

City of Greensburg
PLANNING COMMISSION Meeting
Monday, June 25, 2018 7:00 PM

- I. **Call to Order by Dave Kahley**
- II. **Roll Call---taken by Amy Calisti, Administrative Assistant**

PRESENT:

DAVE KAHLEY, CHAIRMAN
BRIAN LAWRENCE, VICE CHAIRMAN
KAREN HUTCHINSON, SECRETARY
ROBERT RECKLEIN

ABSENT:

LISA METROSKY
RYAN VESELY
JOHN MUNSCH
RICK CUTIA
ANITA SIMPSON

ALSO PRESENT: LOU DEROSE, SOLICITOR
BARBARA CIAMPINI, PLANNING DIRECTOR

III. Approval of February 26, 2018 meeting minutes

Vice-chairman Brian Lawrence made a **motion to approve** the February 26, 2018 meeting minutes. Board member Robert Recklein **seconded the motion**. No discussion. **Unanimously all voted in favor.**

IV. Old Business

There is no old business to address.

V. New Business

A. Collaboration with the Voice of Westmoreland (VOW) group and the property owners from the neighborhood about the future of the City owned Grove Street open space

Tim Hines of 505 North Maple Avenue, Greensburg, a representative of the *Voice of Westmoreland* (VOW) started the public session presentation with a Powerpoint presentation showing the proposed Grove Street project area. The project objects include creating a public space that connection to the natural world, community enhancement through reinvigoration of the Grove Street Park, and connecting residents to community resources, services and local organizations. The project is currently in the community awareness phase, and the conceptual plan and sources of sustainable funding is the direction that VOW is heading. A two (2) year timeframe is estimated for the project with an estimated cost of \$50-70,000. Mr. Hines explained that the idea for this project is permaculture, which is a system of designing a space that promotes natural ecosystems that mimics the natural environment by using plants that are native to this area. The use of permaculture will help to minimize some of the maintenance for the area. Tim showed a picture of the gardens on the *Westmoreland Museum of American Art*, which to him represents permaculture and to give board and audience members an idea of what the finished product might look like. VOW has discussed the project with City Council members, have had two (2) onsite meetings On June 6, 2018 and June 11, 2018 with neighbors and a survey on Facebook for input from the neighbors. Out of 52 surveys that were returned, 76.9% of do not use the park at all as it exist currently, 7.7% use the park for short walks, and 15.4% for open play. VOW had given the poll takers some options on what they would like to see done with the park, i.e. paved walkways and seating and community meeting space. Neighbors also want to possibly see outdoor movie nights and/or yoga nights in the park. Tim showed a few comments from some of the poll takers that included details that neighbors would like areas for reading and relaxing, and to also have natural playground settings for children to play and climb, i.e. rocks and logs. Storm water management of the park would also be tackled and worked into the process.

Mr. Hines mentioned that since VOW does not have permanent fixtures in place as of yet, however members would like to show the community that the process is started by having pop-up events, such as movie nights, which were highly accepted by neighbors who took the surveys and showed at the public meetings in the park; an inflatable type screen for movies. Education opportunities have also been discussed for the area by consulting with local art teachers and other organizations.

A planning meeting with the *Community Foundation of Westmoreland* is set up for options on funding for the project. Continued dialog with the City of Greensburg City Council and Planning Commission, and local organizations is key for the process to succeed. Partners of VOW, Susan Pardus and Kalona Foster have been going to different businesses and neighbors for support and ideas for the project. *Community Foundation of Westmoreland*, *Penn State Extension*, *Smart Growth Partnership*, *Westmoreland Conservation District*, *Community Gardens with Westmoreland County Community College*, and Barbara Ferrier, the Greensburg Civic Group Coordinator are among the organizations showing interest and participating in the project on Grove Street thus far.

