

Findings Report of Parks and Recreation Subcommittee

September 3, 2009

The Parks and Recreation Subcommittee's Charge

1. Review City and County Park Boards to determine their method of appointment, term of service, duties, and responsibilities. Make recommendation for the New Community.
2. Review the City and County existing parks development plans. Develop a plan for parks and recreation for the New Community.
3. Review City and County existing pedestrian route and trails plans. Establish a pedestrian route and trails plan for the New Community.
4. Develop an asset listing of City and County parks departments within the New Community.

The Parks and Recreation Subcommittee's Tasks

1. Review City and County Park Boards to propose their method of appointment, term of service, duties, and responsibilities. Make recommendation for the New Community.
2. Review the City and County existing parks development plans. Develop a vision for parks and recreational programs for the New Community.
3. Review City and County existing pedestrian route and trails plans. Establish a pedestrian route and trails vision for the New Community.
4. Develop an inventory of City and County parks departments within the New Community (to be provided to the Study Committee at a later date).

Vision

That the reorganized community provides for its residents' recreational and health needs through responsible planning and stewardship of community resources, with the goal of enhancing quality of life, property values, and community desirability while efficiently using the new city's ability to form partnerships and access new funding sources, including those grant programs that are available only to municipalities.

Sub-vision statement for Parks and Recreation: That the reorganized community shall make parks and programs available in under-served areas through partnerships with schools, landowners, developers and other parties to provide access to existing facilities and land in ways

that benefit the larger community. That longer-term planning supports the ability of the new municipality to remedy remaining city-wide recreational gaps on its own, while maintaining the viable partnerships that keep costs affordable for the community.

Sub-vision statement for Parks and Pathway: That the reorganized community will see its existing pathways network extended into its underserved areas; continuing the progress already made in connecting the places people live to destinations such as schools, parks, and shopping, , and in the process connecting residents of the entire community to one another, with the following considerations:

First, that the pathways network shall connect to surrounding communities;

Second, that such a network is well-maintained, comprised of the most appropriate pedestrian and cycling elements, planned with all user types in mind, and accomplished without burdening taxpayers;

Third, that this shall be implemented by careful planning and by strategic use of grants, donations, public resources and developer obligations.

Narrative

The Parks and Recreation Sub-Committee performed their study with the above Vision Statements as our guide. While conducting our research into the current inventory of the parks and recreation facilities for both the previously unincorporated area of White River Township and the previous City of Greenwood, we also gave thought to how those resources were developed and how any deficiencies arose. The Subcommittee wishes to recognize the gracious and helpful cooperation and insight given to us during our study by the employees of the city, the county and the townships. We have attempted to stay within current state statutes as much as possible to avoid any future concerns as the parks and pathways system in the new city grows and may connect with other local and state systems. We have also attempted to provide a foundation for the future growth of parks and pathways in the new city that is efficient, representative, cost-effective and flexible.

The Parks Board has been expanded to allow the three local School Boards to have seats on the Parks Board, if they choose to do so. This was done to allow possible future partnerships with the schools and parks system and is consistent with existing state law governing parks boards. This may be an important first step to providing Recreational facilities and opportunities in the new City of Greenwood until adequate park facilities may be built to accommodate the larger community. We also encourage other public/private partnerships to be explored with homeowners associations, religious facilities and private sports facilities in the new city to ensure that recreation and park needs of the community are met. The new Pathways Board was created to give this expanding network the focused and efficient oversight that it will require in the larger city and is explained in more detail below.

The creation of new parks and pathways that will be sufficient to serve all members of the new City of Greenwood will require an increase in funding. It was also believed that finding more

consistent and continuous funding mechanisms will help decrease one reason for some of the deficiencies in the existing communities. We strove to provide these additional funds to the new Parks and Pathways Boards in a means that will have a low overall impact on property owners in the new City. In addition to the new funding mechanisms that we propose White River Unincorporated will now be eligible for grant programs that were previously unavailable to it due to it not being an incorporated municipality. These new funds will allow for a more rapid and responsive growth of the parks and pathways in the new City of Greenwood that will make the City a more pleasurable and desirable community to live in.

Future development of parks, recreation and pathways must be governed by updated five year master plans for parks, recreation and pathways. These planning updates should be completed in an expedient manner. The Parks and Recreation Subcommittee believes that with the new funding and updated master plans the new City of Greenwood can create an interconnected system of public facilities and businesses throughout the community that will allow travel with or without a motorized vehicle. New public/private partnerships can further enhance the recreational experience in the new community.

Merger Findings and General Findings

I. Park Board

A. Membership: Eight members are appointed by Mayor of the new City of Greenwood on July 1, 2010.

B. Half of the mayoral appointed Board members are to reside at the time of their appointment within the boundaries currently defined as the City of Greenwood. This restriction is eliminated January 1, 2020.

