

**TOWN OF MOUNT PLEASANT, SOUTH CAROLINA
RECREATION COMMITTEE
Monday, November 5, 2018
Municipal Complex, Committee Meeting Room, 3rd Floor
100 Ann Edwards Lane, Mount Pleasant, SC 29464**

Minutes

Members Present: Gary Santos, Chair, G. M. Whitley

Members Absent: Tom O'Rourke

Staff Present: Eric DeMoura, Steve Gergick

Mr. Santos called the meeting to order at 8:33 a.m.

1. Approval of Minutes from the October 1, 2018 meeting

Ms. Whitley made a motion to approve the October 1, 2018 minutes. Mr. Santos seconded the motion. All were in favor.

2. Public Comments

None

3. Discussion of future recreation park on Rifle Range Road

Mr. Gergick shared a layout of the conceptual master plan for a future recreation park on Rifle Range Road. He shared how the property would be divided between the Town of Mount Pleasant and Charleston County Parks and Recreation (CCPRC) and conceptually the different elements that would be at the facility. He said there would be ballfields, parking areas, lake access, a gym area, and playgrounds.

Mr. Santos asked if an area on the top left that has Town of Mount Pleasant (TOMP) on it was just woods.

Mr. Gergick said it was a wetland area.

Mr. Santos asked how much of it was wetland.

Mr. Gergick said that most of that particular area was wetlands and would not be developable unless they were able to mitigate something to find other areas where they would be able to mitigate wetland property. He said that the top area would be undeveloped but potentially would have a

boardwalk. He said there could be a boardwalk path going across the back side by the pond. He said it could be a hidden trail access through the area. He said that most of the developable property is located at the other end.

Mr. Santos said he spoke with Mr. David Bennett with Charleston County PRC about their portion and invited him to come talk with them. He said they said they had just completed their five-year plan and it was not on the radar for them at present. He said that Mr. Bennett thanked him for inviting him and said he would like to come in the future but right now they do not have any plans that he knows of for that facility which might be good for the Town. Mr. Santos said that what he would like to see is the possibility of putting some fields out there that they can use for a tournament facility as well. He said budgets are going to start getting tight and it would be great to have the Town's departments to be able to pay for or help pay for themselves. He said there are a lot of tournaments that are held in and around South Carolina and other places and his goal is to see if the Town can have a facility where they can take advantage of some of that revenue that the tournaments bring whether it was accommodations tax, sales tax, or hospitality tax that helps our businesses. He said it also helps the children from having to go off places as they can have tournaments in Mount Pleasant. He said he would like to start focusing on looking at this facility and does not want to wait as the longer they wait, the longer it will take to be able to do anything. He said they are working on Carolina Park. He said they need to start talking about this and get some ideas about what they want to do with the facility and how that facility can help recreation pay for itself and come up with some ideas. He said he wants them to start talking about this more and come up with some ideas to see what they can and cannot do, where they can put things and where they cannot put things. He said it had been there for a while now, but it was time for them to talking about it. He said that even talking to PRC about their half and was there any ways the Town can work with them as well to benefit both entities. He said that was his goal with putting this item on the agenda to talk about what the Town has. He asked Mr. Gergick to tell everyone what is there now. He said in the future he wants to be able to talk about what they can and cannot do.

Ms. Whitley said she had been thinking a lot about the Rifle Range property as well because she said that as Town, they have lots of ballfields, gyms, and recreation facilities. She said that what they do not have is anything major when it relates to arts or a performing art facility or gallery space where community members can have an opportunity for that aspect of recreation. She said she thought that the Rifle Range property presents a unique opportunity to do something a little bit new. She said they currently have an assessment that the College of Charleston is performing to assess what exists in the Town of Mount Pleasant. She said there was also a citizen group and she had been in communication with Ms. Dawn Durst with the Mount Pleasant Symphony Orchestra and they are East Cooper based. She said Ms. Durst has a network of private people that are interested in donating to put a facility like that in one of the public spaces. She just wanted to put that information out as they move forward with the assessment.

Mr. Santos said he saw where there was an outdoor 3,000 square foot performance pavilion with restrooms. He asked if Ms. Whitley was talking about an indoor facility.

Ms. Whitley answered in the affirmative. She said then they could have events.

