

BREMERTON PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING

Minutes of May 25, 2021

Virtual Meeting

Commissioner's Present: Tim Baker, Ben Burnette, Pat Watson, Dave Hedger and Maggie Williams

Staff Present: Jeff Elevado, Director of Parks and Recreation
Colette Berna, Park Preservation and Development Manager
Steve Mutek, Parks Operation Manager

I. Meeting Called to Order at 5:31 p.m. by Chair Burnette

II. Approval of Minutes: A motion was made to approve the minutes from the April 27th meeting. Hedger/Watson (M/S/U)

III. Public Comment: N/A

IV. Business Items:

1. Parks & Recreation COVID-19 Status Update

Director Elevado shared that the Dept. continues to follow the latest CDC guidelines in city parks. The allowance for vaccinated people to not wear masks has been included in shelter rental agreements and gatherings of no more than 50 people are still allowed. Softball leagues are scheduled to start on June 21st and the Dept. is working on determining when we can safely open the Sheridan Park Community Center and Bremerton Senior Center. Flower baskets have been installed and downtown fountains are scheduled to start running again soon.

2. Catalyst Charter School Proposal to use Manette Park for recess and physical education classes – Amanda Gardner, Dustin Church & Tatiana Epanchin (Catalyst Charter School)

Director Elevado provided background to the proposal which started back in 2019 with discussions about possible partnership between the school and city and led to formal proposal Commissioners received prior to this meeting. **Ms. Gardner and Ms. Epanchin** (Co-founders of Catalyst Charter School) and **Mr. Church** (Director of Operations and Finance) introduced themselves and presented information about charter schools which are publicly funded, tuition-free independent schools that were approved in Washington in 2012. **Ms. Gardner** explained that the Catalyst Charter application was about 800 pages and was unanimously approved in May 2019 and that the school is open to all students regardless of background, income or zip code. **Ms. Epanchin** presented mission and vision for school and core values which spell out the word "BRAVE": Belong, Resilient, Achiever, Vulnerable, and Enthusiastic. **Mr. Church** discussed 5M investment converting former Discovery Fellowship building into school. He felt there was a mutual benefit allowing students to use the park space to build community relations and presented slides showing the park not being used during school hours. He proposed having three recess shifts next year from 10:15-12:50 with 28-56 students and student to staff ratio would be no more than 15:1. He also proposed offering additional athletic classes at park on every weekday except Wednesday with no more than 28 students at a time. This proposal would include a payment of 100k over 10 years to go towards maintenance of park due to increase use by the school. **Ms. Gardner** noted that this proposal is a starting place, they are willing to negotiate and incorporate feedback from community, and hoped Commissioners would see this as a natural extension of similar partnerships that exist between the city and schools like at Kiwanis Park and Smith Nature Play Park. **Chair Burnette** opened the meeting up for the public to comment. **Julia Hamon** supports the proposal, has a student at Catalyst, has done recess duty and noted the school only

has a blacktop area without a functional playground and it would be good for them to have a grassy area. **Ken Riley**, a founding board member of Catalyst, supports proposal and is excited about partnership with city and believes Catalyst would be in full compliance of whatever agreement is made. **Tiffany** has kids attending Catalyst and supports proposal. **Arnie Hobbs and Paula Wood**, invested time and donations towards the park redevelopment and are concerned about the proposal and feel use of park by school would make it difficult for surrounding neighborhood to use it. **Penelope O'Laughlin** has students at Catalyst, supports proposal and is excited for opportunity for students to practice their "BRAVE" skills in the community. **Darryl Riley** has been part of design team at Catalyst, supports the proposal, and offered assistance with landscaping by his landscape company. **Ellen Stetzer-Hetrick** lives across the street from Catalyst, has been impacted by the school's construction and did not feel there was any outreach from school to surrounding neighborhood. As a retired educator she knows kids need recess and knows the grounds at the school are too small and wonders if this was taken into consideration of the school's planning or if they just assumed they were going to have access to the park the neighborhood worked very hard to create. **Emily Russell** has a student at Catalyst, supports the proposal, and is excited by the opportunity to teach kids about stewardship and suggested the proposal be tried on a trial basis to see whether the school can take care of the park or not. **Terry Hedger** worked hard fundraising for the park redevelopment, explained how expensive the playground equipment was and noted that after it was installed with help from community it had immediate use. She said photos shown in earlier presentation of no one at park is not accurate as she is there often and sees many young families with kids using it. She said if there are 28-56 kids using the playground she's concerned the young families in neighborhood will be shoved out. **The Parr Family** lives in Manette, has a student at Catalyst, supports the proposal, noted that the school is part of the community too, and offered to volunteer to help keep park clean. **Alanna Imbach** thanked the city/community for the beautiful park, has a student at Catalyst and enjoys spending time at the park after school. She supports proposal and offered to volunteer at park cleanup days. **Steph Layson**, teacher at Catalyst recognized neighbor's comments about construction and lack of outreach and offered apology. She suggested that if smaller kids are on play equipment that older Catalyst students could stay away, and if part of the agreement needs to be that Catalyst doesn't use the playground and just uses the lawn area that could work. Also, if 28 is too many, Catalyst could work with City/Commission to figure out what number works and that she really wants students to be able to access green space and be outdoors beyond their blacktop area. **Loren** has kids, supports proposal and sees opportunity to complete original plan for park which included bleachers and path around field. **Sarah** has four kids, one at Catalyst, and feels having the playground at Manette Park used by Catalyst is a no brainer. **Director Elevado** read three letters into the record. **The first letter by Meredith Sobolesky** opposed proposal because community fundraised and spent time and personal money for the park renovation and many likely would not have done so if it was going to be a permanent recess area for a charter school. The letter noted that up to 56 kids not including school staff using the park will decrease enjoyment by community members visiting the park and that proposed compensation of 10k/year is not adequate. **The second letter by Karina Stone** opposed the proposal. She regularly uses the park with her young children and retired parents and they take great pride in knowing their hard work and monetary contributions helped make the park a reality. The letter noted that the planning and development of the neighborhood park did not intend for high intensity use by a charter school and that the volume of kids proposed at this small park is quite dramatic. The letter said that although the proposal requests non-exclusive use, families seeking use of the park during school hours would feel excluded and her family would feel overwhelmed and would no longer make the choice to use the park. The letter said there is no mutual benefit between the community and school as the proposal suggests, instead it hinders the community's access to all the amenities within this much-loved park. The letter said Catalyst launched a public charter school on a site where there is no adequate playground or greenspace which appears in opposition to their own charter school application and as a Manette resident she feels taken advantage of by suggesting

