

**MINUTES
PIQUA CITY COMMISSION WORK SESSION
THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 10, 2013
7:30 P.M.**

Piqua City Commission met in a City Commission Work Session at 7:30 P.M. in the Municipal Government Complex Commission Chambers located at 201 W. Water Street. Mayor Fess called the meeting to order. Present were Commissioners Vogt, Martin, and Wilson. Absent: None. Also present: City Manager Gary Huff, Bill Murphy Economic Development Director/Assistant City Manager, Law Director Stacy Wall, City Planner Chris Schmiesing, Police Chief Bruce Jamison, and Finance Director/Assistant City Manager Cynthia Holtzapple, Parks Director Brian Brookhart, Becky Cool, and Jim Dziatkowicz of EMHT.

Also present: Edna Stiefel, Ruth Koon, Kazy Hinds, Dan French, Dan Henthorn, Cindy Pearson, Al Cooper, Don Cavender, Tom Hudson, Kevin Pryfogle, Brad Boehringer, Jim Cruse, Bethany Royer, Butch Thompson, Doug Haines, Cathy Oda.

Moved by Commissioner Martin, seconded by Commissioner Wilson to excuse Commissioner Terry from the October 10, 2013 Piqua City Commission Work Session. Voice vote, Aye: Fess, Martin, Wilson, and Vogt. Nay: None. Motion carried unanimously.

Moved by Commissioner Wilson, seconded by Commissioner Martin to add a fourth item to the Work Session Agenda for discussion. The topic is Metal Detecting in Public Parks. Voice vote, Aye: Wilson, Martin, Vogt, and Fess. Nay, None.

Park Master Plan

City Planner Chris Schmiesing stated the Park Board members were invited and some of them were in attendance. The previous Park Master Plan was completed in 2000 and not all of the components were included for a Master Plan. Mr. Schmiesing explained the reasons for implementing and having a Master Plan. One of the main reasons is to be able to apply for Government Grants as a Master Plan is required to be in place before applying. Mayor Fess stated it is time to develop a new Master Plan since it has been thirteen years.

Mr. Schmiesing introduced Jim Dziatkowicz Landscape Architect from EMHT who has completed numerous Park Master Plans in the area including Kettering and Grove City, to provide an overview of what a Master Plan is and benefits.

Jim Dziatkowicz came forward and provided a brief overview of a Park Master Plan and the need for such a document. Mr. Dziatkowicz stated he was surprised at the Linear Parks in place already in Piqua, further stating that Piqua is really far ahead of other communities in putting a Park Master Plan together. Mr. Dziatkowicz provided samples of other Park Master Plans and went over the steps in putting together a Park Master Plan. This plan includes: framework for sensible facility & service departments; community input opportunities; sharing information about programs & facilities; and having a clear sense of direction.

There were several questions regarding the information included in a Master Plan. City Manager Huff explained it is an accepted process to have a Master Plan in place before applying for any grants, as a Master Plan must be submitted with any Grant Application. City Manager Huff also explained that the CDC grant money would be used for the Historic East Piqua project.

Several Park Board members were present and voiced their opinions on the use of grant funds and how much the city has to put in with matching funds. The Parks Department only has 3 employees and some things are not getting done; with the new fiber optics coming would it be possible to install video cameras in the City Parks to help curb vandalism.

City Manager Huff stated the purpose of the meeting is to explain what a Park Master Plan is.

The Park Board has a member from each one of the Neighborhood Associations on board to provide neighborhood input. Mayor Fess stated there are a lot of things happening in the City of Piqua, and the Park Board is doing a great job.

Tom Hudson stated the bridge over the river is very important asset to the City of Piqua, as Piqua is becoming the Crossroads of America for bicycling.

Doug Haines stated Piqua is on the map with the Bike Trail now, Ash Street connects the downtown with the Mall area, and there is a need to have the bike path on the south side to continue on the path. All of this work is a positive move for the City, and by utilizing a roundabout at Looney Road and Garbry Road this would be a step in the right direction to help promote economic development in the area.

Commissioner Vogt stated we need to have a current Park Master Plan in place so we can possibly receive additional grants to complete some of the projects. City Manager Huff stated if the City receives additional grant money it can be used to improve the recreational trail. It was noted that is about a six to nine month process to put together a Park Master Plan.

Mayor Fess thanked Mr. Dziatkowicz for coming and providing information on the need for a Park Master Plan, and also thanked the Park Board members for attending.

