



City of Othello
Planning Commission
November 15, 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 6:04 pm.

ROLL CALL

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

Absent: none

Staff: City Clerk Tania Morelos

Attendees: Bob Carlson (remote)

MINUTES APPROVAL

No changes made. October 18, 2021 minutes were approved as written. M/S Gentry/Gilbert

ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT (ADU) UPDATE

Chair Dorow mentioned that City Council approved the ADU ordinance recommended by the Planning Commission with one change: Owner occupancy for the first year was added to all zones where ADUs are allowed (R-2, R-3, R-4), rather than just R-2 as the Commission had recommended.

UPDATE PARKS & RECREATION ELEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE PLAN-DISCUSSION

Chair Dorow emphasized the need to make good progress on the plan tonight. He summarized that the Commission has worked on goals, now need to set objectives. Need to look at the inventory to determine if there is enough room for what the community wants. The Needs Analysis looks at what is needed and balances public desires with the City's capacity to provide those facilities and programs, include initial capital investment and the on-going maintenance. The 6-year Capital Improvement Program/Capital Facilities Plan the City does each year sets funding priorities. The whole process of updating the Park Plan needs public involvement.

Goals & Objectives

Goal #1 Explore, identify, and invest in growth opportunities for parks and recreation.

The Commission discussed the pressing need for a soccer complex, and the need to also consider maintenance. They determined there isn't enough room in current parks for a soccer complex. Chair Dorow asked opinions of using baseball outfields for soccer. Commissioner Gentry stated he doesn't like it, except in a pinch. We need to have a dedicated soccer complex. Chair Dorow asked whether Kiwanis Park should be a soccer park. Commissioner Gentry felt Kiwanis is an open space park, not a soccer park. We need a new park for soccer. Commission agreed.

Chair Dorow mentioned that the City is looking at a possible ecology park, by buying and restoring a toxic waste site with wetlands. This project could invigorate the surrounding area and spur additional clean-up. The existing site needs about \$3 million in clean-up. Commissioner Carmona mentioned she would prefer something more advanced than a basic walking trail, with elevation changes, that would bring tourists. She visited one in the Spokane area. It had a constructed waterfall that attracted turtles and ducks. There was an overlook with a view, and a nearby restaurant. Chair Dorow mentioned that Ducks Unlimited

would be a partner in this project. Eco-tourism is a big deal. This would be a diamond of a wetland project. It would attract a lot of birds and critters, maybe even sandhill cranes. There is not a lot of recreation opportunity for age 50-70 in the plan so far, and this eco park could help meet that need. Commissioner Gentry suggested pickleball would be good for this age group. Question about whether there would be soccer at this eco park. Chair Dorow stated there is not enough space, and high groundwater creating wetlands. It would be better suited for trails. Commissioner Gentry felt it would show the beauty of the area. Commissioner Carmona mentioned that if it is visible from the highway, it would attract tourists.

Commissioner Gentry mentioned that the canal is kind of like our river, and he wondered about the possibility of trails along it, to get the benefit of proximity to running water. The Commissioners felt USBR probably wouldn't like it, but the City will have some good partners so we should keep this idea in mind.

Commissioner Gentry felt a soccer complex is the number one priority, almost an emergency.

The Commissioners added this Objective for Goal #1: Perform a feasibility study for adding new parks, including a soccer complex and an eco park/nature park.

Goal #2 Focus on unique amenities for all parks. Objective: Have at least one unique feature or amenity in every park. The Commission made no change to this proposed goal and objective.

Goal #3. Commission preferred the wording "Incorporate better distribution of amenities increasing neighborhood access to recreation activities." Discussed proposed Objective: All housing areas should have a general-use park within a half-mile distance. Discussion about how far reasonable to walk. While a quarter mile walk would be desirable, it would be too much to require a major park every half mile. Commissioner Gilbert noted that the distance from Lions to Kiwanis is probably around a half mile. Consensus that closer would be better, but half mile is reasonable.

