

Zionsville Department of Parks & Recreation

2010 Park Department Summary

(prepared in part for the Jan. 5, 2011 Town Council Meeting)

2010 was a year of great strides for the Zionsville Parks and Recreation Department. 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), eleven of the thirteen 2010 goals were achieved and/or addressed by the Park Department and Park Board. Additionally progress was made on one of the two other goals but it could not yet be considered as "complete". This was the construction of a Laurel Street pedestrian connection from the Village to the Rail Trail. Work is expected to progress on that in 2011. As with all such goals, some were just not able to be completed and one of those remained in 2010.

Acquisition

Goodwin: With the cooperative efforts of the Town Council, Park Board, Park Department and Fire Department... slightly over 13 acres of new land was secured for the benefit of the Town's citizens. Situated at the intersection of County Roads 400S and 875 E and just across the road from the current western end of our very popular, paved Rail-Trail; about three acres in the north of this property will remain reserved for a potential future fire station. The remaining approximately ten acres are slated for use as a park. It is envisioned in 2011 a park conceptual plan will be finalized including a public input component similar to that developed as part of the 2009 Elm Street Green design process. Certainly being a potential continuation of, and trailhead for, the Rail Trail is one reason the Park Board promoted acquisition of this parcel. Additionally the Park Board has high hopes for a \$200,000 matching grant program for which the Park Board directed an application be prepared this past year. Such funds could help supplement the moneys that may be needed for park construction, reducing the total amount of tax dollars to finish the project. The Board hopes to hear final word on the grant earlier in 2011.

Laurel St- Rail Trail: For nearly eight years, various Town Staff and citizenry had been promoting the acquisition/development near the Laurel Street area of a pedestrian link from the Village portion of Zionsville to the Rail Trail. With Town Council assistance, most notably Council President Matt Price and Councilor Art Harris, the Park Department was able to acquire this important link for public safety, alternative transportation, and recreational usage. The Park Board has allocated funds for design in 2011 and construction may well be able to commence yet that year.

Capital Projects

Elm Street Green: This was probably the most anticipated and highest visibility park project in 2010. This was likely because this Phase 1 construction project was developed out of a conceptual plan process that included considerable public input. Also the land had been owned for quite some time as funds were being developed and eventually allocated for this development. This project developed a passive park site with shelters, paved pathways, stone walls, a canoe launch/stream access portal, significant native plants, etc. The park is also leading the way with innovative, "green-based" practices that the Town may at some point wish to implement on a more widespread basis or may wish future developers to consider. These include storm water best management practices such as specially constructed and planted bio-basins to slow, filter, and reduce run off; permeable pavers; and prairie/wildflower meadows to both cleanse the environment and provide aesthetics. The park also has LED street lighting to reduce energy usage and ambient glare. While any change, such as construction, causes concerns in a few individuals, the vast majority of public comments on both this project and the one listed immediately below, are overwhelmingly positive.

Turkey Foot Park Path: Also a significant project in 2010, this expansion of the Town's Trail System via Turkey Foot Park's internal path was completed in 2010. The path links the new parking lot at Turkey Foot Road to Redbud Lane and allows access to Willow Road and the trail along there. This internal park connection was a priority of the Town's Pathway Committee, a separate entity established by the Town Council to advise the Council on pathway linkages throughout the Town. This new park pathway could also connect to the northern end of the Town's proposed Turkey Foot Trail if that would be built in the future.

Mulberry Fields was also a park receiving attention, especially in the first, second and last quarters of the year. The landscaping contractor's performance continued to be held to the standard expressed in the original design documents. As just one example, nearly 50 large trees and numerous shrubs were replaced at no additional cost to the taxpayers because of the poor performance regarding the 2008 planted specimens.

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 again this season. 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 proceeds (after costs) will be about \$50,000 (+/- ~10%)

Garden Plots were again rented in 2010. The plots were rented for \$20 each and were located on the newly acquired 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

highways. Basic tilling and water hook ups were provided. The slots filled in record time and we understand that a newly established program at a nearby church also filled.

Christmas trees were collected at Starkey Park in January 2010 and chipped into mulch. Costs remained basically the same as the fees for the required drum chipper were not raised. This is a long-standing tradition makes the mulch is available to local residents for their pick-up and landscape use.

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

Zionsville Sports Association's (ZSA) partnership with the Park Board facilitated the Zionsville Youth Football League in another successful season at Mulberry Fields.

Also in cooperation with ZSA, newly scheduling youth matches occurred at Mulberry Fields for the Zionsville Lacrosse Club and the Zionsville Rugby League. Both these new programs went well and indications are at least one of these will be returning while the other apparently will be playing on the more robust, newly constructed Zionsville School's athletic complex.

The Zionsville Schools continued 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.

A local church also regularly utilizes Mulberry Fields for some of its programming. They make a gift contribution each year in recognition of our facilities benefit to them.

The Zion Nature Center (ZNC) continues to increase its popularity (attendance up about 10% in 2010 reaching just over 10,000 visitors). About 67% of those visitors attended the over 200 programs offered or coordinated by our interpretative staff. Additionally, the ZNC continued the tradition of supplementing the Town and Park Department's budgetary support of the Center. ZNC collected over \$9,000 in program fees. Over 90% of these program fees moneys were generated from the day camp program and much of these monies were turned back around and used to support that program and its 106 participants. These program fees were in addition to a smaller, but still significant amount of fees in sponsorships and grants. The 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 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's Interpretative Naturalist, works hard at keeping programs fresh and new and issues monthly updates on the growing numbers of attendees.

ZGreenFest was held in April again. The staff's estimated attendance shows the highest ever. Thanks to all the volunteers and to our nature center staff who helped organize and hold the event. It takes much time and dedication for our 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 expanded in 2010. Highlights from their programs this year include a continuation of their previously successful offerings, a weekend with an outdoor movie showing in the summer (the musical *Annie*, this year) and four-nights of *Murder Mystery Dinner* this past the fall (a doubling of the number of dinner nights from the first year). Additionally they continued and expanded their day camp program at the farm. Plus this year they added to our Town's recreational/educational opportunities by providing an "Archicamp" utilizing local historical buffs and trained historical interpreters to interest kids in a historical look at our community's historical farm.

Respectfully prepared and submitted
Matthew L Dickey,
Superintendent of Parks & Recreation