



OPEN SPACES

CAPE MAY COUNTY

MINUTES – TUESDAY, MARCH 22, 2022 – 10:00 AM

COMMISSIONERS MEETING ROOM

OPEN SESSION

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 10:03 am.

Pledge of Allegiance: Mr. Lomax led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Statement Pertaining to the Open Public Meetings Act: Mr. Lomax read the statement.

Attendance Board Members:

David Craig
Leslie Gimeno
Neil Byrne
Peter Lomax

Attendance Others:

Barbara Ernst, Scott Mullen, Lauren Purdom, Joe Molineaux

Approval of Minutes:

Minutes of 1/25 – Closed Session: Mr. Craig made a motion to accept the minutes, as written. Mr. Byrne seconded the motion. All in favor with the exception of Mr. Lomax, who abstained.

Minutes of 2/22 – Open and Closed: Mr. Lomax offered two minor comments; Mr. Craig made a motion to accept the minutes, as corrected. Mr. Byrne seconded the motion. All in favor.

Chairman's Report: In the interest of time, Mr. Lomax did not offer a report.

Director's Report: Mr. Mullen/Mrs. Ernst did not have a report.

Financial Report: The financial report dated 1/31/22 was reviewed by Mr. Mullen, with a balance of approximately \$12,286,114.76 being available. Mr. Mullen said that closing on the development easement for the Bohm farm in Eldora had recently occurred. Ms. Gimeno thanked Mr. Mullen and Mrs. Ernst for their hard work on this difficult project that had taken almost 3 years from start to finish, and noted that the SADC had participated via a cost share agreement.

Correspondence:

- Email dated 3/18/22 from Mr. Dietrich, Upper Township Engineer, to Ms. Gimeno and Mr. Mullen regarding Beesley's Point Park. He indicated that a changing room was being proposed for the site to be used by special needs athletes who access the bay from the park. Mr. Lomax indicated that there would be a discussion later in the meeting regarding this issue.

Application Workshop – Sea Isle City Dog Park (PR 22-01) and Observation Tower (SFCE 22-01):

Mr. Lomax welcomed City officials and commented that this meeting is the kickoff for the new application processing format by the Open Spaces Board. He said that this portion, the workshop – was to be a presentation by the applicant to give the Open Spaces Board and Staff a good understanding of the proposal, accompanied by feedback and dialogue between the applicant and the Board so that adjustments can be made to the project prior to the Creative Placemaking review by Designing Local.

Mr. Byrne asked if he should recuse himself from this portion of the meeting, as he is an employee of the City. Mr. Lomax indicated that he had received guidance from County Counsel that participation in the workshop setting is fine, but that those with conflicts will need to recuse themselves from any deliberations, formal presentation, and decisions with respect to the project.

Mr. Previti introduced himself, Chris Eaton, and Cathy Custer and thanked the Board and indicated that the City had used the 2022 Program Guidelines in the adjustment of the projects which had come before the Board in 2021. He said that the City followed the advice of the Planning Department staff and had developed two separate applications: one for the dog park; and the other for the Observation platform. The City had negotiated the change in location for the paint facility, which had once been in the center of the site, and now was moved to the south end. The dog park application consists of a park with separate areas for large and small dogs and associated parking and amenities, and is located at the southern end of the site. Mr. Lomax asked about the proposed parking lot surface, as well as the total number of parking spaces. Mr. Previti said that the existing surface is clamshell, and that will be carried through the new design with the exception of the handicapped spaces, which will be paved. He said that the total number of existing parking spaces is 195, and proposed is 154, resulting in a net loss of 41 spaces, 1 of which is an ADA accessible space.

The observation platform was sited at the northern side of the site which has a dune cross-over to access the beach. The City had surveyed the beach and dunes and has identified the highest dune as being 17'. Therefore, the floor of the platform is designed so that people sitting on the deck can easily see over the dune towards the ocean, and can also see the back bay. The structure will be 16'x30' and the aesthetic will be similar to the Fishing Pier at the City's marina. As it is a very exposed area, it has been designed to withstand the elements, including open eaves for airflow considerations, hurricane straps, etc. Mr., Previti indicated that feedback from Designing Local had been incorporated into the current proposal. There was discussion that as the floor area of the deck will be elevated, the area underneath should be improved and used as an open air shade structure.