Mr. Santos said this was what they were talking about and they want to start looking at this piece of property and try to get some ideas of what they want to do with it. He said that Ms. Whitley said they have a lot of fields, but he said there are a lot of people playing on the fields and they are hard to get sometimes which is a good thing as they are being used. He said that was what they are there for, but he wanted to make sure they start working on this as soon as possible. He said he did not know how long it would take to work on it but wanted to at least talk about it. He said they need to meet and see what they can and cannot do and come up with some good ideas. He said he thought they should bring the PRC in and see what they are going to do as there may be some opportunity for the Town to share. He said that historically they are passive and have waterparks and things like that. He said in speaking with Mr. Bennett he

was very open to meeting with the Town about that piece of property. He said it would be good if they could get the whole piece of property. He said he wanted Mr. Gergick to tell them what they have there now and start discussing what else was wanted.

Mr. Gergick shared a plan for a new two basketball court gymnasium similar to the Jones Center minus the pool with programming rooms for dance, art, Kids Grow, or music classes.

Ms. Santos asked if it would be a double gym like the Town Hall Gym.

Mr. Gergick answered in the affirmative and said it would be a double gym with an indoor walking track. He said that all of this was conceptual and could be changed. He said that the intention was a two-court gymnasium with an indoor walking track going around it upstairs and programming rooms. He said it would be a duplication of the Jones Center except for an additional basketball court and not having a swimming pool there. He said there would be tennis courts, maintenance facility, a parking lot, a disc golf area. He said they had a lot of people that responded to the surveys requesting the disc feature at the new facility. He said there would be two multipurpose rectangular fields that could be used for lacrosse, soccer, football, field hockey, or other sports that may come in the future.

Mr. Santos said also rugby could be played.

Mr. Gergick agreed that there was a demand for rugby as well. He shared where a pavilion performance area with restrooms. He said they would use the fields as a lawn for a performance, band, or entertainment. He said they would have two 300 feet baseball fields, a meadow, a pier with access to the pond, and a perimeter trail going around the entire park including PRC's area and the Town's portion of the facility.

Mr. Santos asked Mr. DeMoura about 300 feet baseball fields and said he thought in previous discussions they thought that 300 feet might be too short, and they may want to go a little bit longer if they are going to have older children play out there. He asked if 300 was the standard or should they do they something else with a wall.

Mr. DeMoura said that he and Mr. Gergick had talked about it and said that Mr. Gergick had enlightened him on the different recreational needs when it came to baseball fields. He said that if they were building just a baseball field, they would want it to be certain dimensions but there are other uses for that baseball field that sometimes prefer smaller wall sizes. He said as Mr. Gergick said it was conceptual and more discussions would be had. He said that as they got closer to construction the needs of the Department, whether they need a full-fledged baseball field or something different to meet other needs would be discussed at that time.

Mr. Santos said that the oldest of the children playing baseball are required to have a 300 feet field.

Mr. Gergick said that the older children and adults use larger fields in the realm of 370 or 380 feet. He said that younger children which is the majority of the program use the smaller fields. He said that with this being conceptual a 300 feet outfield fence is also conducive for softball if they were to make that a softball field which is a large program as well. He said that being conceptual things can be shifted and they could do whatever they want.

Mr. Santos said that the reason he asked because of the situation at Carolina Park they are talking about having to possibly go out further. He just wanted to make sure they talked about that before they do it. He said they do not want to build it and then have to move back some.

Mr. Gergick said there was a full concession stand and restroom area that goes along with the baseball fields, an outdoor volleyball courts near the meadow, green space, and pickleball courts.

Ms. Whitley said it seemed as if there was a decent amount of limitations of wetlands to this project. She said she did not know a lot about tournaments but said it would seem as if they would need a lot more fields. She said she thought Carolina Park may be a better facility for hosting tournaments as it did not look as if they could add fields easily or have many of them to run a tournament.

Mr. Santos said that was true which is why he wants to bring Charleston County PRC in on this as well as he had been talking with them and they have not decided what they want to do with theirs yet. He said there may be some opportunity for the Town to work with them and come up with some good ideas. He said it was not a huge complex there but in also talking with some of the land owners around there he spoke of the possibility of a long-term lease on some of their property. He said they had asked him to get in touch with them to talk about it which is why he wants to start the conversation now because there are so many opportunities to look at before Charleston County PRC comes back and says what they want.

