

Recreation Board Minutes
May 7, 2025

Rodger Carroll - May I have a motion to open the meeting
Aly DeAngelo - So moved
Tyler Stanley - Second
All in favor say aye - The motion is approved

Roll Call

Eric Action - Present
Ann Brennan - Absent
Roger Carroll - Present
Clare Ceballos - Absent
Chair
Aly Deangelo - Present
Joanne Pickrell - Present
School Board Representative
Tyler Stanley - Present

Approval Of Minutes

Roger Carroll - May I have a motion to approve the April minutes.
Aly DeAngelo - So moved
Tyler Stanley - Second
All in favor say aye - The motion is approved.

Commonwealth Unification Draft Plan - Review (Elena Andrews)

Mike Price - We went through a design process and reviewed other plans and came up with a lot of issues. Cost, and it still seemed like a separate park. The whole goal was to the park together. The original intent was for it to be one park. But then we revisited and decided to work in that direction. We developed a working group, Aly and Eric sat on that. We had a meeting last year in the fall, working with Brian Kent Jones with the intent to develop a plan to unify CommonwealthPark. We looked at three or four different options, gave some feedback. Brian Kent Jones took that back and tried to focus into one design concept that we can continue to tweak and continue to get feedback on but hopefully will be the future of Commonwealth Park. So with that I will ask Elena who is part of that group that has really been the engine that has driven "The Year Of The Parks" in general. So thank you for all of that work.
I appreciate you being here.

Elena Andrews - When we did the master plan in 2016 it was voted to keep it open. We found that it was cost prohibitive. We had to do major utility work down the center of Columbia and it had to be closed off. We took that as an opportunity to test things. We did traffic studies. There was concern that when it was closed traffic would overload on to the Parkview and Drexel side. That did not end up being the case. We got a little bit of push back from the neighbors but after

two or three weeks, they got used to it. Council voted to close it so in the long run it's a huge benefit.

Grass growing in the curbs have been put in and we can see this is cool, it is finally a full park. We continue to come back to the original plan. Columbia went down the middle but it was more like a smaller pedestrian pathway. You still have Commonwealth North and South and still have Drexel and Parkview. To the left toward Parkview, that has been reimagined as the pond, that is where the arboretum feature is.

We basically have three options we want to discuss today and get preliminary feedback. One of the main things is that all of the hardscape options are the same. What is different are the trees and how we handle the trees. We will be presenting the same set of drawings to the tree commission next week for their feedback as well.

Commonwealth South there are the two follies. We ask how we can actually bring people into the park like a park? We want to introduce trails that go all the way across that have a certain amount of formality, it is the most formal park in Bexley. We want to maintain it as a passive open park. It's not going to have anything other than the sports field that has a tremendous amount of things programmed on it. You will not be able to rent it out and have weddings and things like that. We are trying to stay true to what the origin's master plan was. The idea is it's a big walking path and a lot of people go north and south. We wanted to introduce a pedestrian through a fair with some type of destination in the middle. Center is a planted area that would have similar perennials that you see at Drexel Circle, a shade tree in the center. Flanked on either side are pergolas. We have heard from the community they want places to come and sit and rest with some shade. Jazz in the park might happen here and not only in Havenwood. The pergolas would be open wooden structures. Under the pergolas would be blue stone, with a patio that would open out on either side of the field. Like the path that runs around the pond would be a compacted brassfield stone flanked by blue stone edging to make it fancier.

We looked at the north and south entry to Commonwealth Park. We have an arch along the sidewalk that brings you up into the center. We might introduce some columns or ballads or singage.

Now the trees. There are beech trees on either side of Columbia. Spaced 44 feet on center, staggered. If we keep the trees, we have to remove four, they are 5 to 8 inches in caliber. Concerns about keeping the trees as is it still makes it look like there used to be a street here and we are just kinda putting a path in. The second concern is the elevation of just where those trees are a little lower of where we are going to have to hump where that street is. In keeping these trees we will have to build kinda retaining walls at their drip line because you don't want to put soil at the base of a tree because it is actually going to drown it and smother it. There are several shenanigans we would have to do if we said their trees are sacrosanct. We cannot move them. We are going to have to look a little bit in terms of how we are going to arrange that. One thought is if we keep the existing trees, maybe plop in some other trees so it just doesn't feel like it was just a straight road. We are looking at a variety of trees to put in there so it would feel more natural and it would still be porous. We don't want to arrange tightly so it

doesn't feel like you can just walk across from one side to the other. We really want to encourage players and families and everyone to just feel like it is just like it is all one park.

