayor Gregory stated she was on the original committee with the Belleville Heritage Society, Ms. Annette Eckert and several other ladies to develop Ever & Anon Park in downtown Belleville. Mayor Gregory read a letter from Ms. Annette Eckert who stated she supports the creation of a dog park in Ever & Anon Park at this time. Ms. Eckert explained her involvement with the Belleville Heritage Society, City of Belleville, and extremely generous donors who supported maintaining a green space rather than an asphalt parking lot after a hotel was torn down. Ms. Eckert stated much effort went into the creation of the park and the site was created in part to serve as a location for the Old Towne Farmer's Market. Ms. Eckert stated when the park opened it was vibrant, popular and very busy. Ms. Eckert stated the park was also used for concerts, weddings and other events and went on for years until the homeless population became overwhelming to those who wished to participate. Ms. Eckert stated the dog park concept maintains green space and maintains the possibility of using it for concerts or weddings if it is reserved and cleaned by the Parks Department. Ms. Eckert stated even with the extra work for the Parks Department it will be less work for them and the Police Department than it is currently. Ms. Eckert stated it will also provide safety for people, children and animals walking near the park. The danger of drugs, needles and human feces exist at the park now. Ms. Eckert stated the proposed dog park could be a fixture that could evolve. Ms. Eckert stated it would take care of an unsightly, costly and dangerous problem that we currently have. Ms. Eckert stated this is a solution that does not tie the city to one permanent resolution but lessens the cost and risk. Ms. Eckert stated these are and obviously have been

changing times but at the same time green space and the gazebo and the opportunity to enjoy these things on Belleville Main Street will remain available now and in the future with this resolution.

Mr. Poole read an email received from Michelle stating that she was opposed to the proposed dog park at Ever and Anon Park. Michelle stated that she would prefer the city to turn the park into a space that was an asset to downtown Belleville.

Mr. Poole read an email received from Ms. Becky Viall stating she would like to see the space designated as a joint use space as a dog park and children's area that would have membership only access.

Mr. Poole read an email received from Ms. Emily Alvarez who stated she is not necessarily against another dog park but feels there is a better space for that. Ms. Alvarez stated she would love to see a nature playscape installed like the one recently installed in Forest Park.

#### Claims

Mrs. Hessel made a motion that the claims for the month of February 2023 be paid, the motion was seconded by Mr. Heisler. A roll call vote was taken with all members voting aye. Motion carried.

#### Summary of Fund Balances

Mrs. Hessel made a motion to have the finance reports for the month of February 2023 placed on file, the motion was seconded by Mr. Lanxon. All members voting aye. Motion carried.

#### Bids

None.

#### Recreation Coordinator – Athletics

Ms. Martin informed the board members that currently for youth sports the 3 on 3 Basketball League is playing as well as the 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Basketball with District #118.

Ms. Martin informed the board members that currently for adult sports the Women's Volleyball League is playing. Ms. Martin stated she has continued moving more items online and currently has fifteen free agents signed up for the Adult Softball League, most of which are from Scott Air Force Base.

Ms. Martin stated that she has been working on planning new programs for the recently acquired gyms and facilities at the Southwestern Illinois Justice & Workforce Development Campus.

#### Assistant Director Public Works

Mr. Maue informed the board members the Parks Maintenance employees have been working on maintenance and beautifying the parks as much as possible. Mr. Maue stated they are still working on tree removal and doing some parking lot repairs. Mr. Maue informed the board members that the first baseball game will be held at Whitey Herzog Field on Tuesday, April 14, 2023. Mr. Maue informed the board members the park's staff has done a great job and the field looks very nice.

#### Director of Public Works

Mr. Poole stated he would like to give the floor to the City of Belleville Police Chief Eiskant in regard to Ever and Anon Park. Chief Eiskant stated he would like to provide everyone with his experiences with the park. Chief Eiskant stated the homeless population has dramatically changed during his twenty-one years as a police officer, mostly within the past five years. Chief Eiskant stated most of the homeless population is transient from St. Louis and it has created challenges for the police department. Chief Eiskant stated most of these homeless are voluntarily homeless, meaning they have a place to live but they choose to remain homeless, get free meals and continue to do drugs. Chief Eiskant stated that he understands the comments to keep it green space but that he has never witnessed anyone in that park over the past several years that wasn't the homeless population. Chief Eiskant stated there is always human feces, drug paraphernalia, and drugs found in the park. Chief Eiskant stated there are numerous arrests made at this park but with the 2017 Bond Reform Act they are immediately released. Chief Eiskant stated this issue was here long before Mayor

Gregory took office, but it will be fixed under Mayor Gregory's watch because they have come together to find solutions. Chief Eiskant stated to fix Ever & Anon Park it must be fenced in and turned into a dog park.

