

MINUTES

FEBRUARY 2, 2021 11:30AM

TELECONFERENCE

TYPE OF MEETING	Monthly Meeting
CHAIR	Peter Billipp
SECRETARY	Mary McCulloch
ATTENDEES	<p>Members Present: Peter Billipp, Will Bertron, Sami Morrison, Mardi Turner, Brett Bingham, Maryann Grahamann, Jeff Chen</p> <p>Members Absent: Laura Turley, Nina Pilson, Lindsey Swiger, Mary McCulloch</p> <p>Staff: Susan White, Will Thompson, Brooks Smith, Anthony Hagan, Toby Brooks, Jeremy Veld, Donna La Mond</p> <p>Council Liaison: Mayor Pro Tem Kevin Trautner</p>
VISITORS	Manish Agrawal, West U resident. 4221 Southwestern St.

- I. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 11:33 am by Peter Billipp.
- II. **Approval of January 6th Meeting Minutes:** Mardi Turner made a motion to approve with Jeff Chen seconding the motion. The minutes were approved.
- III. **Citizen Comments:** None.
- IV. **Parks Programming and Senior Survey Results – Dr. Jamie Rae Walker**
 The West U Senior Services survey received excellent participation and provided good insight with over 95% of all respondents confirming this is an important demographic in the neighborhood. Dr. Walker took the board members through a presentation of the results. She noted that the 2020 census data will be helpful in determining West U’s aging population and therefore the demand for services in the future. Overall, things are working well and there is some opportunity for things to focus on. Susan explained we have access to additional data from the survey that will be used in discussions going forward. It is worth noting, and appreciating, 1268 participants is impressive, especially around the holidays.
- V. **Friends Update: Sami Morrison**
 Kelly Hill has joined the board. The wine wagon is the substitute for the wine pull that is normally at Park Lover’s Ball. Donations may be dropped at the Rec Center through February 9th. Natalie & Austin Crossley will be with Ilona Carson on a vehicle moving through West U for a socially distant wine pull. April 16th is the official date for the first Friends Park Lovers Golf Tournament at Wildcat. Christine Parker and Sami are chairing the event and supported by board volunteers. “Whiskey Putt”, raffles, Yeti golf goodies, etc.
- VI. **Council Update: Mayor Pro Tem Kevin Trautner**
 ZPC looking into slightly increasing the pervious area on lots. There is an upcoming workshop that is an update on the traffic study. Plan to take action on updated financial policy. The city continues to maintain its reserves at 20% and its triple A credit rating. Mayor Higley will not be running for reelection so Kevin will be running for Mayor and plans to maintain the work City Council is doing with drainage, security and continuing the high quality of life.

Will asked if the city has had a chance to use the security cameras and how that system is working. Kevin said phase one has been successful with good results for identifying license plates, car makes and models. There have been some permitting delays on phase two with the City of Houston.

VII. Parks & Rec Update: Susan White

- 1) The Challenge Course is a hit! Susan has received lots of positive feedback just after the first weekend it opened. Social distancing reminders have been added due to the popularity of this park. During the retaining wall installation someone vandalized the concrete twice and it still needs some work to fix the imprints. Additionally, some middle school aged children were able to forcefully break one piece of equipment. We may need to consider some etiquette signage for respecting when someone is actually running the course and using the timer. The Communications director observed that the challenge course has received the most “likes” and posts on social media. Will was curious if the vandalism was in broad daylight and Susan confirmed that it was. Brooks was able to fix it.
- 2) COVID – Still in the watch stage and status quo. Mardi asked Kevin what our COVID rate is at this time. Kevin said the last report was about 11.6% positivity rate in our area. We have had several hundred West U residents. Only one has not recovered. Approximately 115 active cases in the neighborhood currently. Expecting this is a rise from the holidays and we will be on a downward trend.
- 3) Mardi asked for an update on the field use policy. Susan explained that this will be discussed in more detail at the next board meeting as the survey and park projects have taken priority recently. The tennis subcommittee is working through their use policies too. This is a complex subject that is going to take some time.

VIII. Huffington Park Improvement Project: Discussion and take and desired action

In addition to board and user group feedback, Susan incorporated the survey results into the Huffington Park Improvements presentation. The existing play structure is to be kept in place, but the earthquake shaker will be removed because it is underused. In its place several features are being considered with the user group’s favorite being the “Volta Inclusive Spinner”.

