

**CANAL FULTON
SPECIAL PARK BOARD MEETING
MINUTES
Thursday, February 13, 2003– 7:00 P.M.**

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

MEMBERS PRESENT: Fred Etheridge, Chair; Mary Ann Higgins, Scot Svab, Chad Rupert, new non-voting student Park Board member. Fred Fleming had been called away due to a family illness.

Mr. Etheridge asked Chad Rupert to tell the Board something about himself and why he wanted to be on the Park Board. Mr. Rupert said he is a student at Northwest High School and is seventeen years old and a Senior there. He said he wanted to be on the Board so he could give his input for the young people as to what needed to be done.

Mr. Etheridge said it was his hope that his input would not be limited to the High School. He would also like to see Mr. Rupert get input from the Middle School and the Grade School.

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Linda Zahirsky, City Council Member
Karen Wise, Davey Resource Group

MINUTES:

Mrs. Higgins felt that there should be corrections on Page 3 of the Minutes of the January 12, 2003 minutes. Under the James Schalmo Nature Center, the available date for the \$100,000.00 should read “December, 2003”, and in the second sentence the date should read “July 1, 2003”, not “December”. Mr. Svab then made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Higgins. Roll: Yes, ALL.

OLD BUSINESS:

Softball Fields

Mr. Etheridge stated it was agreed that Mr. Svab and Mr. Fleming would look at the proposal and come up with the scope of work for what we want to accomplish. Mr. Fleming’s father is ill, so Mr. Etheridge asked Mr. Svab to try to work around that.

Council Member, Linda Zahirsky, arrived and was welcomed and introduced to the new student member of the Park Board.

Mr. Etheridge then continued by saying that Dan Mayberry has identified the manholes that can be abandoned. He said it looks like about half of them can be abandoned.

Summer Recreation Program

Mr. Etheridge said that we are continuing to work with Tim Shetzer from the Y and the Township. He said he received a letter on February 10, from the Township Trustees. The letter reads: "Dear Mr. Etheridge: We have been asked to participate in the YMCA Youth Program for Canal Fulton and Lawrence Township area. Could you please provide us with more specific information, such as, where it will be held, cost of participation, what the program would consist of, as well as the City's detailed plans for participation. Clarification on the program would be very helpful to us in making our decision."

Mr. Etheridge said he was encouraged by this letter, because the previously letter he received on January 24th indicated they had sent the proposal to their legal counsel, Attorney Krash. He feels the tone of the most recent letter indicates that we have probably gotten past any legal hurdles.

He said the Board had also asked for proposals from different organizations that provide activities for people, but they have been slow to come in. So far the Board has only received two. One was from Sluggers and Putters and the other was from the Varsity Athletic Club. The Varsity Athletic Club's proposal is broken down into half-day and full-day programs.

Mrs. Higgins said she thought the Y was going to be taking the lead in this, so if these others were interested in participating they would be working the YMCA. She asked if that is how it would work. A short discussion followed. Mr. Etheridge also stated that the Y survey that was sent out to all the schools will also be going out as an insert in the City Newsletter of March 1.

James D. Schalmo Nature Center

Mr. Etheridge stated that Planning Commission support would be absolutely necessary. We will also need the support of City Council. He stated that Mrs. Zahirsky has always been supportive of the Parks and, to a large degree, is responsible for the money we have in this year's budget.

He went on to say that citizen support will be extremely important, especially from the neighbors who surround the area where the Park will be. He said he has met with a house mover from Cleveland and has a proposal on moving the house. He is also working with an appraiser to appraise the property.

Board Vacancy

Mr. Etheridge stated that there are a couple of people who have indicated an interest, but the vacancy is still open.

NEW BUSINESS:

Karen Wise, Wetlands Section Leader from Davey Resource Group

Mr. Etheridge said he and Mrs. Wise walked the site this afternoon and he asked her to share with the Board her thoughts. Mrs. Wise asked if the map was still available to look at for the people who have not seen it.

Mrs. Wise stated she is a wetlands biologist and has been working at Davey for approximately six years. She said the majority of her job is working with the development community in helping to keep them in compliance with state and federal wetland regulations.

