

Zionsville Department of Parks & Recreation

2011 Park Department Summary

(prepared in part for the Feb. 6, 2012 Town Council Meeting)

2011 saw significant progress and/or completion on a variety of projects and initiatives for the Zionsville Parks and Recreation Department and its Park and Recreation Board. During this time the Department continued to carry out its responsibilities to maintain park facilities, provide and facilitate recreational programs, and carry out special projects. This report summarizes projects and activities of note. The report will first go into a few generalities and then discuss a few specific highlights.

General Benchmarks

In the 5-year Park Master Plan (2008 through and including 2012, inclusive), all of the goals save one were achieved and/or addressed by the Park Department and Park Board. The remaining one was a "partial", being somewhat addressed and changed by the park board and portions of it will be complete in 2012. It had involved a dog waste station and a water fountain at the parking area at Carter Station. The dog waste station was delayed to the end of 2011 to confirm availability of budgetary funds and will actually be installed early in 2012. During a discussion on development possibilities at Carter Station and the Wetland property, the Park Board decided at this particular time to make no development within Carter Station (and the Wetland property). Carter Station previously had nearly a 1/2 mile of paving put into place with a parking lot also built at the end of all those trails. Running water in the shortest route to the parking area would likely have required an easement be acquired and projected cost estimates ran over \$10,000.

Grants and Additional Funding (primarily non tax dollars)

\$200,000 Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant (LWCF): A very exciting announcement occurred in 2011 with the release of the news we were awarded for the maximum \$200,000 in matching funds to supplement the Park Board's development of the 10 acres of park land at 400S and 875E. The application ranked 2nd in the state in a competitive year as there were only enough funds to grant a few lucky recipients. Conceptual plans were finalized in late 2011 and Construction document and bid package preparation will be able to proceed in 2012. If it is the Park Board's wish, the project could likely be bid and construction start in 2012 (although most probably not completed until 2013).

\$15,000 from Indiana Power and Light (IPL): Discussions started a year ago when IPL announced they were going to do a periodic clearing of the easement at Starkey Park. The last few clearings had been lighter than normal from the power company's approach and by this time (several years after the last) plants were coming very close to their lines. They have rights to the easement that were in place and attached to the deed when the Park Department acquired that property. In part knowing that the clearing was to occur at some point, a Park Board member got an expert in to study the entire park (at no cost). This study showed that the easement was our worst concentration of non-native invasive plant species. This Park Board member estimated their concentration at 80- 90% of the

biomass in the easement was from non-native sources. So park staff negotiated an amount from IPL so we could come back in after the clearing work and seed in a native prairie wildflower mix. Being a warm season mix, it should start sprouting in mid to late June and over the next 3 to 5 years thicken greatly. Eventually, Starkey Park will have a completely new habitat addition of species appropriate to both the upland and bottomland of the Park. These are species that might have occurred in this area at points in the past. This supplements the over 10 acres of other invasive work we have done at Starkey and other parks throughout the last two years. Included in this is a "Pull for Parks" garlic mustard effort that got well over 100 volunteers in 2011 spread out through several parks.

\$5,000 from Boone County Solid Waste Management District: For the second year in a row, we were excited to be awarded this maximum grant amount to support our ongoing efforts to utilize recycled materials in the construction of our parks. Both years, the selection committee seemed excited to help fund features in our new park development at 400S and 875E. This year's application involved recycled components in the playground features and educational signage about that. Also we feel fortunate in that our Zion Nature Center (through the submission efforts of the Friends of Zion Nature Center) also received a \$1600 grant to develop a composting demonstration area at the Center.

Park & Recreation Impact Fee Passed: Through a yearlong arduous process including active participation throughout from members and officials from the development community and BAGI, the park and recreation impact fee was passed. This fee as it accumulates when new housing is built (only), will help defray some (but by law, not all) of the associated costs for the provision of new recreational facilities as necessitated by the new development. While not a panacea, it is still a valuable as one single tool in the, necessarily broad, funding toolbox.