With respect to the loss of parking spaces proposed for the project, Ms. Custer said that the area is fairly remote and that it is not one of the most popular beaches. Mr. Previti said that the existing parking lot was established by the County to compensate for the elimination of parking on the west side of the road as part of traffic calming and bike/pedestrian accommodations along the corridor. Beach access was discussed, with only one access point in the project area of 4th Street – 8th Street being located at 5th street. Mr. Previti indicated that there was a striped crosswalk between the existing parking lot and the beach access point. Mr. Lomax asked about the presence of amenities at the 5th Street crossover; Mr. Previti said that there were none, but that the dog park had water fountains proposed. The group discussed the possibility of adding amenities at the beach access area to include

water fountains (since water is located within the right of way of Landis), benches, trash cans, etc. There was some concern regarding lighting at the site, particularly the observation tower, and despite the anticipation that it will be used only during daylight hours, some under roof lighting will be provided for the observation tower.

When asked about the ground cover for the dog park, Mr. Previti said that sand cover would be used, similar to the design of the Ocean City Dog Park. He indicated that the City had considered the K-9 grass recommended by Designing Local, but ultimately had decided against it due to the location of the park adjacent the marine environment. It was determined that Designing Local would be asked to make recommendations for the amenities / obstacles in the dog park so that they were consistent with the overall placemaking aesthetic.

It was decided that fencing along the Landis Avenue side of the entire project area (4th – 8th street) would be provided to channel pedestrians to a safer crossing area. Mr. Lomax said that he is concerned about public safety and that aesthetically pleasing fencing would help to direct pedestrians to a safer area. He said that adding amenities such as footwash/shower at that location and creating a designated staging and crossing area for beachgoers would be in the best interest of the users of the park. Mr. Previti said that he would add those amenities into the proposal.

Mr. Lomax asked about the relocation of the paint chip facility, indicating that the desire of the Open Spaces Board, as communicated during the previous meeting regarding the project, was to have the paint chip facility removed from the project area entirely. Mr. Previti said that the City has proposed to shrink the size of the facility and has moved it to the southern end of the project area. Mr. Lomax asked if the City had considered other City-owned locations elsewhere, including the adjacent former landfill. Mr. Previti said that they do not want to propose anything on the landfill site, but that they have a wetlands delineation that they will look at. He indicated that no other city-owned sites are available. Mr. Lomax said that there is a lot of interest in minimizing the impact of the paint facility, both in terms of loss of parking and visual impact. Ideally, he would like to have the facility located elsewhere – ie in an area he identified along the dirt roadway leading to the former landfill - but if no other viable alternatives exist, it should be as small as a footprint as possible. In order of desirability, options for the paint chip facility are: remove from project area; shrink footprint and potentially rotate it so that it fits in the area of the paper street at the south end of the project area – and provide vegetated buffer/landscaping with salt tolerant and drought resistant plantings; or feature it as public art and/or STEM facility.

Consensus among the group is to include amenities for beachgoers in the project, which would be washdown stations water fountain, benches, and trash receptacles. Educational signage has been proposed for the observation tower. Ms. Gimeno said that with respect to the paint chip facility, if an alternate site cannot be found, perhaps it could be featured and make it an attraction complete with educational signage.

Ms. Gimeno explained “next steps” in the process, which will include written feedback from the Open Spaces Board and an ongoing dialogue regarding the project. The City should begin the process of determining any approvals needed for the project, including Green Acres and CAFRA. It was confirmed that the Dog Park would be a regular Park & Recreation Development project, with a 75% Open Spaces / 25% City match. The Observation Tower, parking, and beachgoer amenities are a Coastal Enhancement project, which has the 90% Open Spaces / 10% City match for the improvements and 50% Open Spaces/City cost share for the soft costs.

Public Comment – Mr. Molineaux asked if perhaps the paint chip facility could be considered an art installation and if the array of tiles could be altered as such. Mr. Lomax indicated that he had been in discussions with the City for quite some time related to public art. Mr. Byrne indicated that the gentleman who owns the paint chip testing equipment was generally receptive to considering changes.

Closed Session: The Board entered into Closed Session at 11:32 am, upon a motion by Mr. Byrne, seconded by Mr. Craig. All members were in favor.

Open Session: The Board returned to Open Session at 11:56 upon a motion by Mr. Byrne, seconded by Mr. Craig

Decision: .Mr. Byrne made a motion to allow the incorporation of a changing room for special needs athletes in the footprint beneath the current elevated mechanical building at Beesley’s Point Park with the condition that the facility can be moved (at the cost to the Open Spaces Program) if future improvements warrant such action. Mr. Craig seconded the motion. All members were in favor, with the exception of Mr. Lomax, who abstained.

Public Comment: None

Motion to Adjourn: Ms. Gimeno made a motion to adjourn at 12:02; Mr. Byrne seconded the motion. All in favor.

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