PARKS, RECREATION, AND COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

The Parks, Recreation, and Community Enhancement Committee Meeting was held on June 13, 2011, at 12:00 p.m. with Chairwoman Russell presiding. Members present were Mr. Anderson, Mrs. Horsey, and Mr. Lewis. Mr. Hare was absent.

AGENDA ADDITIONS/DELETIONS

Mr. Lewis moved for approval of the agenda, seconded by Mrs. Horsey and unanimously carried.

Silver Lake Revitalization - Phase III

During their meeting of March 8, 2010, members reviewed information regarding a Silver Lake Revitalization Project and recommended approval of a landscaping and stormwater improvement plan for Silver Lake Park. Mr. Zachery Carter, Director of Parks and Recreation, explained that staff from the City, the State of Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC), and the Kent Conservation District are continuing their efforts to reduce pollution in the St. Jones river watershed area, particularly in the area of Silver Lake. He noted that planning for Phase III of the project, which includes the portion of the St. Jones river that runs between Division and Loockerman Streets, is currently underway. Mr. Carter stated that residents near the target area were consulted regarding this phase of the project and a public meeting was held where plans for the project were displayed. He stated that the community did not relay any concerns regarding Phase III and that members of the Silver Lake Commission reviewed the proposed plans and were supportive. Mr. Carter noted that the purpose of presenting information regarding the project to the Committee was to provide members an opportunity to comment on the plans. He indicated that the State is also considering dredging Mirror Lake and that he hoped to hear more about this possibility within the next one (1) to two (2) months.

Ms. Brittany Benson and Ms. Jennifer Bowman, St. Jones Watershed Coordinators, Kent Conservation District, reviewed a presentation - Silver Lake Park Revitalization Project - Phase III - Park Drive. Ms. Benson explained that the Clean Water Act of 2006 required Delaware to develop a list of impaired waterways and determine the associated Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL), which is the maximum level of pollutants that a water body can receive and safely meet water quality standards. She indicated that the St. Jones watershed has been identified as an impaired waterway and that the Silver Lake sub-watershed of the St. Jones provides the greatest opportunity to make significant improvements. Ms. Benson stated that the Silver Lake Park Revitalization Project was developed by the St. Jones Tributary Action Team to reduce TMDL's. She advised members that the goal of the project is to create a permanent, 100-foot buffer consisting of native plantings bordering the eastern side of the St. Jones river in the targeted area. After meeting with and surveying residents, the team determined that problems in the region include poor water quality, poor habitat value, Canada goose waste, sedimentation of Mirror Lake, and periodic flooding. Ms. Benson stated that the proposed buffer would aid in improving water quality and also result in aesthetic improvements in the area. She indicated that additional goals would be to remove invasive plant species and restore the shoreline.

Ms. Benson explained that three (3) major plantings in Phase I have been accomplished, Phase II design is complete and is being bid out to a contractor, and work has begun on Phases III and IV of the project.

Ms. Bowman reviewed recommendations as to the specific species of plants, shrubs, and trees proposed for this area. She presented two (2) landscaping designs, the original design which contained a "denser" vegetation plan and a second, scaled-back version which contained fewer plantings. She indicated that feedback received from residents indicated a preference for the second option, which reduces obstruction of the view of the waterway.

Mr. Carter indicated that the Silver Lake Commission also favored the "less dense" landscape design, which would provide a better view of the river and would also allow for easier monitoring of the area. He stated that the plan would reduce the amount of area currently being mowed, which would also reduce expenses.

Mr. Dean Holden, Chair of the Silver Lake Commission, expressed gratitude to Mr. Lyle Jones, DNREC Program Manager, Ms. Benson, and Ms. Bowman for their efforts on the project, stating that the work already accomplished has added to the beauty of the region, helped to deter Canada geese from utilizing the area, and aided in stream restoration. He also commended them for working with area residents and the Silver Lake Commission to resolve their concerns.

In response to Mr. Anderson, Mr. Scott Koenig, Interim City Manager, stated that completion of the project would demonstrate that the City is making progress toward meeting the provisions of the City's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer (MS4) permit. He noted that, due to the scope of the pollution problems in Silver Lake, the project would probably not result in statistical improvement; however, the City will receive credit for making a community improvement that shows progress toward meeting the overall burdens of the permit. Mr. Carter stated that community education projects that the Watershed Coordinators completed at the Agricultural Museum and Dover High School will also be credited as activities that help to reduce Silver Lake pollution.

Mr. Jones anticipated that completion of Phase II of the Revitalization Project, which involves construction in the Silver Lake Dam area, will bring about major water quality improvement. In addition, he felt that restoring the shoreline, reducing the sediment, and decreasing the Canada goose population will benefit the water quality.

In response to Mr. Anderson, Mr. Jones stated that reducing the bacterial count in Silver Lake will be a long-range project, due to the quantity of sediment, bacteria, and direct discharge from street drains in the City.

Responding to Mr. Anderson regarding the use of local and minority contractors to complete the project, Mr. Jones stated that much of the work for the project will be performed by City grounds staff and volunteers. He emphasized the importance of obtaining qualified contractors for the project, particularly for major construction to be completed during Phase II in the area between the Silver Lake Dam and the footbridge and indicated that qualified minority and local contractors who submit bids for the project will receive full consideration.

In response to Mrs. Horsey, Mr. Jones stated that they are planning to spray invasive plants in the area, including poison ivy that has accumulated at the Court Street Bridge near Legislative Hall.

Mrs. Russell, Mr. Anderson, and Mrs. Horsey commended Mr. Jones, Ms. Benson, and Ms. Bowman for the aesthetically pleasing and well-designed plan and extended thanks for their efforts related to the project.

By unanimous consent, the Committee recommended approval of the plan as presented.

Mrs. Ann Marie Townshend informed members that a bus tour to visit projects completed using Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, originally scheduled for June 13, 2011, was canceled. She indicated that it is planned to reschedule this event in conjunction with the Committee's meeting in July. Mrs. Townshend advised members that the tour would allow them the opportunity to view sites funded through the Neighborhood Stabilization Program, visit the Interfaith Mission for Housing, and examine areas in the City that have benefitted from housing rehabilitation and infrastructure investments.

In response to Mr. Lewis, Mrs. Townshend stated that properties that receive CDBG funds for improvements are examined to ensure work has been completed before payment is issued, and properties are also inspected if a building permit is issued; however, she stated that perhaps a 6-12 month follow-up survey should be performed to ensure that work has been executed in a professional manner.

Mr. Anderson moved for adjournment, seconded by Mr. Lewis and unanimously carried.

Meeting adjourned at 12:48 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sophia R. Russell
Chairwoman

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