Capital Improvement Projects

New Park at 400S 875E: While not yet in the construction stages there was exciting progress on this site of a future rail trail extension and trail head site. A well-attended design Charrette process was held, similar to that done in 2009 for Elm Street Green. Valuable public input was gathered to supplement the much earlier, completely separate, grant related public input process. Construction document preparation is underway and if it is desired, the project could be bid and construction likely started in mid to late 2012.

Laurel St- Rail Trail Area Improvements: This area's construction documentation was completed in 2011 and the project was purposely designed so it could be bid as part of the Town's asphaltting projects (something that can't always be done for all projects). While this approach does mean we have little control over when the project gets done (in relation to the several other Town paving projects), it did garner us significant cost savings under the Town Engineer's construction estimates. Several Town paving projects (including this one) ended up being delayed until early 2012, but we expect by the end of 2012 this long awaited connection will be completed. As a part of the preliminaries for this work the southern 1/3 mile of the rail trail was re-graveled (about \$4,000 to \$5,000 in

materials, Town Park and Street Department Staff did the actual spreading and compacting). This is something that needs to be done every few years with gravel trails and we believe is the third time gravel has been applied across this surface.

Creekside Park Flood Repairs: Damaged in two places during the early floods in 2011, we had to wait to get permits from the State. Permits were first submitted within two weeks of the flood event and permission was given in the third quarter of 2011. At that point, construction was quickly initiated and they now await the completion of the 334 trail project and a final asphalt coat (same contractor, who intends to complete both topcoats in the same time window).

Recreation and Service Programs (in no particular order)

Golf Course: The Department completed another full season of operation at the Zionsville Golf Course (ZGC). The dedicated staff did an outstanding job of running the course this season in a very trying year. We had the largest flood in a generation on Feb 28th. This inundated the pro shop, causing us to have to delay the course opening by a week to get the structure drained, repaired, and the damage to the course fixed so it's playable. This is apparently only the 2nd time in the entire lifespan of the course that floodwaters have reached the pro shop. A second, lesser flood also hit us later in the spring. Additionally, we had an extremely poor bout of spring weather that kept away the bulk of the golfers until nearly May (over a month longer than normal). This poor weather, the over \$10,000 dollars in flood repair at the pro shop, the money and staff time spent on the course repair, and the over \$5,000 needed for upgrades to the fuel tanks and containment (the original tanks we inherited when the course was purchased) all combined to greatly reduce our bottom line this year. While the final budget numbers are not yet available, it is anticipated when these final numbers are verified/supplied by the Clerk Treasurer's Office that the net operating proceeds (after costs) will be about \$10,000 to \$15,000. If not for the flooding and the required tank issues those numbers would have been much closer to \$30,000. Mike Maguire, Orlin Coleman, and our other part-time staff are to be commended for the extra flood-related work above and beyond their normal excellent performance.

The Zion Nature Center (ZNC) continues to increase its popularity (attendance up about 200 people to a new high in 2010 of 10,260 visitors). While the majority of those visitors attended the many programs offered or coordinated by our interpretative staff, other visitors just stop by for a chat or to enjoy the ever-changing exhibits prepared by our dedicated staff and volunteers. Additionally, the ZNC continued the tradition of supplementing the Town and Park Department's budgetary support of the Center. This year, to supplement the over \$85,000 in direct Park Board/Park Department support to the ZNC, the center itself and their support group along with other donors generated over \$15,000 additional dollars. Over \$10,000 of that \$15,000 was in program fees and the other \$5,000+ was from fund raising efforts by the Friends of Zion Nature Center and other donors and fund raising events. Over 90% of this \$10,000 in program fees were

generated from the wildly popular day camp program and much of these moneys were turned right back around and used to support that program and its participants. The 2011 Park Department Summary – page 4

raising of these supplemental funds, helped assist in other interpretative programs and improvements at the center to dovetail with the other, more traditional, funding sources. The Department thanks all of the Zion Nature Center staff and volunteers for making the center a great success. Our park staff at the nature center also deserve a great deal of credit. Therese Burkhard, the Park Department's Interpretative Naturalist, works hard at keeping ZNC exciting and issues monthly updates about the Center to the Park Board.

