

MINUTES OF ST. CHARLES PARK DISTRICT & CITY OF ST. CHARLES
BOARD MEETING HELD ON JULY 23, 2015

The St. Charles Park District Board and City of St. Charles met at Pottawatomie Community Center on Tuesday, July 23, 2015, at 7:03 p.m. President pro tem James Cooke called the meeting to order, and the Secretary called the roll.

Members present were: Commissioners Trish Beckjord, Jean Cabel, Brian Charles, James Cooke, and Karrsten Goettel; Mayor Raymond Rogina and Aldermen Rita Payleitner, Arthur Lemke, William Turner, Steven Gaugel, Jo Krieger, and Ed Bessner

Members absent were: Commissioners Bob Carne, Bob Thomson and Aldermen Dan Stellato, Ronald Silkaitis, Todd Bancroft, and Maureen Lewis

Others present were: Director of Parks and Recreation Holly Cabel, Superintendent of Parks and Planning Laura Rudow, Superintendent of Recreation Jeff Greenwald, Superintendent of Finance and Administration Cathy Medema, Assistant Superintendent of Planning Design and Construction John Wessel, Pottawatomie Golf Course Manager and PGA Golf Pro Ron Skubisz, Administrative Assistant Sash Dumanovic, City Administrator Mark Koenen, Director of Public Works Peter Suhr, Assistant Director of Public Works Karen Young, Assistant Director of Public Works Chris Adesso, Chicago Tribune Reporter Marwa Eltagouri; Hitchcock Design Group representatives Rick Hitchcock, Tim King, and Greg Chismark; Citizens John Rabchuk, Miles Lowry, Sharm Radjienta, Margaret Morgan, Jan Sorensen, James Enck, Ralph Anderson, Christina Wagner, James Fuller, Chris Meldrum, Sarah Harabaugh, Joan Leonard, Tiffany Minderman, Suzi Myers and Tom Anderson

Consent Agenda

No consent agenda was presented.

Hitchcock Design Group Presentation

Rick Hitchcock of Hitchcock Design Group prefaced the presentation by introducing his team, giving a brief overview of each phase and project timeline, and summarizing the purpose for tonight's meeting. Many cities lie along the Fox River in Illinois but St. Charles is unique because 44% of the river frontage is publicly owned and the downtown area is centered on the river. Recreational activities already taking place in the City is representative of broader demographical data. While the numerous recreational opportunities, passive enjoyment of the river, and respective stakeholders may have competing views at times, the consensus is the Fox

River itself. The goal of the Active River Project is to create a lively riverfront environment that is the centerpiece of the community.

Project objectives and associated standards were summarized from the public open house on July 7, 2015. The feedback received was helpful in guiding the scope and direction of the Active River Project and defining the target audience of the improvements. The ongoing strategy will be to create a package of seasonal and year round attractions for the river and making the area a destination full of complementary activities. It was emphasized that maintaining momentum is essential to ensuring the realization of the project goal. In addition to supporting and enhancing existing attractions along the river, the Active River Project will focus on extending and completing the Riverwalk, extending the Fox River Trail on both side of the river, modifying the dam, creating a stream themed play environment for children alongside the river, and constructing an observation platform on top of the railroad bridge as a truly unique local attraction.

The project will not come without its challenges. Preserving and improving natural areas, water quality and habitats along the river would be a component of the project. Completing connections on both sides of the river will keep visitors safe, allow for easier access to local cultural assets, and help with supercharging the brand. An appealing mix of local attractions would make the area a destination that may attract more infill development in the surrounding space.

Committing to improvements over time, keeping the river and riverfront a priority in the years to come, and having stakeholders who are vested into the goal of the project would help accomplish the desired outcomes. Looking ahead to the next stage of the project, priorities, actions, and investments would be identified. As the presentation came to a close, Rick Hitchcock asked those in attendance to consider the history of the area and the opportunities in front of us, and invited questions from the Park District, the City Council and members of the public. The following questions were raised:

Question: Will improvements adversely affect rowing activities from Ferson Creek to Red Gate?

Answer: Not at all.

Question: Are there additional recreational opportunities on and along the river south of Rt. 64?

Answer: Yes, there could be a number of opportunities. Examples include boogie boarding, canoeing/kayaking to Rt. 38 and whimsical things like art pieces and items of interest may be placed along the river. We would need to evaluate the best options for placement of desired activities and unique items.

