

April 9, 2018

Attendees:

Mr. Suhay  
MR. Wayt  
Ms. Weiss Carson

Joan Heppert, Recording

Regular Meeting  
of the  
Russell Township Park Commission

West Woods Visitor Center

Call to Order:

The regular meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Wayt opened the meeting by announcing that the minutes for the 3/5/18 and 3/12/18 had minor corrections and would have to be tabled for now. They will be added to the next regular meeting agenda.

The discussion led to the survey update and Mr. Wayt stated there were ~95 responses to date. The survey will be available until April 20<sup>th</sup>. The results and comments will be published for the next meeting.

- Valerie Stefancin inquired for people that did not have computer access.
  - Mr. Wayt directed them to the library for assistance.
- Karen Alprin inquired about the locations of the parks on the survey.
  - Ms. Weiss Carson stated there is a map on the website.

Mr. Suhay moved the discussion to the pancake breakfast. He stated that it was a great time and a good team building experience. We talked with a lot of people about the survey and exchanged some good information he stated.

Mr. Wayt led the discussion to the previous March meeting and the easement fees. He spoke with Pete McDonald from WRLC and they are not able to waive the fees, but would consider splitting the fees over two years. These are the easements for Dines Road and the Weiss amendment. The fees are for stewardship and are \$5,000 and \$7,500. Donna Weiss Carson stated that the board would like to consider other options and perhaps donations. She added that the funds are very limited and of concern.

Joe Leslie from the WRLC stated that there are insurance costs for every single easement that the conservancy holds and another fee that they pay for legal expenses. The \$5,000 is actual expenses coming out of their pocket. If they don't get that from their customers that have donated easements then philanthropic means are the only other way he stated. This is a recent policy change.

Mr. Leslie then turned the topic to Modroo. The WRLC is very happy to acquire the home and 13.5 acres and has controlling interest. They are unsettled about the barn on the 5 acres and what the community wants. Currently there is \$325K in the capital budget and this would help with the balance of the Modroo property that could be turned into an asset for the community. One concept at this time is to sell off the barn and they have an interested party. There was a grant applied for to help with the \$50K for some trails or perhaps parking that was not successful at first attempt. They intend to try again at the grant. If a grant cannot be obtained they will continue with the infrastructure based on the park district's priorities. The original plan as laid out by the CEO of the WRLC was for a one mile trail, habitat restorations and a small parking area. Mr. Leslie stated that the public seemed to be receptive to a bed and breakfast; but not to a winery or party center. He went on to surmise that the feel from people in general was to see the house, barn and farmers stand stay. The price for the 13.5 acres and house is \$1.15M and the barn on 5 acres is \$250K. Mr. Wayt inquired if there was any outside interest in the house at this time. Mr. Leslie acknowledged an interest and stated that if they sold the barn, that would get us closer to the goal.

- Charlie Butters asked if Mr. Leslie had spoken with the Russell Township trustees regarding funding to keep this project going. He didn't feel this board was equipped to handle a bigger vision. He also stated the way to get the pulse of the community is to put a money issue on the ballot.

- Mr. Leslie responded that the goal is to have the property pay for itself over time and perhaps this could be what the community needs to heal between the two park districts.

Donna Weiss Carson suggested a focus group be started to look at ideas with the WRLC. Mr. Leslie stated that if they had a commitment and had a partner that really wanted this, they would make it happen. Scott Wayt inquired if the Geauga Park District was interested in the property and Mr. Leslie stated they are not. Donna Mintz and Howard Shanker volunteered to be part of a focus group to come up with numbers of what it will take to solidify the project. There is a shortfall of ~\$700K, figuring on the sale of the barn Mr. Leslie stated. This does not include the donations and gifts.

- Ed Wells inquired who would maintain the property.
  - Joe Leslie estimated that \$45K would take care of the maintenance of the property.
- Donna Mintz stated that there is interest in this project from the Chagrin Falls community.

Mr. Leslie continued that his next step is to develop the plan that the community will embrace for the property that the public won't mind. He hoped to have this completed before June.

2018-19 Ms. Weiss Carson moved to initiate and lead a focus group to evaluate the steps to secure financing and management of the homestead property at Modroo and was seconded by Mr. Suhay.

Vote: Mr. Suhay Y, Mr. Wayt Y, Ms. Weiss Carson Y. Motion passes.

- Sandy Siegler acknowledged Mr. Leslie's work on this project for over four years and thanked him.

Donna Weiss Carson initiated new conversation on the park rules. She had an inquiry regarding hiking trails or pathways on park properties. Option one is to let people enter the park at will without trails. Option two is to consider putting in trails.

- Donna Mintz stated that she walks on Modroo frequently. If you have paths that are walked frequently, the critters stay away. It would be nice to have a path to guide people.
- Ed Wells mentioned in South Russell they have graded paths and it might be a good place to start.
- Shelley Chernin mentioned that the park district owns several types of parks for different uses. Some are used to protect out clean air and clean water. Some of the smaller parks are not conducive for paths Mr. Suhay noted.

Mr. Wayt summarized the discussion and stated that the parks used for walking are Modroo and the Uplands and there are paths available currently at this time on both. Ms. Weiss Carson stated she would follow up with the gentleman about his inquiry.

Mr. Wayt stated the levy discussion on the agenda would be tabled in light of the previous discussion on Modroo.

Mr. Wayt stated that the tax exemption for the Modroo property has been finalized but no refund has been received yet. The Hinkle extension was filed and we are on target for the April 30<sup>th</sup> deadline.

2018-20 Mr. Wayt moved to approve and sign check # 1045 - 1049 dated 4/9/18 and was seconded by Mr. Suhay.

Vote: Mr. Suhay Y, Mr. Wayt Y, Ms. Weiss Carson Y. Motion passes.

The May 14<sup>th</sup> meeting will have to be re-scheduled due to conflicts for Mr. Suhay and Ms. Weiss Carson. Mr. Wayt suggested perhaps it could be held at Modroo and would draw a large attendance. Joe Leslie said there were 30 – 40 chairs available and Joan Heppert would follow-up with Mr. Leslie to secure a date.

Ms. Weiss Carson went over the expenditures and revenues for March.

The meeting was closed at 8:09 p.m.

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Commissioner

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Commissioner

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Commissioner

**Warrant Listing:**

4/9/18	Joan Heppert	\$590.63	#1045
4/9/18	Thrasher, Dinsmore & Dolan	\$1,980.00	#1046
4/9/18	Custom Cut Landscape LLC	\$320.00	#1047
4/9/18	21 <sup>st</sup> Century Media	\$245.25	#1048
4/9/18	Suttons Ins	\$100.00	#1049