C. Half of the mayoral appointed Board members are to reside at the time of their appointment within the boundaries currently defined as unincorporated White River Township. This restriction is eliminated January 1, 2020.

D. The initial Board members' terms shall be:

1. One each from the 'old' City of Greenwood and from the former unincorporated White River Township to expire December 31, 2011.
2. One each from the 'old' City of Greenwood and from the former unincorporated White River Township to expire December 31, 2012.
3. One each from the 'old' City of Greenwood and from the former unincorporated White River Township to expire December 31, 2013.
4. One each from the 'old' City of Greenwood and from the former unincorporated White River Township to expire December 31, 2014.

E. Thereafter members' terms shall each be four years. As of January 1, 2020 the Board will be reduced to six members with four year terms. Board members shall serve unpaid, but may be reimbursed for justified expenses incurred in the performance of their duties, or in accordance with the Governance Subcommittee Recommendations on Board reimbursement.

F. Each public school board within the new City of Greenwood (Center Grove; Clark-Pleasant; Greenwood) has the option to appoint one of their members for a one year term; re-appointments done every year. Such members shall have voting rights.

G. The City Council shall appoint one non-voting member to the Board. This member shall be reappointed annually.

H. The Director of Parks and Recreation shall be appointed by the Mayor and approved by the Parks Board in accordance with IC 36-4-9-2

II. Pathways Board: The Pathways Board shall be under the Department of Public Works to manage a pathways network, extend connections to nearby communities, and to properly serve the newly acquired under-served areas.

A. Pathways Board should consist of three members appointed by the Mayor and serving three-year terms, with initial terms expiring in 2011, 2012 and 2013 the same as the Park Board.

1. One of these appointments shall be a member of the Park Board of the new city.
2. During the transitional period and ending on January 1st, 2020, one of the remaining two members shall be appointed from each of the two areas. This ensures similar representation for the two communities and the permanent Park Board member enhances partnerships and encourages dialog and consensus on planning and implementation.

B. The Pathways Board shall be responsible for the following:

1. Oversee the planning, funding, maintenance and construction of pathways that will be built by DPW.
2. Coordinate these plans and activities with the plans and activities of the Park Board and the Parks and Recreation Department with the goal of maximizing the benefits to every type of pathway user, including children, runners, cyclists, walkers, dog walkers, those with strollers, in-line skaters, the wheel chair bound, or those using other mobility devices to get from where they are to locations in the community.

C. Board members shall serve unpaid, but may be reimbursed for justified expenses incurred in the performance of their duties.

III. Financing: The City of Greenwood currently funds its Parks and Recreation Department from appropriations by the City from general funds and various special sources as allowed by the DLGF. Under Indiana Law, local parks and recreation departments may levy property taxes. The finance structure below has been designed to function either with money from general fund appropriations or from a parks and recreation levy; however, the Subcommittee recommends that the new city use a property tax levy that will be a decrease from the current levy to fund the

parks and recreation department in order to provide for better transparency and more consistent funding.

A. The Parks and Recreation Operating Budget shall be funded by annual appropriations from the Parks and Recreation levy and fees to provide facilities and programming.

1. The budget amount will be based on the current City of Greenwood budget, which addresses existing facilities and programming, plus the costs of any additional programs and facilities to be offered in the balance of the new city. The Budget will be developed by the Director, approved by the City Council and implemented by the Board.
2. Any funds remaining at the close of each fiscal year above an Operating Reserve of 60% of Operating Budget shall be transferred to the Parks and Recreation Development Fund outlined below.
3. A draft operating budget for the first few years of operation is available from the Subcommittee.

B. The Parks and Recreation Capital Budget shall be funded from the following sources with the purpose of acquiring and developing park and recreation facilities in the new city. Pathways shall be funded in this budget.

1. Grants, including those available only to local units of government that have Parks and Recreation Departments.
2. Public donations via sponsorship programs and/or specially established foundations. Such sponsorship programs could be commercial sponsorships, memorials or naming rights and might reasonably be applied to trailside benches, pedestrian bridges, shelter houses, playgrounds, ball fields, other facilities, pathway segments, special events (in parks or along pathways); or even complete parks.
3. User fees shall be used to fund recreational programs, but, where specified can also be used to expand funding for capital purposes. Examples might be user passes (user fees) for gatehouse controlled access of a regionally sized park; or for Parks Dept operating large scale after-school care programs for schools in the school buildings.

4. Vendor payments for exclusive contracts (e.g. vending, etc.)
5. A Parks and Recreation Development (PRD) Fund which shall be a non-reverting fund for capital projects.
 - a) The fund shall be non-reverting and shall accumulate money for capital projects.
 - b) The balance of this fund may not exceed more than a specified share of the taxable base of the new city. The Subcommittee recommends setting this share at 1.25 percent.
 - c) The Subcommittee recommends that the new city consider the following fees, taxes, and levies to provide revenue to the PRD Fund. In formulating these revenue sources, the Subcommittee considered the various ways in which parks and recreation facilities benefit the residents of the new city. The Subcommittee sought to diversify the revenue sources in order to reduce the use of property taxes.