that we (neighborhood) now give up our city park for the school's personal use. She asked in her letter that prior to any decisions to please provide adequate time for local residents to provide input. **The third letter by Kate Fletcher**, a school counselor, has two kids enrolled at Catalyst and that as a private school student in 1980's she was accustomed to using Kiwanis Park for recess and field days and is accustomed to city parks being for everyone. She received notice from another community member that there were some members upset about Catalyst using the park and she is incredibly disappointed. She said the ability to go outside and play is good for children's mental well-being and would rather see Catalyst spend their money investing in their student's mental health as currently they only have one part-time counselor. **Director Elevado** stated that the city's number one goal is to maintain access to the park by the neighborhood that put their blood, sweat and tears into building it. He said that Catalyst is also a part of the community, and feels there are some benefits of a partnership but that there needs to be parameters to ensure access is maintained to community. He showed a slide that looked at the proposed recess times and calculated the estimated number of visits per day using the average (between 28-56) which would amount to an additional 17,000 additional uses of the park during the school year. A typical neighborhood park (which are designed for residents living within a 10-minute walk) get about 9,000 uses a year. Current agreement with Star of the Sea school for Kiwanis Park allows use between 10 am-1 pm and at full capacity would amount to 15,800 additional visits but the park is over twice the size of Manette Park and the Star of the Sea school contributed 400k towards the park redevelopment. This is an example of great partnership but takes into consideration the amount of use, size of park and significant contribution early on. The proposed 10k/year compensation by Catalyst would take several years to replace a large piece of play equipment. **Chair Burnette** thanked Parks and Recreation staff and Commissioners Watson and Hedger for being so involved in the fundraising and renovation of Manette Park and turned it over to Commissioners to comment. **Commissioner Baker** noted that Manette Park wasn't ever anything like it is now, a beautiful park, and hoped we could come to a resolution. **Commissioner Watson** said he was happy to hear the thoughtful and reasoned remarks from everyone. He noted that the proposal they received before the meeting had a maximum number of students of 28 but the presentation showed 28-56. Also, the use of the sports court wasn't in the proposal but was mentioned in the presentation. **Mr. Church (Catalyst)** confirmed the school would like to use the sports court, especially for wellness classes to teach kids to play tennis. **Commissioner Watson** noted that while the proposal is not requesting exclusive use, if the playground, court, or field are completely occupied then it doesn't seem like community members would continue to have access to the park's amenities at all times. **Ms. Gardner (Catalyst)** said they are open to negotiations and maybe the agreement has them not using the play equipment (so it can be open for the neighborhood) and just using the lawn area. She recognized that use by the community takes precedence. **Commissioner Williams** said the Catalyst school sounds like a wonderful program for the kids and everyone involved. She had some questions about the number of students that could be using the facility and she noted the difference in size between Kiwanis and Manette and the different numbers of students. On Our Lady Star of the Sea's website they have 183 students and she saw that Catalyst will eventually have 500 students which wasn't addressed in the presentation. She also wondered if there's been any outreach in the Manette neighborhood about the proposal and outreach in Kiwanis Park neighborhood to determine the impact. She was also curious about Catalyst's charter school application which said they were going to provide space for recess and play area to support their wellness programs and it seems like that wasn't done. She also agreed with another comment about a trial period. **Ms. Gardner (Catalyst)** noted they currently have 168 kids and the maximum enrollment once they have K-8 will be about 500. She said they do have a black top area on site and that they were waiting to invest in play equipment until they knew to what extent they would have access to the park. She acknowledged they are limited in their athletic offerings in their school space and if they end up not having access to the park it will make it harder to do things like have a soccer team or things like that. **Director Elevado** noted that the playfield at Manette Park is rented to Bremerton Soccer Club