Mr. DeMoura said that our side of the conceptual plan is roughly a \$25 million cost and the Town only has just over \$500,000 right now budgeted for this project. He said that even realizing this conceptual plan is a big step forward. He said in the middle of the park is Cook's Old Field Cemetery where families original to Mount Pleasant including the Town's founder, are buried. He said because it is a public park, citizens find their way out to the park and the Town does not have a presence there because it is undeveloped. Mr. DeMoura said they found it in Town's interest to protect that cemetery. He said that Town has used ground penetrating radar, surveyed the site, and was working with the family to construct a fence around that cemetery to keep people out. He said right now they are protecting that cemetery. He said that will take some of the roughly \$500,000 that they have, but not much. He said it may be \$30-\$40,000. He said that right now the conceptual plan is designed to meet as far as they can tell in the future, the recreational needs of the Department and of the community. He said if they were looking to have a bent toward revenue producing facilities or an arts facility, he thought it would make sense to take some of the money that they have and perform a feasibility study as to how it may work. He said they may could have one company do both if there was a company expert in both of those type of things active recreation and arts to determine if they could produce revenue. He said if so, they need to know what the best location for it to be placed, how much would it take and perhaps they could identify possible revenue streams for

it. Mr. DeMoura said if they would like them to, they could utilize some of the money that has already been budgeted and approved by Council to go ahead and generate a feasibility study to see what the possibility was.

Mr. Santos concurred and said there was no use for them to be having those thoughts and dreams if it cannot become a reality.

Ms. Whitley agreed. She asked if the cemetery was in the County side of things and asked if the County was helping to fund.

Mr. DeMoura said it was a separate parcel that belongs to the family. He said that the County had been helpful to the Town as well. He said the Town believes they have an obligation to help protect the property because the Town would be bringing potentially thousands of people into an area and it did not feel it would be right to place that entire burden on the family. He said it had been a history lesson for the Town and a very educational project to learn a little more about the history and roots. He said they have been moving forward with that to make sure it was protected when getting the pathways and trails open. He said Mr. Gergick had mentioned also that sometimes the best way to protect the property was to get people out using it. He said if they thought it was appropriate, they could go ahead using the money that they have and get more information on the facilities. He said if they cannot get one firm to complete it then they will get two individual feasibility studies.

Mr. Santos and Ms. Whitley agreed.

Ms. Whitley asked if they needed a motion.

Mr. DeMoura answered in the affirmative.

Ms. Whitley made a motion to use some of the funds already apportioned for Rifle Range Park to do a feasibility study of active recreation and the arts with the development of the conceptual plan.

Mr. Santos seconded the motion.

Mr. DeMoura asked if that was revenue producing.

Ms. Whitley said she thought for the recreation revenue producing but for the arts she thought they would hope to break even. She said there was

an inherent value to the arts and if they had a good enough facility, they would be able to generate revenue through having event space there as well. She said yes as well for both.

Mr. DeMoura asked what would happen if the feasibility study on the active recreation side, not the arts center, through its report showed that it could produce revenue, but not in ways that met the needs of the Department. He asked if they would cross that bridge when they get to it.

Ms. Whitley said she thought they need to wait and see what the study says.

Mr. Santos said he wants them to look at whatever they can and come up with a comprehensive report. He said whatever they feel was the proper one, he is not an expert on that field.

Mr. Gergick said that for a point of clarification, the feasibility study would be for revenue producing recreational activities at this specific property.

Mr. Santos and Ms. Whitley answered in the affirmative.

Mr. Santos said they had a motion and a second and asked if there was any further discussion.

Mr. Gergick said he wanted to point out another piece of property adjacent to the property as it was not developed and had nothing that was considered for it in the conceptual master plan. He said that there was some talk at one point about that being a location for a side performing arts center or something along those lines. He said that the property has a lot of wetlands. He wanted them to know there was other property there that has not been designated for anything at this time. He said the conceptual master plan does not have the additional road link that would be coming in off of Rifle Range Road from the roundabout and tying onto the other road. He said there was another access road.

Mr. Santos said they had a motion and second, but they have had two people come and join. He recognized Mr. Al Bradshaw-Whittemore and told him they have an opportunity for two pickleball courts there. He asked Mr. Gergick how many courts it would be.

Mr. Gergick said there would be six pickleball courts.

Mr. Santos said they are moving forward on the Town's end.

Mr. DeMoura asked how many the six courts would add to what they had currently.

Mr. Gergick said the others are not designated courts, but they have four at Park West, four at the Miriam Brown Center, two at the Jones Center, and four in the new Town Hall Gym and said it was six at Park West.