Commissioner Gentry noted that his office is across the street and he sees people using Pioneer Park all day long. But Lions and Kiwanis are better for recreation.

Goal #4 Ensure general-use parks have sufficient open space for informal activities.

- a. Objective: Each general-use park should have no more than half its area developed with formal facilities.
- b. Objective: Informal space in general-use parks should be retained in pieces large enough to be usable, at least 100' by 100'.

Commissioners unanimously supported Goal #4 and both objectives. Commissioner Gentry noted that Lions Park is maxed out, he wouldn't want it to be any more crowded. Other Commissioners agreed.

Goal #5 Periodically identify and prioritize future needs and facilities.

- a. Objective: Future needs and facilities should be reviewed and prioritized annually as part of the budget and Capital Facility Plan process.

Chair Dorow mentioned this is a continuation of the existing process. Commissioner Gilbert felt there should be better evaluation of future needs. Some things are opportunistic in nature, like the eco park. Chair Dorow felt the Council Parks Committee is sufficient to address the opportunities that come up.

Goal #6 Develop partnerships to invest in recreational opportunities.

At least one supporting objective is needed. Chair Dorow mentioned there is a need to engage outside entities to partner/invest in future project. At one time, that's how the parks were developed, as shown by the names (Lions, Kiwanis). Rotary is always looking for ways to give back to community, but no one is reaching out to them. He estimated they have \$100,000 that no one has asked for. The men's soccer league is another potential partnership. Objective could be: For every project, explore opportunities for outside entities to invest in the project.

Goal #7 Maximize park safety.

- a. Objective: Install a security camera system at each park.
- b. Objective: Ensure there is adequate lighting of all facilities, and visibility from surrounding streets.

Chair Dorow mentioned that the 2022 budget is looking at camera systems at parks.

Chair Dorow has been asking his patients about park safety, and all agree that the least safe park is Kiwanis. People like it in the day but not at night. Commissioner Gentry mentioned some unsavory behavior he observed at night. Chair Dorow noted that graffiti makes people feel unsafe. Murals may help. Commission would like input from the Police Chief on safety measures. They would also like comments from the community around Kiwanis about why it doesn't feel safe.

Commissioners added 2 objectives:

- Solicit feedback from the public about safety concerns related to parks.
- Revisit safety needs every year.

Goal #8 Increase accessibility and usability of the parks for all community members and visitors.

- a. Objective: Provide at least 25% inclusive features at playgrounds.

Chair Dorow noted he knows a family where the child in a wheelchair can't get to the playgrounds because the paths are in such bad shape. So accessibility goes beyond just accessible features at the playgrounds themselves.

The Commission added another objective:

- b. Recreation needs to be available to all age groups and be inclusive of all abilities.

Inventory

The Commission found the inventory interesting but not necessarily accurate. They noted that the "grassy amphitheater" is just a hill, and the concrete that used to be there to set up on has been removed. At best, this feature is a sledding hill.

The Commission discussed Parks and Rec programs. They did not have anything to add for City programs, but thought the discussion should include private programs such as Grid Kids football and club activities like Barracuda Swim Team. It was mentioned that there used to be a summer parks & rec tennis program. Tennis can be life-long activity, they would like to see this program brought back, along with better maintenance of the tennis courts. Tri-Cities, Spokane, and Moses Lake all have adult tennis leagues. There was also discussion of a possible summer hockey program.

The Commission had nothing to add to the Resources section. They will expect to get this information from Public Works.

Planning Commission reviewed and discussed the facility inventory and tried to fill in gaps and make corrections to the draft:

- Baseball: Have heard comments about field use and reservation costs.
- Lions soccer field is only 2/3 regulation size. There is a lot of use of baseball outfields for soccer.
- Cornhole a good idea.
- Kiwanis tennis & basketball have no lights. 2 sets of hoops in tennis courts, 1 half-court elsewhere. None of these should be counted as a full basketball court.
- There is a volleyball court—just a concrete slab.
- Grassy amphitheater isn't used, except for sledding.
- Parks/Public Works should be able to update the condition & usage information.