who has youth soccer practice there, typically after school, and Catalyst could do a similar rental agreement to reserve space at certain times. He noted that the City has not reached out to the Manette community yet because the details of what was being proposed was not known and when that is better understood that the City will reach out. **Commissioner Hedger** said the school should be aware that the park is for everyone and there is a group of seniors who participate in pickleball and pretty much take over the court for at least one or two days a week. He welcomed the process and now that he knows what Catalyst wants the Commission can discuss and have some basis on which to make a decision. **Chair Burnette** thanked everyone for being at meeting and giving their opinions. He said Manette Park is a beautiful asset and he has some concerns with the proposal, the amount of kids, and additional wear and tear on playground, field and keeping up with maintenance of restroom. He said the Commission is going to be heavily involved in this and felt they could come to an agreement to make something happen. **Dr. Elevado** thanked Catalyst members for their proposal and patience working through process.

V. Staff Reports:

1) Parks & Recreation Commission Application Update

Director Elevado shared that he recently had an opportunity to talk with three fantastic applicants for the open P&R Commission seats. One of the challenges is that some of the applicants live blocks away from other Commissioners. He will be working with the Mayor to try to get appointments through Council soon. He thanked Commissioners for their interest in serving the community and hanging in there while we're short on Commissioners.

2) Warren Ave. Park Renovation Project Update

Director Elevado shared that he's working on getting the entry sign done and backstop is ordered. Mr. Mutek and staff have done a phenomenal job getting the field looking so good, and they're working on coordinating with the Pee-Wees to help paint goalposts. **Ms. Berna** noted that the grants that funded the renovation expire at the end of June so we're just completing the finishing touches and hope to have an onsite celebration there soon.

3) Kitsap Lake Park Renovation Project Update

Ms. Berna shared that the cultural resource survey report was submitted to the state agencies for review and we're still waiting for their approval before we can move forward on Geotech work needed to proceed with engineering documents. We've also been coordinating with DNR and getting additional survey work needed that they requested as part of the lease (for in-water structures). **Director Elevado** noted that the \$258k Dept. of Commerce grant is going to make a big difference as far as completing the upland portion of the park as well as the Community Development Block Grant to help fund the accessibility improvements.

4) Ivy Green Cemetery Improvement Project Update

Mr. Mutek shared that he's been working with the contractor to redo the entry gate, concrete pillars and fence. **Director Elevado** shared that the contractor that replaced the roof offered to donate a nice finial eagle to put on the peak of the roof that was just installed and makes it look more special.

5) CDBG Accessibility Improvement Project Update

Ms. Berna summarized the 75k Community Development Block Grant scope to make accessibility improvements at 4 sites including Kitsap Lake Park, Lions Park, Pendergast Park and Sheridan Park Community Center. **Mr. Mutek** shared that they installed new grab rails at Kitsap Lake Park restroom and have put out bid requests for new roofing, concrete flat work and

are ordering new zero-hinge doors to make the entries accessible. **Director Elevado** shared that it has taken quite a bit of staff time to do the contracts for this project due to the federal grant requirements.

VI. Commissioner's Comments:

Commissioner Watson said the signage on the same post as the smoke-free zone sign at Bachmann Park is really faded and hardly legible and thought if that sign was the same age as the others that were installed at waterfronts, they probably all need to be taken down or replaced. This sign reads that shellfish harvesting is prohibited and was determined to be a Kitsap Public Health Dept. sign.

Commissioner Baker said that most of the people that logged on to tonight's meeting were associated with school (supporting proposal) and wondered how Manette residents felt. **Chair Burnette** said yes, he's heard some concerns from Manette residents. **Commissioner Hedger** said he wasn't sure about the numbers and would be interested in a testing period to get a sense of the usage. He said he thinks people are worried about the wear and tear because everybody remembers what it used to look like and that if we can come up with some limitations on the number of kids and how many days of week and increase the compensation that we could make something work. **Commissioner Watson** said it would be nice to have an agreement where they can use the facilities but it's just a matter of negotiating the right numbers. **Director Elevado** reiterated that his priority is to protect community access and at tonight's meeting he didn't get to discuss mowing schedules and maintenance access during particular times of day. **Mr. Mutek** noted that typical school grounds don't look as nice as Manette Park for a reason and that if we have a school using it the aesthetics will be impacted because we won't have the resources to maintain that level of usage. **Director Elevado** thanked Chair Burnette for being a good moderator.

VII. Adjournment: Chair Burnette adjourned the meeting at 8:10 pm.