



City of Othello
Planning Commission
September 20, 2021
Anne Henning

CALL TO ORDER

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this was a hybrid meeting with a remote component via GoToMeeting. Chair Chris Dorow called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Chair Chris Dorow, Alma Carmona, Daniela Voorhies, Kevin Gilbert

Absent: Brian Gentry (ill)

Staff: Community Development Director Anne Henning

Attendees: Bob Carlson, Councilmember John Lallas

MINUTES APPROVAL

August 16, 2021 minutes were approved as written. M/S Dorow/Carmona

PARKS & RECREATION ELEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE PLAN – UPDATE

The Parks Element of the Comp Plan serves as the Parks Plan that qualifies Othello for grants such as the recent ones supporting the upgraded ballfields, playground, and basketball courts. In order to qualify for future grants, the Parks Element needs to be updated by April 2022.

The Commission discussed how the existing parks should be classified. All agreed that Triangle Park is a mini park and Lions Park is a community park. There was general agreement that Pioneer is a mini park. There was discussion about Kiwanis, that even though it is a large park, the amenities aren't really a draw for everyone, and there is a lot of empty space, so it better fits the definition of neighborhood park rather than community park. Commissioner Carmona noted that the shade at Kiwanis is nice but she would like to see more amenities.

The Commission discussed strengths and weaknesses of the 4 existing parks in 6 categories:

Open Space

Commissioners felt that the amount of open space at Lions Park is adequate, and it is important to have large amounts of open space for large events such as 4th of July, where vendors and private canopies take up a lot of room. Chair Dorow asked if there was room for additional amenities at Lions, and Commissioner Carmona said no. Commissioner Gilbert thought the existing amenities could be enhanced, such as by adding an amphitheater and more gazebos. He wondered if a large event a few times a year justified keeping all that space empty. Chair Dorow mentioned it is good to have open space for activities like frisbee and pickup football.

Commissioners felt there is too much unused space at Kiwanis Park, so there is room for more features. Pioneer Park has space for more amenities beyond the picnic shelter, although there is not much parking. They felt Triangle Park is too empty. Commissioner Gilbert recommended installing a basketball hoop and slab.

Safety

Commissioners felt safety at Lions Park was adequate, although parts of the park are very dark. Commissioner Gilbert felt that the walk paths are well lit, and that it wouldn't make sense to light open areas. Commissioner Carmona pointed out that the arboretum area does not have lights. Chair Dorow mentioned Lions has better lighting than some parks, but some security cameras would be a good idea.

Commissioners were in agreement that Kiwanis Park is too dark and needs better lighting. Commissioners felt better lighting is needed at Pioneer around the gazebo and bathrooms, and that security cameras should be added. They felt that Triangle Park is safe because it is so small that street lighting reaches the whole park.

Commissioners were interested in having murals on restrooms if that would deter graffiti.

Access & Parking

Ms. Henning pointed out that parking is not needed for mini parks and maybe neighborhood parks, because they are intended to be walked to from the neighborhood rather than driven to.

Commissioners agreed parking and access is a strength of Lions Park. For Kiwanis, it depends on what is happening. There is not enough parking at the park for large events like soccer games, although there are school and church parking lots within a few blocks. Parking at Pioneer Park is adequate unless there is a large event. Triangle Park doesn't need parking, since it would be accessed from the neighborhood, by foot.

Park's purpose and use clearly defined

All agreed that it is clear what Lions Park is for. Commissioner Voorhies felt that Kiwanis Park's purpose was clear if it is considered a neighborhood park but not if it is considered a community park. Commissioners felt that Pioneer Park's purpose as a picnic park is pretty clear. They felt this park does not seem to be used except for the Farmers Market, which this year was moved to in front of City Hall. Commissioners were not sure what the purpose of Triangle Park is.

