

MEETING NOTES
CITIZENS COMMITTEE FOR PARKS AND RECREATION SERVICES
OCTOBER 10, 2011

Kent County Commission Board Room (Room 310)
County Administration Building
300 Monroe N.W., Grand Rapids

Committee Members Present: Sandi Frost Parrish, Ron Koehler, Steve Peterson, Mike DeVries, Sue Thomas, Doug Wustman, Rebecca Rynbrandt, Ken Krombeen, John Schneider, Andy Johnston, Rosalynn Bliss, Mike Wawee, Andy Guy, Carlos Sanchez, Rich Houtteman, Eddie Tadlock, Cathy VanderMeulen;

Staff Present: Grand Rapids Parks Director Jay Steffen, Charlie Ziesemer, Kentwood Parks and Recreation Director; Kendall Klingelsmith, Kentwood Parks and Recreation Deputy Director; Mark Fitzpatrick, Ada Township Parks Director; Assistant County Administrator Mary Swanson, and; KC Management Analyst Jennifer DeHaan

Meeting Notes:

Welcome & Introductions - Kent County Board Chair Parrish welcomed everyone to the committee and noted that the committee has been developed to guide and oversee an analysis of our parks and recreation systems. Parrish stated that the analysis will help to identify recommendations that will enable our communities to maintain and sustain high quality parks and recreational services throughout the county. Parrish noted that while it had been a while since the initial meeting a significant amount of work has been undertaken by the staff committee which the committee will be updated on today.

Funding Update – Chair Parrish stated that since the last meeting, the Dyer-Ives Foundation has awarded the project \$25,000 and the cities of Grand Rapids and Wyoming will be contributing funding to the project to support Phase I. This funding is in addition to the \$25,000 that was received from the Grand Rapids Community Foundation, the \$15,000 from the Frey Foundation, and the \$10,000 that was contributed from the County.

Consultant Recommendation/Selection – Jen DeHaan provided an update regarding the process and recommendation from the staff committee which has been reviewing the proposals which were submitted. DeHaan stated that at the last meeting of the Citizens Committee, the staff committee had presented a draft of an RFP which was reviewed and approved by the Committee to be released. The RFP was released and was posted for a period of three weeks through which time seven (7) proposals were received. DeHaan stated that the proposals were distributed to the staff committee and a link was also sent out to all members of the committee to review the proposals. After a careful review of the proposals the staff committee invited three (3) of the most qualified firms to conduct an interview with the committee which was completed on Monday, October 3rd. The staff committee comprised of Kendall Klingelsmith, Mark Fitzpatrick, Jay Steffen, Roger Sabine, Mary Swanson, and Andy Guy from the Citizens Committee

conducted the interviews. DeHaan stated that those invited back for interviews were three firms one representing a strong national presence and based in California; one from Ann Arbor, and a non-profit organization from Northern Michigan. Based upon the RFPs, interviews, and scope of work that has been presented, the Staff committee is recommending that the firm of Laycock Consulting be retained to complete the analysis. Laycock has assembled a highly qualified team of professionals which has a strong understanding of local government operations, a strong understanding of parks and recreational services, and a strong ability to gather and analyze data and information to substantiate any recommendations which may be identified. The proposed timeline for the completion of the project would be to have preliminary recommendations submitted in late December/early January and to have a final report received in March 2012. DeHaan noted that this was timeline was slightly longer than originally anticipated but that all consultants had indicated that the initial timeline due to the holiday season would make it difficult to complete the project; whereas the expanded timeline provided some additional time to gather and analyze the data and to develop sound recommendations.

Assistant County Administrator Mary Swanson stated that the proposals which were received from the consultants ranged in price and that the Laycock proposal was the highest cost but that the staff committee also believed that they were the most qualified and could produce the best product for the committee. Swanson stated that staff had gone back to Laycock to further narrow down the scope of the project and to further define the deliverables that would be provided. Through this process, Laycock was able to submit a best and final offer to complete the study at a cost of \$83,240. To support the study, Swanson stated that the cities of Grand Rapids (\$5,000) and Wyoming (\$3,240) would be funding a portion of the study.

Ron Koehler stated that he was willing to communicate with the school districts and that it would be important that we have some a clear definition of the information that is needed for the study as well as a clear explanation of why we are looking for it. Cathy VanderMeulen asked if we would be communicating with the other partners in the project and how other cities and townships would be made aware of the project. Mary Swanson stated that initially all cities, villages, and townships were invited to participate on the Citizens Committee so they are aware of the project. However, we will continue to communicate with the project partners as well as others not involved directly in the project but that we would work to create a consistent message. Mark Fitzpatrick stated that it was his impression from the consultant that those that are willing to provide the information will do so but for those that aren't willing, there really isn't too much that can be done; we can only explain and ask so much. Swanson stated that we will work to provide clear communication throughout this process. A MOTION was made by Andy Guy and supported by Ron Koehler to select Laycock Consulting as the firm to conduct the study. The MOTION passed unanimously.

Chair Parrish stated that it is important that we make sure to invite partners and interested parties to the meetings in which the preliminary recommendations will be released. Swanson stated that we will post the meeting notices and also communicate with local municipalities regarding the status of the project.

Chair Parrish thanked everyone for attending today and that the next steps will be engage the consultant in the analysis and to hold a kick-off meeting in November with the full committee and to have some preliminary recommendations in late December/early January.