Pioneer Park

- Commissioners were unsure why the T-33 jet was listed, other than that it is a unique feature.

Triangle Park

- Commissioner Carmona mentioned she believes the picnic table has been removed, because it was getting tagged and vandalized.

Future Needs Analysis

The Commission had the following comments:

- Soccer: Kiwanis has almost enough space for a regulation field but it is not painted. The one field at Lions is less than full size, and players need to bring their own goals. So the current inventory is basically zero.
- Tennis: The Commission had heard that there may have been thoughts about possibly redeveloping the tennis courts into another use. It was mentioned that the high school tennis program is large, and there are not enough courts at the high school even for the whole varsity team, so these courts are needed during tennis season, as well as tennis being an activity that even older adults can participate in. The Commission felt the City should not consider redeveloping the tennis courts, instead they should upgrade them.
- Basketball: The Commission felt the inventory was counting hoops, when it should count actual courts. So it should not count those in the tennis courts, because they can't be used at the same time as tennis, and the third area is only half court. They felt there should be a dedicated full-size basketball court at Kiwanis, which could maybe happen by expanding the half court to full size. The courts should have lights, especially for the time of year when it gets dark so early. They felt there is a definite need for more basketball courts.
- Playgrounds: They felt there are not really 3 playgrounds at Kiwanis, just some play equipment in a few places.
- Shelters: Agree that there is a need for more large shelters. Maybe some of the small shelters could be replaced with larger shelters.
- Handball: They agreed they have not seen the handball court in use. They felt this area could be used for pickleball instead.
- Splash pad: They felt this would be a good use inside the pool fence or at Kiwanis Park. They felt that if it is offered for free at Lions Park, it would affect pool use, since the neighborhood could use it to cool off without having to pay for pool entry.
- Street hockey rink is used for futsal every night.
- Amphitheater at Kiwanis shouldn't be counted. Not even any concrete (has been removed).
- Indoor sport court: Chair Dorow estimated the cost at about \$5M. Consensus of the Commission that it is more important to address other needs first.

Park survey

The Commission reviewed the draft survey questions proposed by staff, as well as some examples of actual surveys from other jurisdictions. Chair Dorow noted that parking should be added to the list of existing facilities. He has heard comments that there isn't enough, like during flag football.

In the New Facilities section, need to add soccer complex and eco park/nature park. Discussed whether to remove the indoor sports facility from list. The Commission felt that everyone will want it, but it will be too expensive to provide. Decided to leave it on, but change the question to "select top 3", to understand priorities rather than letting people say they want everything. They anticipate that a soccer complex is more of a need than an indoor sports facility.


The Commission liked the Collinsville survey better than the draft Othello survey for the public. They liked that it defined what is good in the parks and what is needed. They liked the questions "What is most valuable?", the priority ranking, and "What prevents you from using parks & programs?" They felt the survey should be send with the water bill. They felt the Collinsville survey is good because it's short. They noted we don't need to ask about the favorite park, they already know everyone loves Lions. Survey should be a hybrid of the Othello draft and parts of the Collinsville survey. They noted that the survey can be longer if done in-person, like with the Baseball Opening Day survey. A mailed survey needs to be really short. They anticipated getting more information on the survey at their next meeting or maybe even before.

OLD BUSINESS

Housing: On Nov 24, Chair Dorow will meet with Senator Judy Warnick, the Senate chair for housing, to talk about Othello housing needs. Possible topics: State level regulations, and facilitating the process for small investors who lack experience in managing projects. Angel Garza was mentioned as an example of a person whose first development project went slowly but now has learned the development process, so he is able to use that knowledge to develop in multiple cities.

ADJOURNMENT

Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:53 pm. M/S Gilbert/Carmona
Next regular meeting is Monday, December 20, 2021.


Date: 12/20/21
Chris Dorow, Chair


Date: 12-20-21
Anne Henning, Community Development Director