



CITY OF WAUWATOSA

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CITIZENS ADVISORY CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS COMMITTEE

Monday, September 29, 2008 – 6:30 p.m.

PRESENT: J. Albert, G. Becker, T. Brown, F. DeFrain, R. Deuel, J. Engelhardt, J. Kasdorf, S. Kroeger; P. Matthews, M. Moylan, T. Stacey; Ald. Maher (Chair/ex-officio) -12

ALSO PRESENT: W. Wehrley, City Engineer

Ald. Maher in the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

Five-Year Capital Improvements Program – 2009-2013

Mayor Didier addressed the committee regarding funding of Hart Park improvements in the amount of \$2 million in 2009. She spoke of the park's essential role in the quality of life in Wauwatosa and the need to provide playable fields, track, and tennis courts for Wauwatosa East High School teams comparable to the school district facilities at Wauwatosa West. She felt that proceeding with the athletic component would provide a good basis for the rest of the park elements and that some city investment would also help make any potential fundraising efforts much easier. Mayor Didier noted that there will always be a need to do roads; but with the potential sale of public works land bringing in over \$1 million next year, she sees an opportunity here to begin completion of Hart Park. She would also like to offer a small amount to the new Hartung Quarry Park, a portion of which is in Wauwatosa. She noted that the school district plans some further improvements at West High School and Milwaukee County plans to consider improving Hawthorne Park across from Hawthorne Terrace, thus presenting a united front to invest in green space and quality of life.

Ms. Matthews noted that the school district did not pay for all of the athletic improvements at West; there was a great deal of private fundraising. She asked if East pays anything for field use and if there is any consideration of partnering with the school district to help pay for Hart Park improvements. She indicated that she is troubled by the cost of artificial turf. Mayor Didier said that part of the reasoning behind artificial turf is that there will be a return on investment through increased usage, which will help with maintenance and upkeep costs. If the city can get some momentum going by investing in these components, she felt that we would be able to get East parents and boosters to help raise funds to offset some of the costs.

Mr. Wehrley confirmed the thought that getting some long-term agreements for use of the field would yield revenues that would help offset operation and maintenance expenses as well as some of the debt service. Operation and maintenance costs for artificial turf are substantially less than with a natural surface. There would be a reduction in staff time, although there will be more duties for staff to take on due to the park expansion. In response to earlier questions, he noted that it is difficult to establish the number of injuries caused by artificial turf because there are so many different types of injuries. He can provide brochures with more information in that regard from manufacturers' perspectives. To address the current condition of the turf, he displayed a 2005 aerial photo showing that the center section of the football field was just dirt at that time and a 2007 aerial photo also showing dirt in the middle and poor conditions on the sidelines as well.

Tom Ertel, Parks and Forestry Board president, reported that the city invested \$12,000 in grass in 1987, \$16,000 in 1995, and \$10,000 in 2000. The average that should be spent on maintenance every year is \$10,000-\$20,000. The field recently has had about 88 hours of use each year. Recommended annual usage for artificial

turf is about 2,000 hours in a life span of 12-15 years. With only eight months of usage per year, however, we might be able to get two or three extra years of use. The Tosa Kickers are interested in renting the field and participating financially in its upkeep. Other possibilities among interested organizations are the Tosa Soccer Club, Pius High School, Marquette High School, and Divine Savior-Holy Angels High School.

Questions and comments followed on the importance of field size, particularly width, in terms different sports, different levels of those sports, and how the facility might be used. The size of the field also affects the number of lanes on the track, and the overall size determines whether bleachers would need to be repositioned. Moving the bleacher location would, in turn, result in additional costs for meeting ADA requirements. Mayor Didier reported that conversations with the East and West athletic directors have been initiated. Mr. Wehrley said that a study to be completed by November 18th will look at the different alternatives and provide revenue estimates based on each as well as a cost-to-benefit analysis.

Mr. Becker asked if the cost should be a taxpayer burden or borne by those who use the fields, perhaps through fundraising. Mayor Didier responded that this is a community park, not just a school park, and commented that groups raising funds for other purposes such as the Hoyt pool have not been as successful as they had hoped. She felt that there would be opportunities to fundraise for other elements in the park. She noted the effect of losing this facility on the school system and potentially the tax base if families move because we are not in line with other communities. This will also drive revenue and business in the community, she felt.

Mr. Moylan asked the cost of bringing the field up to proper athletic standards with natural turf. Mr. Ertel estimated that just going down the center would cost about \$30,000-\$35,000. He estimated about \$60,000 to bring the base up to standard, and about \$110,000 to do the entire field. This work would be needed repeatedly and would still provide only 88 hours of usage. He said that annual grass maintenance could be anywhere from \$7,000 to \$30,000 per year, with average maintenance probably being \$10,000 per year or less.

When looking at revenue generation and cost in terms of long-term debt, the Chair suggested consideration of revenue bonds. If there is revenue potential, then creation of a separate revenue stream that could be used for that debt service and to build a system that is self-sustaining might be worth discussing.