An “Option 5” discussion came out of the user group meetings. We would be able to take advantage of the manufacturer’s sale to get an additional play unit for a reduced price. In considering the pricing to refurbish the existing structure that is 11 years old (faded panels, cracking surfaces, painting, etc = ~\$27k) the option of a new structure at the sale price (~\$31k) is something we need to consider. The dolphin rocker would be kept in its current location to keep other costs minimal. The user group preference is to get the new structure. Two board members also support the new structure, specifically Lindsey believes it is “more bang for the buck” and has a good warranty to consider. For comparison: The new structure will be shorter than the existing one. The new structure is smaller and doesn’t have the bridge. The new one adds new coordination challenges and various types of climbers. The existing one has more slides. Maryann has asked for a visual rendering of this new structure in Huffington and Susan is waiting for this from the manufacturer. Mardi asked about the pole sticking out of the front bow of the boat and expressed a little concern on safety. She also made sure both structures have transfer stations and are ADA compliant. Susan summarized this as a whole new structure for less than \$4,000 more is recommended from a financial point of view. Maryann confirmed most of the user group was in favor of the new structure, and the ones that were not had concerns over the specific offshoot features. However, the images shown for these were for older kids and looked less age appropriate. Upon seeing the Twisting Traverse at the correct age scale it is most likely not a concern anymore. The timeline for approving this new structure needs to be quick to get

the reduced pricing. Order by March 31 and delivery will need to be by May 31st. Susan said the rubber surfacing over the sidewalks received positive feedback. A light blue or teal should not be too hot in the summer.

The survey results show the number one feature people want at Huffington is a Shade Arbor at 36%! It came in as the most used of the park even over playground equipment. Although the survey was more heavily responded to by seniors, this data about Huffington was screened for age 50 and under. One of the user group members had suggested keeping the arbor, but removing the wisteria and game tables. This concept would provide a shaded race car area for the little kids. History – the shade arbor went in 1996 when there was no shade from trees. At this time the park has a lot of natural shade.

Will commented that the survey numbers for the shade structure and game tables are inconsistent and he would expect them to be closer. He also feels people may have been placing “shade” as the priority, not specifically the arbor. Lastly, the game and picnic tables should be unbundled for clarity between the two. Peter agreed with these comments and shared that he felt similarly about the wording and grouping of amenities on the survey. Susan mentioned the cantilever option for additional shade in the future similar to ones at Wier Park. She also believes the people that currently use the arbor to park strollers, etc will find another shaded area maybe near the new turf.

Projected Expenses for the Huffington Project are \$197,274.00 for all new equipment or \$193,215.00 for a refresh and small new feature. Friends had approved a budget of \$250,000 so either option is within that.

Jeff thinks it makes sense to go with the new structure from a long-term cost and suitability for young children perspective. Peter thinks there is good consensus between the user group and the board to move forward. Susan said some landscaping improvements will still be considered. Stroller parking is not realistic because people want to keep them close by.

Peter made a motion to approve the recommendation for proposed improvements and the proposed budget. Jeff Chen seconded the motion. Peter called for all in favor. The board unanimously approved the new equipment option.

IX. Park Ambassador Assignments:

- Colonial Park East (Will) – drainage and turf concerns, Brooks is working on it
- Colonial Park West (Nina)
- Colonial Park Pool (Mary)
- Friends Pocket Park (Sami)
- Huffington Park (Maryann)
- JEH Park (Laura)
- Judson Park (Jeff)
- Recreation Center Playground (Mardi)
- Whitt Johnson (Brett)
- Wier Park (Lindsey)

X. Order of Business: Peter Billipp

Pickleball – Linda Lewis, a previous Mayor, has a passion for pickleball and raised the question of adding this amenity to West U. Using the 2 half courts at Whitt Johnson by painting lines and adding temporary netting (approximately \$700) makes this a multi-use court. There would be a place to store the nets that has a combo lock on it for registered

pickle ball players. Mardi asked about the existing 4-square lines and Susan said we would use a different color for pickle ball. Sami mentioned a concern about the little kids that play on those courts and ride their trikes, so the players may need to ask them to move. Sami did say she has seen pickle ball interest sky rocket. Mardi asked where the seniors play and Susan said it would typically be in the auditorium, but is currently on hold. Note – most people want to be outside for this. Peter asked if a pickleball court would fit in the racquet ball court. Susan said they tried and it is not exact. Peter asked about the tennis court at Judson, but Susan said that court has the most reservations. Jeff confirmed that court would not be a good option because of the tennis demand on a single court. Peter mentioned there may be West U property somewhere that can be repurposed. More to come on pickleball.

XI. Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 1:04 p.m.
Next meeting is tentatively scheduled for March 3, 2021.