

Centre Region Council of Governments
COG PARKS CAPITAL COMMITTEE
Draft Meeting Summary
from Thursday, May 20, 2010
held in the COG Forum Room

Mr. Klees called the May 20, 2010, meeting of the COG Parks Capital Committee to order at 12:15 PM with the following individuals in attendance:

Parks Capital Committee (5 of 6): Messrs. Klees, Warner, Luck, Rosenberger, Killian
Others (18):

Mr. Roy Harpster, CRRA	Ms. Sue Mascolo, CRRA
Ms. Amy Farkas, Harris Township Mgr.	Mr. Adam Brumbaugh, College Township Mgr.
Mr. James Steff, COG Executive Director	Mr. Tom Kurtz, SC Borough Asst. Mgr.
Ms. Kathy Ulincy, COG Finance Officer	Mr. Ronald Woodhead, CRPR/CRRA Director
Mr. Bud Graham, Harris Twp. Supervisor	Ms. Kim Wyatt, Finance Officer Patton Twp.
Mr. Rick Tetzlaff, Member SC Softball Assn.	Mr. Nick Malawskey, CDT reporter
Mr. Steve Miller, Ferguson Twp. Supervisor	Mr. Dick Mascolo, Former Twp. Supervisor
Ms. Kathy Matason, CRRA	Dr. Donna Ricketts, CRRA
Ms. Diane Ishler, CRPR Office Manager	Mr. Charles Khan, State College Borough Intern

CITIZEN COMMENTS: None

APPROVAL OF MEETING SUMMARY

The April 1 and April 15 meeting summaries were unanimously approved as amended (April 15) following a motion by Mr. Warner and a second by Mr. Luck. The April 15 amendments were on the recommendation to the General Forum - the "municipal contribution" should have been "total project costs" and the funding range was \$8 - \$10 million. The recommendation now listed in the minutes is the same as presented to the General Forum.

THE RECOMMENDATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGIONAL PARKS

Mr. Klees started the review of municipal comments with Mr. Luck, Patton Township. Mr. Steff had prepared a matrix of all the comments.

Patton Township - Mr. Luck noted the Patton Township comments relating that most of the discussion centered around the needed tax increase and the level of debt the Township would be carrying. The Patton Township comments were:

- committed to continued participation in the Regional Park Program
- Hess Softball Field Complex must be included in the Regional Park Program and should be acquired with funds currently in the Regional Park Fund.
- the Board is unable to commit to a funding level greater than the equivalent of 0.26 mills which is approximately 150% of the current contribution.
- the Board expects a tax increase will be required to fund any contributions over existing levels
- commitment to future funding will be considered again during development of the Township's next Capital Improvement Plan (August - October 2010).
- The Board urges the Committee and the Parks and Recreation agency to develop a plan to solicit and obtain funding commitments from the Visitors Bureau, banks other local businesses and sports groups.
- The Board of supervisors supports a borrowing term of 20 or 25 years.

Mr. Luck clarified the comment that lists commitment to future funding. He related that the comment meant that the commitment to the future funding would be considered in the process of developing the Capital Improvement Plan. Mr. Rosenberger asked if the 0.26 mills was correct as it

seemed high to him. Mr. Luck indicated that 0.17 mills is for their current contribution and the discussion was they would be willing to go up another ½ more. Mr. Warner indicated that the contribution discussion at the Harris Township was that the funding number wouldn't take affect until three or four years in the future. Mr. Luck indicated that it was more a matter of the level of contribution Patton was willing to make. Mr. Killian asked how that would relate back into the total project costs. Mr. Luck indicated that would put Patton approximately in the middle scenarios. Mr. Klees related that due to all the different scenarios, etc. that have been discussed, there is some confusion as to when it will start, how much will be in the regional park fund at that time, and how much would we borrow. All of these variables will continue until decisions are made.

Ferguson Township - Mr. Killian indicated Ferguson Township took a similar approach. Ferguson Township comments:

- supports the April 15, 2010 Alternate Plan with a proposed cost of \$11.73 million. Public restrooms must be an amenity in Whitehall Road Park
- supports a loan/bond term of 20 to 30 years
- supports the recommendation that additional funding may be committed to the project from non-municipal resources such as state and federal grants endowments, community fund raising campaigns. etc.
- supports the annual municipal contribution limit of \$735,000
- supports the recommendation that the financing should be shared among the five municipalities using the Modified COG Formula for 2011 and then adjusted on a five year basis
- supports the recommendation to develop all three parks within 3-4 years
- supports the acquisition of Hess Softball Complex as a third regional park facility provided partner municipalities can agree on sufficient funding to develop all three parks within recommended 3-4 year period.
- supports recommendation to develop a master site plan for Hess Softball Field Complex.
- supports recommendation to adopt Articles of Agreement for Hess Complex provided that the Whitehall Road Park master Plan is approved concurrently with the Articles of Agreement.
- supports the recommendation that all regional parks be developed in closely sequential phases over a 3 to 4 year time period with the understanding that the priority improvements for Hess Complex be completed in time for the 2011 softball season.
- supports all regional parks remaining eligible for state funding.
- supports that if the School District, sport leagues, and other groups request competition-quality fields, these organizations will be expected to provide the supplemental funding for facility improvements and operational/maintenance costs above the basic recreational level as provided by municipal funds.
- supports the recommendation that any in-kind services performed must be consistent with the master site plan for the regional park and approved by the Parks Capital Committee. The agreed to value of the approved improvements will be deducted from the overall cost impact of all three regional parks. Since the contributions may be across the Centre Region, the value does not accrue to a single park or single municipality.
- clarify that "future improvements" listed in the recommendation, for future improvements to the parks are to be made as funding is available, are those beyond Alternate Plan describes on April 15, 2010 document.