Mr. Wehrley said that from an ecological standpoint, about 40,000 tires are shredded for the cushioning, and artificial turf is recyclable at the end of its useful life. The turf material is porous to allow it to absorb up to 28 inches. Installation cost includes removal, grading, base, storm sewer, under drains, and engineering design. If the surface becomes unusable at some point, it might be possible to remove it, re-grade, and put a new surface on top. Mr. Ertel estimated the cost of replacing artificial turf without the base at about \$400,000.

Discussion of parks versus street infrastructure needs continued. Ms. Matthews noted that this committee envisioned getting more roads done, but now we're spending twice as much and doing half as many roads. She advocated going to referendum on Hart Park instead of fighting every year for money to do a portion. She saw artificial turf as a want rather than a need but also agreed with the need for a decent field on which to play.

Mayor Didier explained that one of the problems is having staff for some of the maintenance. By realizing more revenue with artificial turf, we will have the ability to maintain parks without increasing the tax base. The problem with going to a referendum, she felt, is that we just had the fire station referendum. With leadership from city hall and money from the public works land sale, she felt we could start the effort and get some fundraising; otherwise, we may be looking many years out.

Mr. Brown was concerned with expanding the park while having problems year after year with taking care of what we already have. He noted the importance of dealing with potholes and flooded basements, and said that what Wauwatosa looks like outside someone's front door is more important to him than what Wauwatosa looks like in the Village. He felt that funds from the sale of city property should not be committed until the property is

sold. He noted that the city could not maintain roads on the necessary schedule under the \$3.5 million cap, but now that the cap has been removed, we are back to square one or worse. Instead of maintaining roads on a 40-years-resurface/80-years-rebuild schedule, we are shoving that responsibility off on someone else in the future.

Mayor Didier responded that the committee could elect to reprioritize appropriations within each of the proposed budgets. More roadwork could be added, but she is asking for consideration of the parks because she feels it is a detriment to not support the community and the schools.

Mr. Engelhardt commented that the Rotary stage will be a draw to help bring donations for other portions of the park over time. He agreed with the need to look at information from the study to help make a decision. Mr. Ertel reported that the Parks Board will send out letters in the next month to seek some commitments. Usage formerly was at about 120 hours and is now at 88 hours and keeps sliding. Besides adding sports such as la crosse, field hockey, and rugby, the field could also be used for events such as band competitions.

In response to questions about what to expect from the upcoming study, Mr. Wehrley said that consultants were asked to inventory existing fields and estimate expected use at various possible sizes. If the facility ends up smaller than other fields in the area, users will not be as motivated to come. Each step has both higher construction costs and revenue potential. Costs versus benefits will have to be considered.

Discussion turned to time constraints in terms of approval of the budget and timing of construction, particularly in connection with anticipated floodplain work at Hart Park. Mr. Wehrley said that the study would first be presented to the Parks Board and then to the Common Council Committee of the Whole on the night they vote on the 2009 city budget. He explained that the Council has agreed to proceed with floodproofing Hart Park buildings under a \$1.7 million grant provided that no city funds are required. Some of that work will affect a corner of the track and the south end of the tennis courts. He outlined other interconnected issues relating to the courts, softball field lights, football practice area, and bleachers that are unknown but also affect decision-making and timing of construction.

Moved by Mr. Brown to delay any consideration of the plan for the improvements to the Hart Park athletic fields including tennis courts and softball field for one year subject to having a plan in place and that there is some thought about financing for some of the improvements, one option being the sale of public works land --

In response to questions, Mr. Wehrley indicated that there could be a stopping point after floodproofing, if needed, but it would still be necessary to know with some certainty that the athletic facility work was going to proceed. Further discussion of timing was related to sports seasons and budget approvals and the lead-time needed prior to construction.

There were further comments on the need to get back to doing more road and infrastructure work, to wait for the sale of the public works land to occur, and to wait to look at the study. There was also concern that there hasn't been any community discussion about artificial turf and a comment that more people will be hurting financially in the coming year.

Moved by Mr. Brown to amend the motion to a recommendation to delay for one year any consideration of the plan for capital improvements for Hart Park; seconded by Ms. Matthews.
Roll call vote, Ayes: 4; Noes: 5 (Albert, Becker, DeFrain, Engelhardt, Moylan) Motion fails.

The committee discussed possible amendments to the 2009 plan to include more street work. Cutting spot improvement work was raised as one possible option. Mr. Wehrley explained that, due to staffing, the department could not go from 2 miles to 4 miles in one year.

Moved by Mr. Brown, seconded by Mr. Becker to recommend that the city get on track and remain on track for 4 miles of roads per year, including utilities beneath the roads, to meet sustainability of our city infrastructure –

Ms. Matthews proposed an amendment to state that not less than 2 miles per year should be done with a goal of 4 miles. Mr. Brown declined the amendment, feeling that it is necessary to do four miles and that the committee should keep pressing for that.

Vote on the motion, Ayes: 11

Moved by Mr. Becker, seconded by Mr. Albert to make a recommendation on Hart Park capital improvements after being briefed on the study around November 15. Ayes: 11

Moved by Mr. DeFrain, seconded by Ms. Matthews to delay approval of the capital improvements plan until this committee has reviewed the Hart Park study in November. Ayes: 11

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Carla A. Ledesma, City Clerk
City of Wauwatosa

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