

Zionsville Department of Parks & Recreation

2012 Park Department Summary

(Prepared in part for the February 4, 2013 Town Council Meeting)

2012 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 mid-2012, the Park Board initiated work on its 5-year Master Plan Summary for 2013. This process began with 6 meetings which were attended by 40 stakeholders. The meetings focused on a general SWOT (Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats) analysis to define the department's present state and help identify factors to increase the department's effectiveness. Additionally, the Board developed an online survey which received 442 responses from Zionsville citizens. This survey was promoted in local media and on survey cards distributed at a variety of public locations throughout Zionsville. Finally, a general public meeting was held to solicit additional input on several distinguishing topics ranging from funding to programming. Park Board members have begun to examine the data received from the public and development of the Master Plan has started. The 5-year Master Plan will help the Park Board meet Department of Natural Resources (DNR) standards, which allows the Park Board to qualify for future DNR grants.

Grants and Additional Funding (primarily non tax dollars)

Urban Forest Grant: The \$15,000 UF Grant jointly benefitting the Park and Street Departments was in full swing in 2012. The Street Department selected Davey Tree to complete a street tree inventory. The Parks Department has secured quotes for extensive grant supplemented invasive removal on the Rail-Trail that is to be completed in early 2013. Urban forestry related planting for Elm Street Green is complete.

Boone County Solid Waste District Grant: Grant money was used in 2012 to purchase new playground equipment. The equipment, which is composed of recycled content, will be installed at the new Heritage Trail Park.

Capital Improvement Projects

Heritage Trail Park: While not yet in the construction stage, there was exciting progress on this site of a future rail trail extension and trail head site. Phase 1 design documents are complete and the project went out for construction bid. The bids received were higher than expected, therefore, the Park Board asked the consultants on the project (Rundell Ersntberger) to make some changes to the project and a re-bid will go out late January.

Laurel Street/Rail-Trail Area Improvements: Laurel Street/Rail-Trail connection was paved allowing access to the Nancy Burton portion of the Rail-Trail. Also the slope down to the parking lot was improved for safety and access. Future improvements to this area include a small sun shelter.

Town Hall Park/Rail-Trail link: A pathway linking the Town Hall to the Rail-Trail was completed. The pathway was a joint project between the Street Department and Parks Department. Street Department employees provided the necessary machinery. Bicycle racks, supplied by the Parks Department, were also installed at the site.

Starkey Nature Park Boardwalk: Zionsville Eagle Scout, Nicholas Bravard, renovated a boardwalk at Starkey Nature Park. The new boardwalk, which Bravard built with help from scouts, friends, and family, is composed of recycled plastic decking repurposed from a previous Zionsville Parks & Recreation Department project. In close coordination with Park Staff, Bravard and company adapted a pre-fabricated boardwalk support kit to suit the wooded site.

Recreation and Service Programs (in no particular order)

Zionsville 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 busy year. Even with the capital expense of the \$95,650 golf carts purchase, the course's gross operating revenue of ~\$304,500 almost met the total expenses of ~\$308,000 (estimates pending Clerk-Treasurer Office's final numbers). Over 18,500 rounds were played in the 2012 season with approximately 96% played as 9 hole rounds. Mike Maguire, Orlin Coleman and the rest of the course staff hosted numerous special events, 4 regular golf leagues and over 20 middle school matches.

This summer's drought conditions allowed the course to remain open more days than usual, watering from the course's dedicated well was able to keep the greens viable throughout the season. In early fall, concrete slabs were poured and new fuel tanks were installed. The Department thanks all of the Zionsville Golf Course staff for making 2012 a phenomenal year.

The Zion Nature Center (ZNC): ZNC and its programs continue to be popular. This year, the center's interpretive naturalist, Therese Burkhard, and her staff hosted approximately 71 public programs and 73 private programs; these included school programs for over 500 students, programs for about 100 scouts, a 4 week summer camp with 93 participants (and a waiting list of 100) and the annual Z'Greenfest with over 500 attendees and 12+ sponsor booths. Although programming accounts for many of ZNC's visitors, over 4200 walk-in visitors stopped by to view the continually changing educational exhibits. This year, a one-time capital project costing approximately \$7,700 increased the centers operating expenses to almost \$94,000 (estimates pending Clerk-Treasurer Office's final numbers); this includes both full and part time staffing costs and program support. Program fees (after expenses) cleared approximately \$3800 for the centers portion of the non-reverting operating fund. As always, supplemental support was generated by the Nature Center and the Friends for Zion Nature Center including awards of over \$3000 in grants, the bulk to be received and used in 2013. Additionally, a \$2500 donation was

presented to the center from the Zionsville Kiwanis. The Department thanks all of the Zion Nature Center staff and volunteers for making the center a great success.

