

The City of Canal Fulton

SPECIAL PARKS & RECREATION BOARD MEETING MINUTES

February 28, 2005 – 7:00 PM

SPECIAL REGULAR PARKS & RECREATION BOARD MEETING

Fred Fleming called the February 28, 2005 Parks & Recreation Board meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

CALLING OF THE ROLL

Present: Fred Fleming, Mary Ann Higgins, Bob Wagner, Mary Ann Hupp, Nate Ogg

Absent: Rebecca Shimer (sick)

Others in Attendance: Bob Fonte, Stark Parks; Dan Rice, Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition; Chris Pugh, Independent; James Deans and Chell Rossi, T.A.P. Committee; Dennis Downing, Ed Shuman and John Hatfield, Heritage Society; Dan Mayberry, Greg Mayberry, residents

OLD BUSINESS – No Report

NEW BUSINESS

Lease Agreement between the Park Board and Stark Parks

Mr. Fleming asked Mr. Bob Fonte to address the Board about the lease agreement. Mr. Fonte stated, “The lease dated May 3, 2004 was the agreement that we entered into with the Heritage Society with the intent of getting staff dedicated to Canal Fulton that would begin developing more programming in the Canal Fulton area.” He said, since the Visitor Center got funded that Stark Parks would help staff it. When they did this, they asked if it would be alright if they started in Canal Fulton’s building and then they would move to the new building. The actual terms were that Stark Parks would try to be helpful to them in any way they could to make their facility run a “little more regularly in terms of hours of operation and helping with tours.” Mr. Fonte said Bob Waynewright was working with Canal Fulton directly, and he had heard no complaints. Stark Parks had helped and worked with the City to attain funding for the building, and they said they would try to help when it came to operating it; that was the purpose of the draft lease they sent to the City in December. Mr. Fonte went on to say, “If you have programming or schedules, the reason I put a deadline in there is because if you don’t have a deadline, you never get done. Also, when we start marketing for programming, a lot of those things . . . we set our calendar, quite frankly, in the fall for the purpose of making sure that our schedules get into everybody’s brochures because most things are printed by the end of the first quarter.” Mr. Fonte has asked for an annual operating plan that results in an approved plan for each year. Stark Parks sends out a yearly schedule, so that each side knows what the expectations are each year, and Mr. Fonte said that was the intent, and that their schedule is typically done in November. Mr. Fonte said Stark Parks was receptive to anything they can to support the programs that are going on in Canal Fulton.

Mr. Fleming stated the Park Board is in charge of all facilities/recreational programs. They don’t make decisions or sign contracts, but they do look at them and make recommendations to the City Manager, which in turn goes to the Law Director then to City Council (per the Charter). Mr. Fonte stated originally he had met with the Mayor and Victor Colaianni. He gave them a copy of the lease agreement. In the future, Mr. Fonte will send anything regarding this issue to the Park Board. The Law Director will change any wording, if necessary. Mr. Fonte asked if there were any questions about the actual functions. Mr. Fleming said that’s

why he has the Heritage Society attending to ensure everything is the way they want to see it. Mr. Fleming wasn't sure that a lease was what they should be using or just a cooperative agreement.

John Hatfield referenced the Heritage Society's concerns. The dry dock needs serviced; it's under water, the gates have to be fixed, and the lifting device is an issue. They wanted to get the boat repaired and running by April/May for educational purposes and revenue. Regarding the lease, he said that when the Visitors Center was started, it was to replace the boat house, provide restrooms, a visitors' room and a ranger, that was the original intent when they put in the first \$100,000. The concern is they don't know what they are going to do between now and August. If they sign a lease with Stark Parks, Mr. Hatfield said it would eliminate a lot of their rights. They are concerned that Stark Parks will put items there that would be in direct competition with them. When they run the boat, they are still going to run the museum, and they have their own gift shop. They want to do more catered cruises, etc., hopefully evening cruises, trying to make money to provide guidance and help with the Historical District, help with the building, work on the Canal, etc. The Heritage Society has been doing this for years, with no consistent government funds. They want to keep the boat running and can make it pay. Their short plan is to have a dock. They need to do marketing and get information out. The boat house was moved into the park and is sitting where the Visitors Center will be, and there is construction work also in the way.

Mr. Fonte said the misunderstanding he has is that Mr. Hatfield is talking about the dry dock, which has nothing relatively to do with the agreement with the City. The dry dock is under contract; it took a while to get all the permits/permissions to do the work; once those were done, the weather has not cooperated. There was a contractor ready to do the work; Park District had agreed to be the project manager. He said the Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition is the fiscal agent for the project; they were handling the grant. Dan Mayberry said the money went through the City, so the City has to sign the contract. Starks Park is doing is managing the repairs once the contract is executed. Mr. Hatfield said that according to Dan Mayberry and Marge Loretto (City Manager), there had been no contract signed. Mr. Fonte said he can't help that; they can't sign the contract, but they will manage the work as soon as the contract is signed.