Unique features/amenities

Commissioners agreed this is a strength of Lions Park. They noted that Kiwanis did have a very large gazebo and a lot of shade but not really anything else unique. Chair Dorow mentioned that Kiwanis Park used to have a zipline. Commissioner Voorhies felt the features at Kiwanis were adequate as a neighborhood park but not as a community park. Commissioners noted that the airplane is a unique feature at Pioneer Park. Triangle Park does not have any unique features.

Condition of park amenities

Since there are updates in progress or recently completed on most of the major amenities, Commissioners felt that Lions Park is mostly in good shape. Chair Dorow noted that the roller hockey rink is deficient. Commissioners felt that most features in Kiwanis Park are due for an update. The original bathroom has no lighting so is dark inside even during the day. The basketball, tennis courts, and playground are all old, and the walk path has deteriorated. Pioneer Park amenities are in good condition. Triangle Park has no amenities.

Age, diversity, and amount of amenities

Commissioners felt that if all the currently-planned projects get done, there will be a good mix and amount of amenities at Lions Park. They felt Kiwanis Park is good for little kids but doesn't have much for other age groups. This category did not apply to Pioneer or Triangle.

Councilmember Lallas mentioned there have been discussions about doing additional basketball courts at Lions, beyond the 4 proposed. He stated the tennis courts were built for the High School, and now that the High School has its own courts, the Lions Park courts aren't being used. He felt there was opportunity to redevelop some or all, maybe into futsal (indoor soccer) courts. Commissioner Gilbert felt that futsal courts would be used almost non-stop. Chair Dorow mentioned that the hockey rink is used for court soccer often.

Councilmember Lallas noted that the number one concern of the community is age diversity of parks. Chair Dorow mentioned that if we want parks to draw from the neighborhoods, the parks need suitable amenities. He asked whether it detracts from Lions Park to only put 4 basketball courts at Lions and put the other 2 at Kiwanis? Commissioner Gilbert felt this would better serve the community.

Adequate recreation opportunities for the surrounding area and similar to other parks of its size

Commissioners felt this was a strength of Lions Park, a weakness of Kiwanis, and did not apply to the other two parks.

Park Classification

After discussing the above strengths and weaknesses, Chair Dorow wanted the Commission to revisit the classification of each park. All agreed Pioneer is still a mini park, but they would like to see Kiwanis be improved as a community park. Commissioner Carmona noted that the nearby apartments are recent, so the park is serving a much larger population than it used to.

Facility Needs

The Commission discussed the Facility Needs list in the existing 2015 Comp Plan Parks & Recreation Element (p.82). The list was compiled from various meetings during the development of the 2015 plan.

Community Center (with recreation center, pool, gym, auditorium, reception rooms, kitchen, meeting rooms, multi-use space, basketball courts, afterschool programs, racquetball court, theater space, and rock climbing). The Commissioners discussed that this concept is similar to a YMCA and probably too expensive for the city to take on for the 5-10 year time frame of this plan. In addition, Commissioner Carmona noted that after-school programs have been tried in the past and failed. Agreed this is a low priority at this time.

The recent concept of a community center/farmers market is a little different, more like Pybus Market in Wenatchee. Councilmember Lallas mentioned that in Olympia, they reclaimed land and built a facility that the city manages. He saw this similar to the Avista building, which Avista was planning to donate but we will need to wait until they are ready. Commissioners felt that Lions Park was not the right place for this type of facility, that it would take up space that would be better for other uses. Commissioner Carmona felt that Pioneer Park would be good, since it doesn't have other uses. Councilmember Lallas mentioned that he thought the USBR/Irrigation District property south of Lions Park would be a good location for uses like an RV Park. He said a frequent comment he hears is there are not enough activities in Othello, especially fine dining.

Firing range was listed as a need, but the Commission felt there wasn't room within the city for this use, therefore, they consider it a low priority.

Parks with trees and shade was listed as a need. Commissioners felt this need was met by existing parks.

Skate park was listed as a need; however, this information may have been collected before the current skate park was finished. Ms. Henning asked if all potential users were able to get there since they can't drive, and Commissioners said they see kids on their boards heading toward the skate park, so they felt one skate park was sufficient.