Garden Plots: There were 64 plots rented this year (\$20 each) located at 400 S & 875 E – the site of the new Heritage Trail Park. This year’s drought conditions and the subsequent Citizens Energy ordered water ban created additional challenges with the plots. When the Park Department was informed that water from Citizens Energy would no longer be available at the site, tanks were brought in with the gracious assistance of the Zionsville Fire Department, for use by gardeners. This water emergency created over \$3000 in additional, unforeseen, expenses. A special thank you goes to ZFD staff members Brent Smith, David Hackett, David Kall and Chief Jamie VanGorder for providing technical assistance in delivering water to the thirsty garden plots.

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. It is estimated that over attendance topped 10,000 for the ZYFL regular games, special events and playoffs.

The Zionsville Schools continues their rental use of Jennings Field (\$1) for practices and special events. Also the Zionsville Middle School uses nearby Mulberry for cross-country practice/meets and occasional other uses.

Other Events in the parks continue to increase. Lincoln Park hosted 26 weddings (an average of at least one a week during the May-October season), the Sullivan Munce Ghost Walk in October and the Paint Out in June. Creekside hosted the annual Creekstomp with the ZNC and Stormwater Departments. The Rail Trail provided paths for numerous events including the Optimist Club’s “Hit the Bricks” walk, Indianapolis Hiking Club events and the St. Vincent Walk of Hope, which brought in approximately 450 attendees. Approximately 100 members of the Central Indiana Bicycling Association used Mulberry Fields as a support site for three rides this season.

Christmas trees collection at Starkey Nature Park was discontinued this year. Greencycle, Worman Enterprises and Rays Recycling were contacted in November to remind them of the Starkey Park tree collection discontinuation and address any concerns. Only 39 trees were left at Starkey (a typical number during previous years of the program was 600 trees) and these were taken to Worman. Notices on the change were posted on site at Starkey Park (both in 2011 and 2012), posted on the Town website, printed in both the Zionsville Current and the Zionsville Times-Sentinel (both in 2011 and 2012) and information was passed along to the Zionsville Association of HOAs for distribution to

its members. Less than half a dozen calls were fielded concerning the change and, overall, the process went smoothly.

2012 Bicycle Rodeo: The annual Bicycle Rodeo was held again in May. It was scheduled to start at 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.

The non-profit group, 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 2012. Highlights from their programs this year include a continuation of their previously successful offerings, a weekend with an outdoor movie showing in the summer and the new Haunted Farmstead this past fall. Additionally, they continued their popular day camp programs at the farm.

Maintenance Efforts

Drought: Department irrigation systems were turned off for a period of several weeks in response to the Citizens Energy Water Ban for the Town of Zionsville. To preserve young trees over 100 gator bags were installed at various locations including Mulberry Fields, Zionsville Golf Course and Elm Street Green. At the Heritage Trail Park garden plots, the normal water supply was shut down in mid-July. Staff watered the plots several times with a Fire Department tanker truck and within 2 weeks, staff assisted in set-up of water tanks and pumps for garden plot watering. Because the Zionsville Golf Course pulls water from their own on-site well, the greens were not severely affected. The Mulberry Fields Splash Pad remained open throughout the water ban.

Snow Removal: A post-Christmas blizzard brought several inches of snow to Zionsville's Parks and the closing of the Town's non-public safety departments. Due to the long duration of the snow fall, park staff had to prioritize removal from park locations. Snow removal was completed at nearly all of the parks including the Rail-Trail, the parking lots at Mulberry Fields, Elm Street Green, Starkey Park and others.

Training: Park Maintenance staff completed a number of educational courses in 2012, including Defensive Driving training, Personal Protective Equipment Training, an Invasive Plants Workshop, Snow Plow Safety training, Pesticide training and Class 3a ornamentals and Class 3b turf certification.

Respectfully prepared and submitted

Matthew L Dickey,
Superintendent of Parks & Recreation