Question: Have we explored the potential of the Ferson Creek Area to work into the project?

Answer: Yes and the process is advancing to identify the best options. Future improvements to that section, as well as other areas, are being considered. There will be floodplain and floodway issues to consider when erecting structures.

Question: Have there been any conversations with our neighbors to the south about continuing the length of the Active River Project?

Answer: Yes. Our office was approached by Geneva with interest. Generally speaking the regional approach is sensible. It's an opportunity for all when you compare one attraction in one place vs. multiple attractions over a large region.

Question: Have you studied areas where the regional approach took off?

Answer: Most of our work is completed with single cities for maximum economic development within city limits.

Question: Thinking about stormwater management, what will happen with an overflow event?

Answer: The Fox River is highly regulated and we're not able to do anything that would compromise the river in any way downstream. On a smaller scale we can address the flow similar to the Fox Waterway Agency. The opposite is true as well. During a drought we may find that some features, like a rock attraction, may be dry.

Question: How complex will the oversight from other agencies be at the start?

Answer: There's no question that there would be a lot of fingerprints on a project like this. Being the biggest component of the project, the dam will deserve and receive the most attention. The dam ties in to all components of the project. The return on investment would be multi-dimensional. It's a good time to voice strategy to other agencies.

Question: Will this be a new concept for the Illinois Department of Natural Resources or the Army Corp of Engineers and can we test drive it with them as we go?

Answer: It's a complicated answer. We have reached out to officials but none are necessarily in a position to guide us along. So much more study will be required and handed over before they would go on record to say this is a good idea. The bookends are a great concept on one side and a permit in hand on the other. No

one has said it is impossible but this is all ongoing. We're neither encouraged nor discouraged at the moment by the contact made with regulating agencies. It's a long process and we'll need to gain support on the way

Question: Is the permitting process the potential blocker? Or is it policy? What is the big blocker for the whole concept?

Answer: The yes or no to the concept will come from the value that the community and leaders see in the proposition. The policy and agency pieces would come later.

Question: Where would kayakers go south of Rt. 64?

Answer: It depends. The answers may be different between a passive enthusiast and a course user. Course users would loop around and repeat along the course north of Rt. 64. A novice would likely portage. South of Rt. 64, a canoe user may need to either back up or exit at a yet to be determined stop.

Question: Will there be warning signage?

Answer: Appropriate signage should warn of what's coming ahead with an option to exit. There could be lots of options on the manner of exit such as a smooth exit vs. a rapid of some kind. The placement of materials and rocks along the shore and in the river will determine the desired effects. There probably isn't enough volume for a spillway channel.

Question Individual praised Hitchcock for outstanding work. We have the opportunity to take this to the next level and the residents will benefit. With talks of a competitive whitewater course aside, will this now be strictly a recreational attraction?

Answer: The concept drawing is only a concept. There is no accepted design for the course at this time. Our staff will give guidance on the placement of features to attain the desired skill level but still provide something for everyone. Perhaps that means having the option for occasional competition with limitations.

Question: If it will be a competitive course, what kind will it be?

Answer: Nothing is decided yet but you could say there are a lot of possibilities. It may vary from weekend to weekend. It could be a recreational attraction 360 days of the year.

Question: We're very excited about the presentations, are grateful for the skilled staff, and having all our questions answered. A 10 year plan says that the show is on the road. What are your recommendations?

Answer: We would address the phases a little later in the process. There are enough components to sustain momentum and the community has a great opportunity.

Question: What are the possible locations for access to amenities along the east bank at Rt. 64 and under the Rt. 64 Bridge? The best option appears to be on the east given the limitations on the west side.

Answer: The clearance under the Rt. 64 Bridge would remain 10 feet with no motorized boat traffic.

Question: It's a pleasure to hear the recommendations and appreciate you taking comments into account. My request is to add wording in the goal statement regarding more ecological influence.

Answer: The ecology is critical and important. It's tough to get it all in the goal statement.

Rick Hitchcock thanked everyone in attendance and especially those who may have sat through all four presentations.

Other Business

There was no further or other business, so, upon motion duly made, seconded, and carried, the meeting adjourned at 8:27 p.m.

Secretary