

Minutes for FoGP meeting on 11 June 2009

Thursday, 7:00 PM,
Grant Park golf course clubhouse.

Attendees:

Don Lawson, Lynn Crawford, Jody Johnson, Craig Maas, Jim Goulee, Mary Kanitz, Deb Branger, Kathy Slamka, Alexis Gassenhuber, Don Bulley
Minutes typed by Don Lawson

Summary:

The big issue, brought by Jim Goulee, was that the Wisconsin State Budget was being worked into a situation where the "sound funding" option for Parks (via a sales tax) had been thrown out by a few members of the State Assembly, after having been put in place by the Joint Finance Committee. Attendees agreed to mount a "phone calls" campaign to Jeff Plale's office, to see that the sales tax option would be put back into the budget.

Agenda items and resulting discussion:

1) T-Shirt sales:

Various members of FoGP had purchased "100 year anniversary / Gold Medal Finalist" T-shirts that were being offered for sale by Parks.

2) Funding of Parks:

Jim Goulee (Program Director for The Park People of Milwaukee County, Inc.) brought us news that (as mentioned in the Summary above) the option for funding Parks via a dedicated Milwaukee County Sales Tax was in jeopardy, as the Wisconsin State Budget was moving through the Legislature. (Jim mentioned that this option had been pursued by the Quality of Life Alliance.) The original proposal had been for a 0.25% local sales tax to support Parks (as proposed by Ryan McCue in 2003). By the time this got into the advisory referendum, it was a 0.5% tax to support County Transit, and a 0.5% tax to support Parks, the Museum and Zoo, and to support an EMT program. As of the FoGP meeting, the tax had been changed to 0.56% to support Transit, and the options to support Parks etc. had been removed.

Our goal was to re-insert a 0.35% sales tax to support Parks.

Without this funding being in place, long-term prospects for Parks looks very grim. The latest County budget submitted by County Executive Walker proposed laying off 30 "front line" parks employees. This is 10% of the core Parks staff. Before Walker's proposed layoff, the Parks staff is at only 25% of what it was 30 years ago.

The Parks budget is currently \$42 million. \$24 million is property tax levy, and the remainder is fees from golf courses, rentals, etc. Parks is trying to figure out how to deal with a total of \$276 million in deferred maintenance.

If Parks funding could be raised to around \$45 or \$50 per household in Milwaukee, it would have barely-adequate funding. (The 2006 estimate was \$46 per household.)

FoGP decided to mount a phone call campaign, working with phone lists from attendees of past Community Forum and Pullin' O the Green events. (Later Don provided sections of lists, plus key "script" items, to Craig Maas, Kathy Slamka.)

3) A new friend of FoGP:

Debbie Branger introduced herself to members of FoGP. She is part of the local business that is handling concessions at the Beach House this year.

4) Wheelchair access to restrooms at Picnic Area 5 pavilion:

Don reported that our attempt to install wheelchair access ramps at Picnic Pavilion 5 had run into a snag, despite concrete work being scheduled for the pavilion. According to conversations with James Keegan (who heads up 'infrastructure' work for Parks), Federal law does not allow us to do a partial improvement of the restrooms. We would need to not only install the ramps, but also rework the layout of "stall walls" etc. to accommodate wheelchairs. An initial estimate was around \$8000, which we currently do not have in our account.

Mr. Keegan advised Don that we should still keep our \$1500 prospective donation in mind for other possible improvements.

Betsy Abert suggested that we could make the access ramps using treated wood, rather than using concrete. She would look into possible options.

5) Matching Grants for Herbicide Supplies:

Don Bulley (who, along with being a member of FoGP, is the Treasurer for Friends of the Mill Pond) reported that FoMP donated a jug of Round-Up to Brian Russart's efforts of managing exotic invasives. Therefore, since FoGP is doing matching donations, we agreed to donate an additional \$150 to Brian Russart's Natura Areas Management program (via The Park People).

As preparation for discussion on donations, note that the FoGP account balance is above \$6000. With the annual 8% charge by Park People to act as the fiscal agent of FoGP, this balance would be reduced to half of its present value if, over 8 years, we don't do anything with the money we have accrued.

6) The July Picnic event:

Don reported that Picnic Area 7 has been reserved (with a fee waiver) for the FoGP July Picnic on July 29th. The event will run from 5:00 to 8:00 PM.

Music: We will not have music provided by GMP because too many musicians from our "house band" will be out of town on that day. However, Don and Betsy will look into bringing other musicians to the event.

We asked that the hot dogs, hamburgers, etc. be catered by Debbie Branger's business, as a way of giving her some business and also giving her some PR exposure.

Food tickets will be sold in advance via a "flier drop" campaign. Also, we will get news into a "Rocky" So Milw E-Vents e-mailing. Alexis, Kathy, Craig, Betsy said that they would be willing to help sell tickets.

NEXT MEETING

The next FoGP meeting will be on Thursday July 9th, with a focus on the July 29th Picnic.