We could pop some different ones in , beech and different varieties. With that density you will not think there was a road here. It just so happens we have a grove of trees then this path goes through. On the northern end we have the opportunity to plant something more formally. We are not looking at having another set of follies on the north end. But we want to do something that actually says that if you are coming from the north end of the park you would have a formal entry. We would have a formal semi-circle grove of trees there. Then plop things in the rest of it.

Then we said what if we got rid of the trees ? Bring the trees in about 25 feet from the center and make it tighter and really make it a pedestrian space. It would still have that formality of going north and south within that park but if you bring them in a bit closer and allow and have a v-shaped tree basically you could have a shaded tree walk you go through. Reminiscent of parks you see in Italy or France. That would mean we would remove all of the existing beach and have to plant new trees.

LoriAnn Feibel - Can we save the trees?

Elena Andrews - They are at a point where they are almost too big to make it worthwhile saving. You can move them, it is very expensive but no one would warranty one.

We would introduce lights down the path down the center. Maybe light pole lanterns hanging from the pergala. Very subtle.

Do you have any main feedback, are we going in the right direction, your feedback on the pergola, and also if you have any thoughts about the trees. We are not voting on anything today and nothing is set in stone. We wanted feedback before we got too far into the design process.

Lori Ann Feibel - If you all haven't been by that park it is so beyond beautiful I see it every single day and enjoy it immensely. And the fields are so beautiful.

I am curious what you think The Tree and Public Gardens feel about removing those trees. What kind of trees would they be? Any chance of flowering trees?

Elena Andrews - Flowering trees to get that shape they do not go like that. You would have to get them super close together. It is going to be an elm or zelkova.

If you are putting money into this, you know it's beautiful to keep those trees. If we are removing them we can still put new trees and kind of do a one for one off removal. The park still has enough space so we could add trees into it. And as we are trying to have Commonwealth Park be the focal point for the arboretum, having a different variety is not necessarily a bad thing.

Lori Ann Feibel - Well you haven't steered us wrong and it is beautiful.

Roger Carroll - Have you done any cost estimates on the various options?

Elena Andrews - Not yet.

Mike Price - Is it fair to say as far as the budgeting, or financial, that this project will be driven by the hardspace stuff than the landscape stuff.

Elena Andrews - Yes the landscape is not going to be the expensive part of this project. And there is also an opportunity, those are planted 25 feet apart and 25 feet from center, rather plant 6 and 6 plant 4 and 4. When you plant new trees you plant them closer together because when they grow up with one another they are more healthy. There are not a lot of trees in that middle area of the park, it is just so we do have the opportunity to plant things close together and get a pretty spectacular look.

Mike Price - You are saying 4 and 4 instead of 6 and 6 ?

Elena Andrews - Yes I think so.

Mike Price - I like that from the standpoint of looking east and west the two closest to the circles were gone to the middle then it would even open it up more as you look east to west.

Elena Andrews - I was actually saying a row of 4 and 4, so it would be 8 and 8.

Mike Price - Or get moved tighter to the end that makes it tighter on either side of the circle just as you look east and west it doesn't feel like a wall of trees, breaking it into two pieces again.

Elena Andrews - The center walkway would be about 15 feet wide , so the thought you could easily walk two to four people a breast. The center would be brassfield fines which is compacted gravel and the edges would be a blue stone. Right now where the paths by the pond, it's a metal edging. With this we want a nicer finish that widens the path a little more but also ties the bluestone in the center off to the edges.

Eric Acton - This may not be a concern of yours but what does parking look like ? What kind of parking ?

Mike Price - as it relates to Commonwealth Park? It was discussed when we closed Columbia, how many spots we would lose. We haven't had an issue. We have programs out there but we do not host large events and that sort of thing so its not

Eric Acton - One thing I noticed because when we run there maybe twice a day in the Fall September and October it seems like they are cut out to the park , will those still be there?