Alderman Phil Elmore stated he just wanted to inquire with Mr. Poole that there is a new playground that is located a few blocks away at East End Park recently installed? Mr. Elmore inquired with Mr. Poole that there is also a nature scape playground at Bellevue Park? Mr. Elmore stated that maybe the public is unaware of the greenspace and playgrounds in the area. Mr. Poole acknowledged that Mr. Elmore was correct in his statements regarding playgrounds and greenspace.

Mayor Gregory stated that since her administration has been in place there have been twenty-two new police officers hired. Mayor Gregory stated that because of hiring those officers, crimes with social issues are down. Mayor Gregory asked Chief Eiskant to share how much each of the categories of crime were down. Chief Eiskant stated every category in Belleville was down except for one which was burglary.

Mr. Poole stated he had been a city employee for twenty-two years and Ever and Anon Park was a little jewel at Mascoutah Avenue and Main Street. Mr. Poole stated that in the last several years that was his experience with the park. Mr. Poole stated that the parks and maintenance employees are tasked with cleaning the park and it has become an issue. Mr. Poole stated that the proposal is to make the park a controlled access membership-based dog park. Mr. Poole stated that members would need to fill out the application for the dog park and provide vaccination records and pay the fee accordingly. Mr. Poole stated that members would then have access to the downtown park as well as the Rotary Dog Park on Sixth Street. Mr. Poole stated he is not opposed to opening the park to the public, possibly during downtown events. Mr. Poole stated the proposed fence would be decorative and possibly six foot tall.

Mr. Poole informed the board members the Parks Department has been granted access to the gyms for programming purposes at the Southwestern Illinois Justice & Workforce Development Campus. Mr. Poole stated the Parks Department will also be responsible for scheduling the facility. Mr. Poole stated it is his understanding that the Parks Department will have the first rights, the second rights will be SWIC and outside rentals will be third. Mr. Heisler asked Mr. Poole if there were other gyms outside of the main gym. Mr. Poole explained the three gyms that are available. Mrs. Hessel inquired if the department would have access to the outside sports facilities. Mr. Poole stated there will be access to the tennis courts and the football field at some point. Mr. Poole stated that the football field needs a new turf wear layer and SWIC is working on that currently. Mayor Gregory explained various planned usage of the Southwestern Illinois Justice & Workforce Development Campus.

Mr. Poole informed the board members that included in their packets was a proposal from Gonzalez Companies for engineering services for improvements at Bicentennial Park. Mr. Poole stated the proposal is for design work to include dredging two ponds, parking lot improvements near the Splash Pad and adding a small shade shelter. Mr. Poole asked if there were any questions regarding the proposal. Discussion was held on the proposal from Gonzalez Companies. Mrs. Hessel made a motion to accept the proposal for design services from Gonzalez Companies, LLC as presented in the amount of \$24,150.00, the motion was seconded by Mr. Lanxon. All members voting aye. Motion carried.

#### Additional New Business

None.

#### Old Business

Mr. Elmore explained to the board members that he joined the Belleville Jaycees organization in 1993. Mr. Elmore stated he wanted to make sure the board was aware that the Belleville Jaycees one and only goal was to raise funds to build a park to give to the City of Belleville. Mr. Elmore stated sadly the Jaycees organization no longer exists. Mr. Elmore stated that it was well known that if at any time the Jaycees were unable to run or maintain the park it was supposed to go to the city. Mr. Elmore stated that he was made aware that documentation regarding this has not been found, however there are at least 20 witnesses that could attest to the agreement. Alderman, Chris Rothweiler informed the board that as the former President of the Jaycees he could second the intent as stated by Mr. Elmore. Mr. Poole informed the board and Mr. Elmore that Jaycee Park is a City of Belleville owned park. Mr. Poole stated the park is being utilized and maintained by the Parks

Department. Mr. Poole stated the hall located within Jaycee Park was recently sold and unfortunately the City of Belleville was not given the first right of refusal. Mr. Poole stated there needs to be a document drawn up between the City of Belleville and the new owners. Discussion was held on Jaycee Park. Mr. Elmore stated he needed to clarify in his prior statement that everything in Jaycee Park and the park itself was supposed to go to the City of Belleville. Alderman Rothweiler informed Mr. Elmore that documents were searched for regarding the agreement and were not located.

Executive Session

Mrs. Hessel made a motion at 7:44 p.m. to enter Executive Session, seconded by Mr. Hartin. All members voting aye. Motion carried.


Mrs. Hessel stated the board was back from Executive Session at 8:14p.m. Mrs. Hessel made a motion to recommend the fencing of Ever & Anon Park and start it as a controlled access, membership-based park to include a dog park, seconded by Mr. Lanxon. All members voting aye. Motion carried.


Questions From the Floor

None.

Adjournment

Hearing no further New Business, Old Business or Questions from the Floor. Mr. Lanxon moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mrs. Hessel. All members voted aye. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m..

  
Ms Marge Belt  
President of the Board

  
Mr. Jason Poole  
Director of Public Works

Subscribed and sworn before me this 11<sup>th</sup> day of May 2023:

  
Notary Public