An additional question was raised. How will COG Regional Park participants become legally obligated to finance the Oak Hall and Whitehall Road Parks, once Hess Field is developed? How

can COG bind a financial commitment by the Participating Municipalities to develop Oak Hall and Whitehall Road Parks since the improvements to Hess Softball Complex is scheduled to be completed prior to the 2011 softball season? Mr. Rosenberger asked what assurance would be needed for Ferguson Township from the other participating municipalities.

Borough of State College - Mr. Rosenberger noted the split vote and related they wanted to make sure there was ample discussion at the Council meeting, as to what caused the split vote. They also had a discussion about the .2 mil. increase in funding outside the regular COG and municipal annual budget processes. The council wants to discuss this recommendation at the next COG General Forum meeting to hear the discussion on both alternatives to developing the three regional parks. They do not want the support of Hess Softball Field Complex to jeopardize moving forward with all three parks. Mr. Kurtz suggested it would be good for the General Forum to hear each stand on the recommendations for the Regional Parks. Both points of view had compelling reasoning and it should be presented so all the General Forum members could hear the points.

College Township - Mr. Klees reported the College Township Council made the following comments:

- Hess Field does present an opportunity for acquisition
- believes it makes sense to use several “facility and funding options” to assist in guiding funding decisions by tying costs and amenities together on all three potential regional parks
- believes that a figure closer to \$11.7 million in first phase funding from participating municipalities will be necessary to make all three parks functional and attractive to residents of the Centre Region. Residents have a certain level of expectation with respect to elements and amenities offered in the parks
- regional park amenities, i.e. number and type of field, et., need to be large enough to attract the type of public/private partnership interest necessary to construct the quality facilities the public expects
- CRPR should be the exclusive manager of all regional facilities
- all three proposed regional parks should be constructed over a 3 to 4 year period
- all three proposed regional parks must proceed forward as a package
- the CRPR staffing concerns previously identified in the Oak Hall Master Plan document will also be similar at Hess Field and Whitehall Road Parks.

Mr. Klees clarified bullet 3. The \$11.7 million is a total of \$10.1 million borrowing and the fund balance of \$1.6 million. The Council thought the funding should be sufficient to call these regional parks and to make the parks desirable enough for groups to want to use them and contribute to go beyond that. They recognized that there would be increased operational costs as these parks are developed. Mr. Kurtz asked if anyone had done an estimate of operational costs? Mr. Woodhead indicated the estimated operational costs for Oak Hall are identified in the Oak Hall Master Site Plan; they will be in the finished Whitehall Road Master Site Plan, and in the Hess Softball Field Complex Master Site Plan when it is completed.

Harris Township - Mr. Warner indicated the comments spoke for themselves:

- Hess Field should be acquired using the existing funds in the Regional Parks Fund and the property should be closed on by September 1, 2010, in accordance with the sales agreement and the family’s wishes.
- acquisition of Hess field should not be tied to the approval of a funding package for the regional parks. It is important to secure ownership of Hess Field first, as was done with other regional parks. Funding discussions can continue concurrently with the acquisition, but should not hold up the purchase.
- as the master site plan for Hess Field is developed, the relationship with the State College Area Softball Association should be continued.

- a cap of \$10 million should be placed on the borrowing, with the understanding that the remaining funds in the Regional Parks Fund should also be used for the development of the regional parks.

Mr. Woodhead asked how to move forward on these projects? Mr. Klees related that the Executive Committee, at its Tuesday meeting, will consider sending these comments and the potential for discussion to the General Forum. Mr. Steff mentioned that the first item on the Agenda is a discussion of the municipal comments and Mr. Klees will update the General Forum. The committee did have a discussion but did not decide whether this warrants a special meeting of the General Forum to discuss just the regional park funding. Mr. Klees was unsure as to whether there would be sufficient attendance at a special meeting for one topic given the pressure on everyone for their time. Mr. Steff stated that after the discussion at this General Forum meeting, we should know whether a special meeting of the General Forum is warranted. Discussion followed with most thinking they would rather not have a special meeting if the objective could be reached in the regular meeting.