Elena Andrews - we are not changing any of the parking or any of the street trees that are between the sidewalk and curb on Commonwealth.

Eric Acton - It seems to make sense to remove those trees and just to go with something that you would know makes sense aesthetically. In whatever roots and everything else that comes as these trees grow. But that is the same for that area, not sure anywhere else but the

walkways seem so important to the presentation of the park that it would make sense to me to remove the trees and start over.

Aly DeAngelo - I like the formality of it and the coziness of it .

Mike Price - You like the third option.

Aly DeAngelo - When I walk through an area like that in other parks it's just such a calming lovely feel so I think it really could be cool.

Roger Carroll - How long will it take to develop if you went for the third option. To look like that in terms of how long to take the trees to grow to look like that

Elena Andrews - It depends on the variety of trees and how fast growing they are. To get the feel in the design document it will take about 15 years. Depends how close we can space things and how fast we can get things. To start to feel at least things touching, five to eight years. We actually dug out all the asphalt and got down to virgin soil. With the idea that whatever goes in there can be as healthy as possible .

Joanne Pickrell - The existing trees that we may or may not remove are at maturity level, do they have much life in them, That is something I am wondering also. Do we make a decision on trees that we will have to take down maybe in 2 years because of their condition?

Elena Andrews - They are not in bad condition There are a couple that did not survive that have been removed. You can go through there and see the rhythm and see a couple missing trees but in general the trees are in decent health. So it would be taking out trees that are 10 to 15 years old that could live for many many more decades. The type of beach tree that it is will never get to be really big and have a wide canopy. It will always stay on the edge and never grow over when you go through like some of the Southern California streets that have old trees that are touching, it will never have that feel. The question is what is more important 10 or 15 years down the line do we want to have something that looks like that versus street trees that just have grown that came back.

Personally I am on the fence about it. I would pick Option 3. I think that one would look the best but that is purely from an aesthetic position. I think the one thing I would want to look at is understanding the number of trees that were taken out. I think there are probably about 12 beach trees that are there now were putting back in 12 and so whether or not you know we do need to say do we add couple more trees, just banking for our canopy because I know that the tree commission does want to increase the urban forest canopy removing semi adolescent trees then putting in younger ones we just reduced that which is the trade off

Aly DeAngelo - Keep some of the beach trees and get some other trees so option 2 we don't necessarily have, we could have put in a couple a little bit closer.

Elena Andrews - So this is where we are at, in terms of spacing that they have right now going north and south are about 30 feet off center, which is a standard street tree spacing, we are limited if we can squeeze something in.

And in between both of those there is always going to be on the outside edge and then if we are too close to the center the same things are going to disrupt the pathway. In order to feel more natural everything is going to be filtered a little bit more on the outside and then potentially you are going to have more trunks in that and weather or those trunks create a visual barrier. One thing to remember is you still have a lot of space in between those.

When you look at the plan it may look like a lot of sticks but if you go out there and have a bunch of people standing there and you stand on one side of the field and the other it's not like it is a pure fence. You are still going to be able to see it, somewhat porous. This might have an advantage if you kept the beach. Do you go in with a variety of other trees or other beach trees?

Aly DeAngelo - That plan does not narrow the path

Elena Andrews - All the plans have the same pedestrian path in the center. Only the 3rd plan brings it in.

Mike Price - Part of the concept around this was if you are approaching from either the north or the south even now with filled in grass, there is no street there, everything lines up, those trees line up with the trees on either end heading north and south on Columbia Ave. The idea here was to give it more of a random feel by adding trees in. So you do not look at it as these lines of trees on the same width of the former street there. It is trying to take out the formality of the old streetspacing of the trees by adding more trees in essence and breaking it up.

Tyler Stanley - You were saying you would have to build some kind of retaining wall around the roots potentially?

Elena Andrews - Yes because essentially what we want to do with the path, because the trees sit a little lower in general, in order to just shed things off we want the path to not retain water, we filled it in with soil, good stuff, The path we want to dig out and raise it up and put gravel down and allow things to pump away from it. But to get that elevation we are going to have to build something to protect those trees so we are not putting too much soil on their root mass. And that would be potentially in both options the trees would be planted at the right height and we would be fine with that. This option there would be a stone retaining wall which is an additional cost as well.