U.S. Route 36 Enhancements-Phase II

City Manager Huff stated the city is currently working on Phase I of the US Route 36 Enhancements and would like to begin the process to apply for funding for Phase II. This will need to be put on the next City Commission Agenda which is October 15, in order to meet the deadline for applying if all are in agreement, stated City Manager Huff.

City Planner Chris Schmiesing passed out a handout showing the suggested improvements to US Route 36 they would like to make if the grant money is received. Mr. Schmiesing also presented Slide and went over each of the area of improvements and how they would be implemented. This includes: tree plantings, removing a portion of the slopes for a better visual of the businesses and easier maintenance, new crosswalks across U S Route 36, bike/pedestrian lanes, and sidewalks are all part of the plan to enhance the community.

City Manager Huff stated we are not asking for funding at this time for any of the projects, we are only asking the Commissioners for approval to apply for the grant funding. This work would not be scheduled until 2018/2019.

City Planner Schmiesing stated this is merely a concept plan at this time.

There was discussion on the location of the bike/pedestrian lane on the bridge, the absence of an entrance sign when coming into the City of Piqua, comments were also presented concerning the roundabout discussion at Looney Road and Garbry Road intersections, traffic lane issues of only one lane for traffic, possibly providing screening to hid the backs of some of the buildings, and the need for paint on the Railroad Bridge over US RT 36.

After discussion all Commissioners present were in favor of moving forward with applying for the grant money at this time.

Mayor Fess thanked Mr. Schmiesing for his presentation.

Vehicle Impoundment

City Manager Huff stated we need to do more to resolve the issue of junk vehicles and how we are currently handling the removal of them.

Law Director Stacy Wall gave a brief overview of several situations that have occurred in other communities and how they are proceeding with the removal of junk vehicles. Ms. Wall stated the City of Piqua needs to revisit the current policies and procedures on the books at this time and make some changes to be in compliance with the State Code.

Police Chief Bruce Jamison stated the City of Piqua needs to review and change the whole process of the way they are towing vehicles. Chief Jamieson explained the reason for asking for the changes.

There was discussion regarding the impound fees, who is paying them, the length of time the vehicles are being held, and the location. Butch Thompson, Miami Auto Salvage came forward and voiced his concerns with the current process on junk vehicles and impounding.

Police Chief Jamison further stated the City has to go through a process when towing a vehicle of notifying not only the owner of the vehicle, but also the lien holder, which is sometimes hard to locate.

After a brief discussion of the necessary changes that need to be made, City Manager Huff stated he will continue to work on the changes and keep the Commission updated.

Metal Detecting In Public Parks

Don Cavender came forward to ask that changes be made to the City Code regarding the use of metal detecting equipment in the Piqua City Parks. Mr. Cavender asked if the City has received any complaints about citizens using metal detectors in the City Parks. City Manager Huff stated he was not aware of any complaints regarding metal detecting in the City Parks. The current law states no metal detecting is allowed in City Parks.

Mayor Fess asked if there was any way the Ordinance could be amended to allow metal detecting in the City Parks, if any damage occurs they would be responsible for making restitution.

Mr. Cavender stated the City of Troy and Tipp City allow metal detecting in their Public Parks.

City Manager Huff stated he was concerned that not everyone using a metal detector would be responsible, and there is the liability issue if someone would dig holes and leave them.

Jim Cruse, Park Board member stated that Mr. Cavender came to the Park Board asking permission to use the metal detector in the Park. The Park Board stated they had not received any complaints.

City Manager Huff stated if the City knowingly lets that happen they will be liable. Same as if we know ground hogs are digging holes and we did not take any action to stop them the City would be liable also, stated City Manager Huff. Law Director Wall stated if permits were to be issued to allow this how would it be monitored? There was discussion on the issue of someone digging holes and leaving them for someone to fall in or twist an ankle.

Mr. Cavender stated why is the City of Piqua so concerned about the use of metal detectors in the City Parks when Troy and Tipp City are not concerned about it. If I can't dig in the City Parks can I dig anywhere else in the City, the ordinance just references the City Parks, stated Mr. Cavender.

Mayor Fess stated appreciates Mr. Cavender bringing this to the Commissions attention, but does not feel there is enough support to change the Ordinance at this time. We will see that signs are posted in the City Parks regarding the use of metal detectors.

Moved by Commissioner Vogt, seconded by Commissioner Martin, to adjourn from the Piqua City Commission Work Session at 9:30 P.M. Voice vote, Aye: Vogt, Fess, Wilson, Martin, and Terry. Nay: None. Motion carried unanimously.

LUCINDA L. FESS, MAYOR

PASSED: _____

ATTEST: _____
REBECCA J. COOL
CLERK OF COMMISSION