The discussion continued with the possibility of Hess Field being improved to remove the safety concerns before the master site plan is completed. It was not clear whether improvements could be made before the master site plan required under the Articles of Agreement for regional park acquisition. It was suggested that fixing safety issues may be different than development. Mr. Steff will check the wording in the Articles of Agreement for Acquisition. Mr. Klees was uncomfortable moving forward for Hess Field without having an agreement from all the municipalities concerning the other two regional parks. Some of the discussion also centered on whether the State College Borough would provide sufficient comment on recommendation for decisions to be made. The comments they provided did not give clarity to each recommendation. Mr. Luck asked since the Borough has not provided comments in the same way as the rest of the municipalities, are we completing the comment period by having these discussions then the Borough would provide their feed-back? Where do we go from here? Mr. Steff indicated that was a good question. The Borough agrees with the concept of the regional parks and is suggesting that a discussion on a General Forum level would provide answers to some questions. We do have to have some decision from the Borough as to their financial commitment so we can move forward. Mr. Luck asked if there was some expectation on our part and on the Borough's part that after these discussions the Borough will have the numbers so we can move forward? Mr. Kurtz said not necessarily as the townships stated because the Borough cannot make this decision outside of budget discussion. A definitive amount would only be in a tentative fashion. Mr. Klees indicated that is conversation about waiting for budgets was not included in the discussion for the other regional projects, what changed? Mr. Kurtz indicated operations staff have been heard as to should happen outside the budget process. Ms. Wyatt related that Patton Township is concerned about shrinking revenues and long term debt. Ms. Farkas suggested that we needed to build consensus since the recommendation is split 3 - 2. She also suggested since most agree that we should acquire Hess Softball Field, the Articles of Agreement should be forwarded and approved so we can meet the closing deadline of September 1, 2010. A Memorandum/Agreement of Understanding could be written so that the other funding decisions for development are not hurried ones.

It was mentioned that it's not clear what is being provided for the \$10 million. The Chair mentioned that to proceed, a listing is needed of the definite options with the costs of those items and information so the officials have an understanding of the process. This information would help the elected officials understand the process so far and what is being asked of them. It was also suggested that a listing of possible outside sources be included and the items these outside sources may be interested in funding. It would also be helpful to have Ms. Ulincy provide the municipal percentage for each funding scenario.

Mr. Woodhead, Mr. Steff, and Mr. Klees have scheduled a meeting with the Centre County Convention & Visitor's Bureau. They will report at the next meeting.

For the June General Forum meeting, it is possible that the Whitehall Road Parkland Master Site Plan

and the Hess Field Articles of Agreement for acquisition may be presented.

WHITEHALL ROAD REGIONAL PARK - 25 Acre Parcel

Mr. Woodhead reported that the new appraisal report reduced the appraised value and therefore reduced the purchase price. The reduced purchase price amended the grant application to:

Total Project = \$385,000 Land purchase \$375,000 (= 25 acres @ \$15,000) + closing costs \$10,000

- Grant request (50%) \$192,500

- with matching COG \$134,750 and Ferguson Twp \$57,750.

HESS SOFTBALL FIELD COMPLEX - ACQUISITION UPDATE

Mr. Steff reported that there have been few comments for revision of the Articles of Agreement for the acquisition of Hess Softball Field Complex. He reviewed what has to be accomplished for the Hess Field acquisition to proceed.

- The General Forum must approve the execution of the Sales Agreement to purchase
- to authorize the execution, the Hess Field Articles of Agreement must be approved unanimously by Centre Region municipalities. The draft is ready for the revisions suggested by the municipalities and then for review by the COG Solicitor.
- The Solicitor has recommended that a boundary survey be conducted to specifically confirm the location of the property lines. Staff is proceeding to obtain quotes for that work.
- The Solicitor has completed the arrangements with Mr. Dreibelbis for the donation of the existing facilities / structures on the site. He will confirm that donation in writing to Mr. Dreibelbis.

A discussion followed that concerned the Whitehall Road Master Site Plan and the presence of the “tennis building” on the plan. If a building is going to remain on the Master Site Plan, a policy addressing what happens when other groups want to fund a building needs to be in place. Some members would rather take the building off the plan. Some said to take tennis off the plan and put “reserved for future plan adjustment”.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Kurtz suggested that someone check with Halfmoon Township to see if they adopted an ordinance for the acquisition of Hess Field. It was in their minutes that they approved it, but according to the Articles of Agreement, they have to adopt it by ordinance. Mr. Steff will follow up with Halfmoon Township. (Post meeting note: They did not yet take official action on the ordinance).

Mr. Kurtz introduced the intern that attended with him, Charles Khan.

JUNE MEETING DATE

Mr. Klees suggested that the Whitehall Road Master Site Plan should be on the next meeting agenda, plus add comments for the Article of Agreement for Hess Field and action on the Sales Agreement for Hess Field. In addition anything that comes from the General Forum meeting in May.

The Committee Chair will be out of town on the next regularly scheduled meeting date so the next meeting of the COG Parks Capital Committee will be determined using “doodle”.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was unanimously adjourned following a motion by Mr. Warner and a second by Mr. Rosenberger.

Respectfully submitted by Diane Ishler, CRPR Office Manager

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