Mr. Santos asked Ms. Brenda Corley, another new arrival if she would like to say anything while they are talking about recreation facilities.

Ms. Corley said she was just attending to show support and find out what was going on. She asked if they were talking about space behind the school.

Mr. Santos answered in the negative and said it was over on Rifle Range Road and were talking about doing some additional recreation.

Ms. Corley said they need it and the more, the better.

Mr. Al Bradshaw-Whittemore, 577 Antebellum Lane, Mount Pleasant, said he was the United States of American Pickleball Association (USAPA) Ambassador for Mount Pleasant. He said that the first of October, Mr. Scott Manna was named a second ambassador based upon the population they thought there could be two. He said they still do not have a district ambassador. He said he appreciate pickleball being included. He said it was growing.

Mr. Santos said they have a motion and a second. All were in favor.

4. Discussion of the development of bike and pedestrian trail connections to schools

Mr. Gergick said Mr. Kevin Mitchell was going to be speaking to explain the potential locations for paths to be able to connect the schools together with pedestrian paths.

Mr. Mitchell said they had successfully completed the Darrell Creek Trail Project which extended from Park Avenue Boulevard up to

Commonwealth. He said it was 3100 linear feet and an eight-foot-wide asphalt path. He said the Town did that in partnership with the Charleston County School District. He said that they entered into a memo of agreement and used their contractors and they just completed it for \$241,000. He said that leaves a little over \$50,000 in the Bike and Ped Fund. Mr. Mitchell shared an exhibit that was conceptual. He said he had reached out to the developer at Tupelo, Mr. Tim Cook. He said they talked about three different options to connect the Tupelo area with the Darrell Creek Trail. He said that at present the only access is to go out to Highway 17 and then back down Darrell Creek to get to the school. He said they thought it would be a viable and successful project. He said there are going to be some challenges as there is wetland in the middle of the site and there are also private property owners as well. He said that was the three options. He said it may be a combination of three options. He said that the only true access point into the school would be at Park Avenue Boulevard. He said there was not an access along Darrell Creek. He said that the red lines shown would have to extend north or up to Park Avenue Boulevard to tie into that pedestrian connection at that intersection. He said it also would not create a mid-block crossing. He said it would be twice as long as the red lines show. He said it would be between two to three thousand feet. He said they could be looking at a project that could be between \$200-\$250,000. He said at this point it was just a concept and a first brush of looking at the potential. He said they would need direction as far as where to take this from Council.

Mr. Kevin Cunnane, 3032 River Vista Way, Mount Pleasant said that he and Mr. Tom O'Rourke had been out there at the request of someone that lives in the neighborhood who is a teacher and worried about the children traversing the woods to get to school. He said they are doing it regularly. He said that there was another path also where Park Avenue meets Darrell Creek. He said on the picture it looks like a drainage ditch to the right. He said on the other side of the drainage ditch they are walking to school and biking in some sketchy spots. He said that was another potential that may be shorter and said they may can get someone out to look at that. He said that idea was if they get Tupelo connected, they would be keeping children

safer to school and they would be extending the Carolina Park, Park West, Dunes West, and Rivertowne pedestrian network out to a whole neighborhood. He said they would be bringing it closer to the edge of town so that at some point they actually have a cohesive trail system in Mount Pleasant. He said it was a good idea to connected one way or another. He said he did not know which one works best. He said the idea and concept of getting children to the schools is great and all they have to do is tie the schools together and they would have a town-wide system. He said when they went and looked at it, it was tough not being familiar with it. He said they did not walk in the woods as they were just trying to find it from roads. He said they looked at Hamlin, the townhouses across from Hamlin, and there is an access to Laing and Jenny Moore over there. He said it was also the same thing is whether the Town can pay attention to these and maintain them better to make it a viable option for children. He said every child that is on a bike is one less car given how all the school traffic was. He said he thought it was a real easy for the Town to make life easy for people.

Mr. Santos asked if the one at Hamlin was the County.

Mr. Cunnane thought it was a water easement.

Mr. Santos asked if there was a lot of County property and if they would have to work with them on that.

Mr. Mitchell said that was a Town project that they completed a number of years ago. He said it was a nature trail with a combination of boardwalks. He said it extended from Hamlin, the townhouses behind Jennie Moore School.