Secretary Karen Hutchinson asked Mr. Hines if the goal is to make the area into a park or a community garden. Tim stated that the project is more for a park and not a community garden. Ms. Hutchinson reminisced about the time her father played ball and when recreational activities were more popular within the neighborhood. Karen also expressed her concerns about the park drawing negative activities, but Mr. Hines tried to calm concerns by stating that this is one (1) piece to a changing puzzle. By this idea/statement, Tim said that he's heard these concerns in other locations and municipalities, but it also starts with the property owners and the mindset to help take care of the area. Karen also asked if the City of Greensburg would be maintaining the park, to which Tim informed her that those discussions are still in process with City Council and other organizations. In the past, volunteers have helped take care of the community parks but overtime the population changes and other maintenance avenues must be addressed. Mr. Hines also mentioned that it's easier today to get volunteers and news about activities with social media and better connections.

Chairman Dave Kahley asked Planning Director Barbara Ciampini what the role of the Planning Commission members was for this meeting. Ms. Ciampini stated that the Planning Commission was to hold a public gathering for members of the community to voice their opinions. Overall, Ms. Ciampini feels that the project is a positive asset to the neighborhood. There are still plenty of millennials in the area and with the park being located within the Healthcare District and close to the Gateway District it will be easy for residents to partake in activities and use the park. Small baby steps are what's needed for this project or any project. There is no zoning change or vote needed from the Planning Commission board members; however, if VOW would like to do storm water management changes at this location then the proper procedures and guidelines will need to be followed.

Vice-chairman Brian Lawrence made a suggestion in regards to the concerns of negative activities at this location. Mr. Lawrence stated that there is a philosophy and supporting material entitled "Crime Prevention through Environmental Design" that could help with the design and thought behind this project. The philosophy focuses on eyes on the street and to not design secluded locations that would attract wrongful mischief. The park is in a public location with properties and porches all around it to help can an eye on the area. Mr. Hines believes that the park will also help neighbors to get to know one another better and create communication.

Mr. Lawrence asked Ms. Ciampini if in the past there were any specific designs put forth in the Healthcare District, to which Barbara stated that there was a potential design that would create housing on this site but that avenue hasn't been approached.

Barbara Ferrier of 922 Kunkle Street, Greensburg, commented that discussions with Patricia Buhl from Excelsa Health Westmoreland Hospital have taken place and members of the hospital community are also interested in helping with the organization and development of the park. This would be a nice area for relatives and friends of patients at the hospital to spend time outside of the waiting rooms since it's nearby.

Frank Puklavik of 223 South Washington Avenue, Greensburg, spoke in regards to the maintenance issues at this location in the past. Frank stated that there used to be a basketball court and other items on the Grove Street property, but overtime the children and residents who used the park didn't take care of the land and is afraid that this will happen again.

Angela Aldous of 335 Center Avenue, Greensburg, moved to the area four (4) years ago and loves that the City is walkable; however, she feels that there isn't enough greenspace and park space. Ms. Aldous feels that more people have been moving to this area because there is potential for this project and others.

Craig Panko of 626 Stone Street, Greensburg, lives right next to the Grove Street park area. Mr. Panko believes that the area is okay as it is since kids love grass and it's easy to maintain. Craig stated that during the winter, plow trucks will plow the snow into the open area and doesn't think that anything should be added. He also said that kids play on the large tree on the property and if they want to play on playground material then there is a site a couple blocks away for them. Mr. Panko doesn't like the idea of changing the land, adding pavement or landscaping. Craig said that when the roads were paved and drainage redone at the intersection of Hamilton Avenue and Stone Street a few years ago, the excess storm water was maintained and has been since. Barbara Ciampini asked Mr. Panko if he was given \$50,000 and had to use it on this property what he would do with the money. Craig commented that he would put new lights and cameras to keep the area crime free and that's it.

Susan Pardus, Sabrina Martin and Kalona Foster of VOW have met with landscape architects to address different factors, such as lighting and water issues. There will be green space available. Kalona mentioned that they believe this area could start a chain reaction for positive changes and help to change the culture in the area. Ms. Foster is hoping that with the park change, the neighbors and city residents will take pride and change their views. Sabrina stated that she is a recent graduate of Greensburg Salem School District and has grown up nearby the park area on Grove Street. When she was younger, her parents didn't allow her to visit the park since it wasn't a friendly location. Ms. Martin also mentioned that while in school, students had more respect for the school and its resources since they were taken care of and were positive

aspects to their daily lives. Sabrina feels that the current Grove Street area isn't useable as it is and believes that a change could add educational opportunities and help younger generations learn about the environment.