She said currently in the State of Ohio, almost any filling of wetlands or streams requires a permit. She said in this case the City has a substantial tract of wetlands within the City limits that you are not trying to fill. She stated she looked at the area today. She feels this is not a real urban area, but is certainly developed almost all the way around the wetland. She said considering that, the core of the area is very good and high quality. She said it is probably one of the largest contiguous areas of wetland right in an urban center that she has seen.

Mrs. Wise said to have the opportunity to use this land for the entire community. She said in the short term, make it a passive nature preserve for the residents, and maybe in the long term, figure a way to use a trail system to other parks and to the Ohio-Erie Canal. She said a variety of wildlife and foliage live in this area. She said the plan was prepared by a landscape architect. He has proposed a passive recreation type approach with a small trail head and landscape buffer proposed. There will also be a parking facility and picnic shelter. There will also be viewing platforms and overlooks.

She also said there would be state grants available and perhaps federal grants. She said there are at least two grants that would be worthwhile. One is through the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency. It is The Ohio Environmental Education Fund. It would be anywhere from \$5,000 – 50,000.00. It would allow grant money to be funneled to the school district and the schools, in turn, could use the money to develop environmental educational curriculum. She said the other grant available is part of the Clean Ohio Fund. It goes through the Ohio Public Works Commission. She said the way it is set up is that there are nineteen Natural Resource Assistance Councils (NRACS). Stark County has one. She said for the year 2003 Stark County's NRAC received \$1,073,736.00. That money will be awarded on a first come first serve basis. You need to make your application by April 1, 2003. They will continue to award through June 30 of this year. She said the money is earmarked for conservation projects, including the purchase of open spaces and the cost of making them accessible to the public.

A discussion followed.

Mr. Etheridge asked Mrs. Zahirsky what she felt the next steps should be. She suggested that the Park Board have a special meeting with Council. She said it should be held before the March 4, 2003 Council meeting, at 7:00 P.M. Mr. Etheridge said he would like to bring the Planning Commission in first as a matter of protocol. Mr. Etheridge asked Mrs. Zahirsky if she saw any resistance. She asked if any of the homeowners have been talked with. Mr. Etheridge said not yet.

Mr. Etheridge asked if Mrs. Zahirsky thought it would be beneficial for Mrs. Wise to address City Council. She said yes. A discussion followed. Mrs. Wise was asked if she could address Council on March 4, 2003. She asked if it would be possible to do it at the March 18th Council meeting. Further discussion followed.

Friends of Echoing Ridge

Mr. Etheridge stated that they had acquired handicapped picnic tables that were secured through recycling grants. They are not assembled. It was decided that it would be a good idea to coordinate a day to assemble the picnic tables with the Friends of Echoing Ridge. The date has been set for May 3, 2003, at 2:00 P.M. There will be hotdogs and soft drinks.

Mr. Rupert was asked if the Seniors have a community service project. He said he would look into making this picnic table assembly their community project.

Park Events

The list of newly scheduled events were approved. The Northwest and Kyler softball dates were also approved; however, there was a conflict during a particular week. Mr. Etheridge stated the request from Kyler arrived first, on the 20th of January. Mrs. Higgins said she will look into resolving the conflict during that week. Mr. Svab made a motion to approve both softball teams dates, with negotiations between the two for settling the week with the conflicts. Mr. Etheridge seconded the motion. Roll: Yes – ALL.

Mr. Etheridge said they have another opportunity for recycled materials. This is the last year for this grant. City Manager, Marge Loretto, said she would like input from the Park Board as to what the Board would like to have. Mr. Etheridge asked Mrs. Higgins and Mr. Svab to work with Mrs. Loretto on this.

Mr. Etheridge asked if everyone realized that there will be a Park levy on the May ballot. Mr. Etheridge said that Mayor Kenney said the PAC they had for the last Park levy is still active. He said there is about \$75.00 in it. Further discussion followed.

The meeting was adjourned.

Fred Etheridge, Chair