Mr. Santos said it would be nice if they could get them to finish the sidewalks and connect them all the way out. He asked if they were connected now as he knew some of the developments have put sidewalks out in front of their place. He asked if it was all the way up now.

Mr. Mitchell asked if they were still speaking about Hamlin Road and the Jennie Moore.

Mr. Santos said Rifle Range.

Mr. Mitchell said he would have to go and specifically look at where the sidewalks are located.

Mr. Santos said he thought he had seen some new sidewalks out there but did not know if it connected the whole way.

Mr. Mitchell said that they have it at corners and where there is new development but where there is not new development there is not a sidewalk.

Mr. Santos said he would like to see them be able to take that sidewalk along the street for security reasons as there would be more eyes on the children. He said when they go back through the woods, he would wonder how they would do that as he would be a little nervous going through woods where there is no security if there was an issue or accident and being in the woods no one would see them. He said that was one of his concerns as it was great that they do that but certainly have to think of a way to make it safe for the children.

Ms. Jennifer Paul, 1357 Paint Horse Court, Mount Pleasant said she lived in Tupelo which was why she was present. She said that a lot of the neighbors have been interested in this. She said they do not have sidewalks that comes up to Tupelo. She said she has ran across the street and bikes over there. She said that her children do not take the bus because Highway 17 is a nightmare. She said there are several of their neighborhood friends that do not take the bus so there is a lot of needless cars on the road. She said if there were walking paths whether they were sidewalks or trails or some safer way to get to the schools it would ease congestion quite a bit. She said she did not think there was anyone in their neighborhood who would not be interest in that.

Mr. Santos said that he liked interconnectivity. He said he walked to school every day of his life up until he was in high school. He said it was short to where they went and was not through woods. He said something they need to think about was security as they do not want to have an issue. He said he thought it could be done.

Ms. Whitley said she thought it was a good idea and suggested leaving it up to parents to decide what is appropriate for their children. She said they may walk their younger children through the paths but then older children could be on their own. She said that was one of the great things about Mount Pleasant is that it was a safe place and it is a place where there is an opportunity for children to have a little bit of independence in their neighborhoods. She said that 975 feet is not that far, and they are not going a mile through the woods. She said it was an interesting opportunity.

Mr. DeMoura said if they like they could explore the possibility of a split lane on the church's property that connects to neighborhoods. He said if they would like staff can open up a dialogue with the diocese to talk about a potential connection. He said in other words to start talking to property owners as to whether the Town can get permission to cross those properties.

Mr. Santos said it looked it would be shorter or easier for the neighborhood on the bottom in Tupelo and have better security as people would be around the church.

Mr. DeMoura agreed. He said that the concern is the neighborhood to the north as he did not believe it connects to the one south. He said it was all private properties and fences. He said it looked like a public easement that could connect to another trail that connects to the red one that is already in place and looks like a split. He said if they would like them to, they can contact the property owner and see if it is even a possibility. He said if it was a possibility, they could get a rough idea of where it might go and even cost. He said they would have to bring it back for an allocation. He said it was probably going to be a large amount of money to cross the wetlands. He said staff could let them know if the owners were interested.

Mr. Santos asked if that was wetlands that connects from the church to that neighborhood.

Mr. DeMoura answered in the affirmative and said that a good indicator was the lighter brown or grayer foliage typically indicates wetlands.

Mr. Santos said if they could see what they can do about it as it was a good idea.

Mr. DeMoura concurred.

5. Program/projects update

Mr. Gergick said programs and sports participations are up. He said they had great special events. He said for the second month in a row the Sock Hops have sold out. He said it was fourth and fifth graders, with 450 of them in the gym and dancing and have a good time and was a Mount Pleasant tradition. He said they had been doing it for years at the Town Hall Gym and now have been holding them at Park West. He said they had two great Halloween events at Park West and Darby. He said that the Special Events Office held Children's Day. He said it was an entire town event and everyone involved in planning and preparations. He said the EOC, Fire Department, Police Department and Public Services. He said there were 34 Town employees volunteer for the event. He said on Thursday, November 8, there will be the ten-year anniversary of the Senior Center. He said it will be at the Thomasena Stokes-Marshall Senior Center and invited everyone to be there. He said that this weekend is the Old Village 5K with 200 plus people running through the Old Village and is family friendly event.

Mr. Santos said it was a beautiful race.

6. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting at 9:12 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Bedenbaugh, 11/5/18