Dave Kahley agreed with Ms. Martin on the fact that people tend to destroy areas that are already not taken care of or that they feel aren't respected.

John Felice, owner of Prantl's Bakery at 612 Grove Street, commented on the transition of the City of Greensburg. Mr. Felice has invested time, money and energy into structures within the City and has noticed over the years the changes occurring. John noted that he remembers children playing in the field and over time the activity has died down. He is willing to help with the designs and development of the project, because he sees Grove Street and the City on the cusp of good and positive changes. John feels as though the crime factor will take care of itself with the help of enforcement, cameras and lighting. Mr. Felice also like the idea of pop up events.

Sidewalk replacement was brought up for the park, and Ms. Ciampini informed board and audience members that there may be a possibility for grant money in the future. Fresh sidewalks for easy pedestrian movement will add to the overall positive change at this location.

Amy Dixon Kaylor of 644 Grove Street stated that she hasn't seen a survey or had anyone come to her house to ask her opinion. Ms. Kaylor lives directly across the street from the park and has taken her kids to the area to fly kites and sees residents playing and running with their dogs. Amy does not like the idea of changing the park, except for adding new sidewalks. She doesn't think family members of those in the hospital will utilize the park, and thinks that the area isn't just an open space on Grove Street; it's their neighborhood and a beautiful grassy area. Ms. Kaylor believes that a park, such as Saint Clair Park, is lovely but isn't necessary or needed for the Grove Street property due to the possibility of increased traffic and the residents of the neighborhood losing their parking spaces. Amy isn't anti-new or anti-garden, however she would like to see that placed somewhere else and not on Grove Street.

Brian Lawrence offered suggestions to help the project progress by commenting that temporary installations be used and not a complete change right away. Volunteers should think about how to change the image of the park and really likes the idea of pop up events to help those in and/or coming to the area begin to change their views. Thinking small first is the key.

Barbara Ferrier reminded board and audience members that the idea for now is to have different pop up events to bring people to the area, and that like Mr. Hines stated earlier in the evening the project will take roughly two (2) years to complete. The whole intent is to have individuals dialog and come together.

Susan Pardus mentioned that VOW and other organizations helping with the project would need Port-A-Johns and a sign board showing the pop up events. Barbara

Ciampini informed her that she could speak with the Recreation Department and find out which company they use for events and to help with the organization of such issues.

Craig Panko reiterated that he believes the area is okay the area as it is and doesn't want it to change. Mr. Panko said small pop up events with tents are okay as long as they aren't permanent. Craig likes the open space and feels as though the open space allows for kids to use their imaginations and have a place to run and play.

Tim Hines made the statement again that these audience members and other residents of the City are whom these organizations and volunteers would like to hear from. Mr. Hines believes that all resources and spaces that expose children to natural environments is a great thing and does not want the entire grass area to be replaced. Karen Hutchinson feels that kids need a wide open grass area to play and explore their imaginations instead of staying inside all the time. Ms. Hutchinson believes crime factor began for the area with the idea of landscaping, and Mr. Hines reiterated that change is needed and engagement with the community and residents directly near the Grove Street area will help to make the area nicer.

Barbara Ciampini stated that in her 33 years as Planning Director, this is the first time that a group of volunteers has come to the City and asked what they can do to help the neighborhood.

Dave Kahley thanked the citizens and board members for their comments and thoughts. Mr. Kahley stated that this area used to be a ball park and is now a vacant lot. He doesn't want to see Greensburg become all vacant lots, and feels that with this dialog the area can be used as a vacant field and it can have some advancement. The garden space permaculture photo that was shown send the wrong message to the property owners and should be revised, but Dave said the consensus seems to be that new sidewalks are needed and pop up events are a good idea. With that beginning dialog, volunteers should be able to make improvements and continue with the project.

No further discussion from board or audience members. A vote was not needed as this was a public session only.

VI. Adjournment

Secretary Karen Hutchinson **moved** to adjourn the meeting.

Meeting adjourned 8:02 pm.