Softball and baseball fields were listed as needs. Commissioners felt with the recent rebuilding of the complex at Lions Park that the need has been met.

Soccer fields were listed as a need. Commissioners agreed there is a high need for dedicated reservable fields for practice, and a soccer complex.

RV park was listed as a need. Commissioners felt this was a good idea if there is adequate space, so they are classifying it as medium for now. Providing space for RVs in conjunction with tournaments would be beneficial.

Sidewalks were listed as a need. Commissioner Carmona noted that the paths at Kiwanis are terrible, so cracked you can't even push a stroller on them.

Bike paths were listed as a need. Commissioner Gilbert mentioned there is already a 5-mile path around the city, so he felt this was low priority.

Bike park/course was listed as a need. Commissioners looked at pictures of Moses Lake's BMX track as an example. They thought it looked fun but there are more pressing needs, so they classified it as low priority.

Pool was listed as a need. Since there is an existing pool, the Commissioners discussed this as an indoor pool. Chair Dorow mentioned there are 80 kids on the swim team, and there is no public indoor pool nearby. They classified this as a medium priority.

Batting cages were listed as a need. Commissioners felt this might be a lower-cost facility that could be provided, maybe in a portion of the existing tennis courts. They classified it as medium priority.

Splash pad was listed as a need. Commissioners felt this was high priority, depending on which park. They felt it would take away from the pool if located nearby: Why would someone pay to use the pool if they could just cool off in the splash pad? But if it were located at Kiwanis, it would provide an amenity for those nearby. Chair Dorow mentioned there used to be a wading pool at Pioneer Park 30 years ago.

Dog park was mentioned as a need. Commissioners felt all the parks get used as dog parks. They classified this as low priority.

Gym was listed as a need. The Council is currently considering adding a workout station to one of the parks, so the Commission felt this need would be met, therefore it was low priority.

Tennis courts were listed as a need. The Commission felt the existing courts were adequate so this is low priority.

Mini golf was listed as a need. The Commission felt this was a unique activity, so they classified it as medium priority.

Ice rink was listed as a need. The Commission felt this was not very attainable, so they classified it as low priority.

Education center and museum were listed as a need. The Commission wasn't sure what this meant, but thought maybe like Mobius in Spokane. They felt it would be difficult to do at the right scale for Othello. They felt it is more suited to a private or non-profit company.

Trampoline park and go carts were listed as needs. The Commission felt the liability for these types of use would be too high, so they are removing them from the list.

The Commissioners discussed other facility needs that should be added:

- Soccer courts. High priority
- Musical playground. Commissioner Carmona described one she had seen in Spokane. It was very interactive, and accessible for those with special needs. She said it wasn't as loud as a windchime, so it shouldn't be a problem for neighbors. She felt it would be good for Kiwanis or Triangle Park. She thought schools would want to take field trips to this kind of playground. High priority. Ms. Henning mentioned that staff has already been looking at musical features for the updated playground at Lions Park.
- Pickleball courts. Chair Dorow described it as a combination of tennis and ping pong. He thought Triangle Park might be a good location for the first court in Othello. High priority.
- Frisbee golf. The Commissioners thought this might be a good choice because it can be inexpensive, and it would be a new activity in town. Medium priority.
- Art. Murals on bathroom walls. Similar to Toppenish. High priority.
- Stage. Commissioners felt this would increase events that could be held. Chair Dorow mentioned that with a name like Othello, there should be some sort of Shakespeare event. High priority.

Goals

Chair Dorow noted that the goals in the existing plan sound like they came out of a textbook. He would like to see goals that make sense to regular people. He proposed the following goals as a start:

1. Invest in growth opportunities for parks and recreation.
2. Focus on unique amenities for all parks.
3. Add diversity to all parks for better access for all throughout the city.

He would like the Commissioners to add to this list of goals for the next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:08 pm. Next regular meeting is Monday, October 18, 2021.



Chris Dorow, Chair

Date: 10-18-21

Anne Henning

Anne Henning, Community Development Director

Date: 10-18-21