Garden Plots were again rented this year. The plots were rented for \$20 each and were located on the new 13-acres at 400 S & 875 E. The plots were placed at the northern end of the property because of the curb cut location required by county. This is likely going to be a future location of a fire station so we let everyone know we are effectively "squatting" until the County's conditions can be met for a more internal location. We doubled the number to 80 this year and still sold out in record time (a second church added it's plots to last year's church so there are at least 3 providers now in Zionsville). Our planned Elm Street location is delayed until the contractor for the park development gets the grades at that location to the specifications in the plans. We are holding onto some of the money that would have been used for final payment until that is finished.

Community Concert Series: With the cooperation and assistance of the Park Department, the Zionsville Chamber of Commerce Free Concert Series was again held at Lincoln Park. This is a well received community standard. Thanks to the Chamber for their efforts

Also in cooperation with ZSA, youth matches occurred at Mulberry Fields for the Zionsville Boys and Girls Club Youth Football and the Zionsville Rugby League. Both these programs went well and early indications are at least some will be returning.

The Zionsville Schools utilized Jennings Field for practices and this year, with the increased construction constraints on the High School Project, the parking area at Jennings ended up being utilized for a significant component of temporary student parking. Also the middle school uses nearby Mulberry for cross-country practice/meets.

Christmas trees were collected at Starkey Park in January 2011 and chipped into mulch. Costs remained basically the same as the fees for the required drum chipper were not raised. This program was started back when few others were providing such a service. Now however, other private business will take Zionsville residents' trees and most of them recycle them as well. In December of 2011, the Park Board decided to discontinue the program for Christmas 2012 and let these other private businesses provide the service while we focus on our core missions.

2011 Bicycle Rodeo: As part of a grass roots volunteer effort and a collaborative effort of the Park Board's Recreation Advisory Committee, a bicycle Rodeo was held for families in May of this past year. It was scheduled to start at our newest park, Elm Street Green. At that site were several skill-training games, making it fun for kids to learn and test

bicycle handling and safety skills. After that whole families went on a 7-mile ride throughout the trails of Zionsville culminating in the Farmers Market area for treats. It is planned this will be the basis of a yearly program.

ZGreenFest was held in April again. After the initial thought that perhaps the Friends of Zion Nature Center might chose to not hold the event, it was held again held this year and was again a success. We are very glad they decided to again hold the event and thanks to all the Friends, the volunteers, and to our nature center staff for the countless hours organizing and holding the event. It takes much time and dedication for the team to present this well-received tradition.

Maplelawn Farmstead, Inc. continues to work on the preservation and programming at the farmstead at Mulberry Fields Park. This partnership has proven to be a valuable one for the department and the citizens of Zionsville. Maplelawn's recreational contributions were again greatly successful in 2010. Highlights from their programs this year include a continuation of their previously successful offerings, a weekend with an outdoor movie showings in the summer and the traditional and popular Murder Mystery Dinner this past the fall. Additionally they continued their day camp program at the farm. Also well attended was their "Archicamp" utilizing local historical buffs and trained historical interpreters to interest kids in a historical look at our community's historic farm.

Maintenance Efforts

Floodwaters: The floods also caused our park maintenance staff considerable time and effort to correct. Jeff Bennington and Rick Hypes, our two Park Technicians, spent many hours cutting, clearing, and shifting flood debris. Then Al Smith, the Assistant Superintendent for Maintenance Services joined them in mapping and cutting many feet of new trail at Starkey Park, as portions of the old route had been washed away.

Snow Removal: While most park systems don't clear much of their trail system in the wintertime, we do try and get to significant portions of the park trails. We also assist the street department in clearing other, non-park trails that lie along streets and other locations since they are often out on the roads in these weather events. This winter's especially heavy storms caused considerable turmoil. This was especially true for the ice storm as using de-icers is not really an option for us. It took over a weeks worth of extra man-hours as Rick Hypes used the front bucket's edge to repetitively smash down to break though the ice layer as Al Smith came along behind with our plow to push it off. Jeff Bennington was left to do most of the snow blowing and other work himself and the Park Superintendent helped out on parking lots. All stepped it up to get the job done.

Respectfully prepared and submitted

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Superintendent of Parks & Recreation