(1) Recreational Impact Fees: The subcommittee recommends two RIF district for the new City of Greenwood, one whose boundaries would be that of the current City of Greenwood and one whose boundaries would be the current unincorporated White River Township. Due to the increased need of Parks and Pathways Development that will be required in the new City of Greenwood the Subcommittee recommends the RIF fees be re-evaluated. It is our understanding that this is currently being done, with possible inclusion of a merged city, by Lehmen and Lehmen. We recommend that the RIF be set at this studies recommended levels.

(2) Transfer Tax on Real Property: The Subcommittee recommends that a real estate transfer tax be set equal to 0.2 percent of the sale value of an existing residential property. The Subcommittee estimates from current transactions that this will raise approximately \$225,000 annually and will increase as sale prices increase. This tax will increase the cost of the sale transaction on a \$150,000 house by \$300. The revenue from the tax allows the city to invest in parks and recreation facilities that will preserve and enhance property values for residents and sellers by making the new city a more desirable place to live. The Subcommittee found this means, used in other locales, to be more

acceptable to the citizens of the new community than other alternatives, such as a larger property tax levy, because this tax touches only a small fraction of citizens each year, and only infrequently in their lives. This tax is under review until a final decision on the legality of the tax is determined.

(3) An additional increment of the Parks and Recreation levy of 0.05% of AV, which is a decrease from the current 0.08% AV. This revenue stream is the means by which the new city provides parks and recreational programming to existing residents. This increment shall be reduced or suspended if the fund reaches the cap defined above

IV. Parks Development: The Subcommittee recognizes that parks and recreation facilities in the new city will be unbalanced initially between the old City of Greenwood and the previously unincorporated area of White River Township, and recommends that the Parks and Recreation Department of the new city make addressing this imbalance one of its top priorities. To address this, the Subcommittee recommends the following steps.

A. Planning: The Parks and Recreation Board of the new city should commission a new master plan for parks and recreation, with the goal of developing a needs assessment and recommendations for addressing the park and recreational needs across all of the new city. The new plan should incorporate existing City, county, and other plans (e.g. the City of Greenwood's plan and planning by Johnson County).

B. Development Opportunities: Immediately, the Parks and Recreation Board should investigate the following opportunities to bring park and recreation opportunities to the previously unincorporated area of White River Township.

1. Provide landowners with the opportunity to donate suitable land for park development.
2. Partner with Homeowner Associations to develop small parks and playgrounds in neighborhoods.
3. Identify and, if possible, acquire land for moderately sized parks near neighborhoods.
4. Pursue acquisition and development of potential park land along natural features, such as the White River and other flood plains

C. Draft an ordinance for the new city that will provide a specified area of aggregate green space and parkland for total units developed. Based on nationally-accepted planning ratios, the Subcommittee recommends 0.25 acres for every 10 units.

V. Pathways Development: Pathways are a connected network of sidewalks, roadside pathways, greenways, trails, bike lanes, pedestrian bridges, pedestrian connectors and any other cycling or pedestrian infrastructure. To address the imbalance between pathways between the two areas of the new City and to provide connectivity for the new community, the Subcommittee recommends the following steps:

A. The Pathways Board should commission a new five year master Plan that should be initiated and completed on the same schedule as the Parks and Recreation Plan. The new plan should incorporate existing City, county, and other plans (e.g. the City of Greenwood's plan, the Johnson County bicycle-pedestrian plan, the MPO regional

pedestrian plan, and the State trails plan. This plan is critical for correcting deficiencies in pathways in the new City for safety, health, and mobility.

B. The Pathways Board should draft ordinance for the new city to require perimeter pathways along or near the external property lines of all development. The Subcommittee suggests that exceptions may be made where such exceptions improve the pathways network or for special topography and that additional requirements may be imposed for special connectivity or greenspace concerns. The goal of this change is to increase the linear feet of pathways constructed at no cost to taxpayers, create more greenspace and greenways, and create more desirable routes. These pathways will enhance property values for not only the nearby properties but for the entire community that they connect to. Other communities are doing this with success.

VI. Activities and Programming. The Subcommittee is in the process of formulating a final finding for activities and programming. Based on our work to date, the Subcommittee expects to find that the new City will be able to rapidly expand the recreational programs available for children and adults in the previously unincorporated area of White River Township by partnering with existing facilities.

A. Existing programs offered by the City of Greenwood should be retained in the new City.

B. The Parks and Recreation Board should offer additional recreational programs in the previously unincorporated area of White River Township at school buildings and school playing fields, religious institutions, Independence Park, and privately-developed recreational facilities.