Mr. Fonte referred to the concern about September saying that the agreement with the City is about when they anticipate the building will be ready; it has nothing to do with them having a staff person. They had a meeting last year, where they said they would extend their current agreement until the building was ready, so they are still prepared to send their staff person to Canal Fulton when that building is habitable to continue what they've done, which is to help do the things they did last year and then transition and move into the new building when the building is ready. That's not saying they're not going to do anything until September. Mr. Fonte said he was anticipating sending Robert back as soon as they can get back into the building. He said the agreement talks about when they "guess the building will be ready because that's not your building; that's the City's building. So it's a different agreement; it has a different start date, and what we talked about was staying in your building until that building became available. So, I don't think there's a concern on our part about waiting until September to do anything. You know, our intent was to come in here in spring and pick up where we left off last year." Mr. Hatfield responded, "The thing is if the boat don't go, the dry dock don't go; and these other things, we can't pick up where we left." Mr. Fonte asked him, "What are we not doing?" Mr. Hatfield stated, "You didn't get the contract signed, and there ain't nobody down there making any quick moves to get it done. You gotta' sign that contract before anybody's going to show up. They need to order or make the materials to do that, and that could run a month or two, and we could be sitting here looking like idiots." It was asked who is it that has to "get this thing off of dead-center." Dan Mayberry said it sounds like the City of Canal Fulton. Dan Rice said that the Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition is the fiscal agent, saying they agreed to be fiscal agent for the surveying project. Mr. Fonte said he had it confused with OECA – not OECC. Mr. Mayberry stated the City received the signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (which is a contract with grant recipients) from Ed McCay of OECA today regarding the dry dock, which includes the survey. Mr. Fonte said, "The City couldn't sign a contract with the contractor until they had that document from OECA." It was noted the Historical Society is very happy with Robert Waynewright. Mr. Fonte said Mayor Grogan said he would extend the agreement until they moved into the new facility, and they need to attach (for insurance purposes to make sure the Historical Society is covered) a letter of understanding attached to it that says that the agreement is extended until it's replaced by the next agreement. He said the reality of it is, what the content of it says is going to happen (the title is not the issue; it's the terms). (Mr.

Hatfield said they have insurance.) The control and scheduling (Operating Plan) of what goes on in the building, including evening programs, is the City's. Mr. Fleming said all their scheduling goes through the Utility Clerk, but the Park Board does not have a problem with the Historical Society doing the marketing. It was said only one person should be responsible to act as a coordinator for the Visitors Center. August 16th is the date the City has for the Center to be available. They started laying block today. Mr. Mayberry said by Olde Canal Days (July 7-10, 2005) the buildings' exterior work, landscaping, etc. will be done, and the interior will be receiving finishing touches – per the construction schedule.

Mr. Fleming brought up the parking lot problems (they can't get at the boat while they're building the building, etc.). Mr. Mayberry said they have maintained a lane through the parking; there hasn't been an extreme demand for parking there yet. He said the new entrance and lot will be constructed while the old lot is still functioning as well as it can. Then they will open the new section (improving the existing). There will be 200 parking spaces vs. the current 100. Mr. Mayberry stated in 2000 when the grant was written, it was the City's intention that the Visitors Center be primarily for the Heritage Society to run their boat operation out of and also from attending all of the local meetings, there were several things identified as needs: restrooms, clean drinking water, and parking. Canal Fulton was identified as a "destination point . . . it's a Trailhead." At the time, Mr. Mayberry wanted a roadside rest at Community Park that the Heritage Society could function out of, hopefully bringing artifacts from their museum, using it for their needs, keep it open for restrooms and drinking water for the public. His thoughts about the Visitors Center were, "Build it and they will come." He thinks the general consensus of the Administration, City Council and the Mayor (who he spoke with) is that the Heritage Society, the Park Board and the City Administration needs to sit down and talk about all of their needs, then get with Bob Fonte and move on from there. He feels partnering with Stark Parks assures many things they can help the City too.

Mr. Rice supported what Mr. Mayberry said. He said when the plan was originally put together they looked at different places to provide services to visitors on the Towpath trail, coming off the Scenic Byway, etc., to provide access. He said Canal Fulton was designated as one of the main visitor center facilities. He thought it premature to focus on who is going to run the building, that the first questions is what is the purpose/needs/functions that they want the building to provide, which would be restrooms, parking, security/safety. Then the question is; who are the logical partners to play a role in it? Those partners certainly would be Stark Parks and the Heritage Society. He said, "We're reacting to a document that was written by one of the partners, where the other partners don't feel like they're a part of maybe." Mr. Fonte said that he is providing information he was asked to provide when it was really lifted from the agreement that was drawn up a year ago with the Heritage Society. He was told to "write something," so he did, and the Heritage Society went back-and-forth and agreed on what it was going to be last May. They talked about them providing the staffing – not setting the programs – but providing the coordination. That's why it was written there would be an Annual Operating Plan. He has no problem starting it over, but September is "going to get here, and we better have a planning place." He went on, "We are not setting the programming; we are acting as a staff person in a facility. We're going to facilitate same way we did last year from the Heritage Society building." They are not going to take over the boat. Their goal is to ensure programming is done professionally and with a theme, so it comes off as professional as it can be. He said, "Tell me who I have to agree with; is it the City, the Heritage Society or Park Board?"

Mr. Deans proposed that the City gets together with the Heritage Society and the Park Board and decide what they want in the agreement within the next 30 days. Then the City should meet with Stark Parks. Mr. Mayberry requested that Mr. Fleming select a few members of the Park Board to act as an Ad Hoc Committee to meet with the City during the daytime, and asked Mr. Hatfield to do the same with the Heritage Society to get an agreement/operational plan so far as the Heritage Society is concerned. Once that is done, they can get with Stark Parks and put the Visitors Center to rest. Another issue is the Park Board doesn't necessarily have to involve themselves in is a game plan to get the water stopped now. Mr. Fonte said that was part of the contract.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Fleming adjourned the meeting.

Fred Fleming, Chair