Tyler Stanley - For me it is an esthetic thing and all about kids playing around with edges on rocks to fall into. Personally, I like Option Three.

Mike Price - I think it comes down to whether you are comfortable taking the trees down or not. Then it is two or three based on whether we keep the trees or not. If we keep the trees we feel

like we want to do something to break up the feeling of these old trees on the street line. But keeping the trees and not doing anything different with it and not adding others I do not think is going to be the approach, which is option One, essentially to keep it the way it is.

Elena Andrews - I am concerned if we go with Option Three we can get them closer and push it up to either semi circle. But having only a group of two and two and two and two I don't think you will get that LA feel. It will look like two trees that are bisecting the path. That's when it goes into from a design perspective you will want to have a group of three or more. Two is just going to look random and I don't think you will ever get it close enough to make it feel like that kind of pedestrian walking of space.

Elena Andrews - We would not get any trees that are low branching. We would want to have trees that limb up higher.

Roger Carroll- Option Three other than removing the existing trees are there any other negative aspects of going to Option Three? I am not saying the moving of trees is negative but that is one possible.

Elena Andrews - I do not think so, I think no. Option Three is my preference and I think it is a shame to lose those trees but I think we do not have any pedestrian space in Bexley that looks like this. I can even imagine on either side of those paths having benches where people can sit and read a book or walk through Mike will allow people to walk dogs through the center of the park.

The main negative is that we would be cutting down existing trees that were potentially funded a number of years ago by for instance "Trees for Bexley" or if they were a donation of some kind. That is one thing I want to talk to Susan Quinten about, look through our records to see if it will be a potentially difficult political situation to put the Bexley Community Foundation in for removing trees that people have put money in to donate. I want to be sensitive to that but also weigh it in terms of should we reach out to them and explain if it was purely a landscape design aesthetic. I would go for this because there is really no other opportunity we had talked about at one point how cool it would be to have the double row of trees around the entire perimeter of Commonwealth Park. That would look so good, it would be great. It unrealistic but its great to show some of these inspirational images

Roger Carroll - Any other questions or comments?

Mike Price - At some point this plan will come back to the board and we appreciate all your feedback. Thank you Elena for the presentation .

Roger Carroll - I am not an expert on any of these things on unification. We have the opportunity to do something special and I think that , to me, would be the guiding point whatever that is. But it is a once in a lifetime opportunity

Director's Report

Pool

Volunteer Appreciation Day

Natalie Mullin - The Volunteer Appreciation Party is Friday, May 23, 2025. It was a good turn out last year and people really appreciated it . We will move forward with it, right now it is set for Friday May 23 from 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. There will be music, cookout ,raffle prizes,snow cones. We hope families just enjoy the evening.

Mike Price - We are having an appreciation good -bye reception for Coach Chris on Saturday, May 17 at 11:30 a.m. at the Memorial Shelter. Also there is a proclamation on May 27th at the City Council meeting .

Pool Season Update

Natalie Mullin - We had a promotional material for memberships including the free membership raffle. We did select a family, I forgot to write the name down, but it was a family of four.

We do not have the early bird special anymore because we lowered membership rates, we do that to encourage people to buy them sooner. So we are just in the ball park, a little behind the 2024 pre-sale through May 5th was 1,296. Last year through May 5th it was 1,385. We will continue to have more memberships purchased just through Monday. Keep in mind, last year through May 31st,which would have been through the second weekend from May 5th, there were an additional 1.292 memberships purchased. So provided the weather stays good and people start thinking about the pool that usually encourages them to purchase. Last year we had a little over 3,800 memberships. I expect to get back in that range.

Regarding Non-resident memberships, the returning members are now grandfathered in once they get in, after they had a sponsor and we have not had any issues with any of our non-residents, in fact they are fabulous and a lot of them end up moving here. They had a direct link through the month of March to get their memberships. We opened applications on April 1st for non-resident memberships. We had 240 memberships so we can take another 60 because 300 is our max. We have filled our max and we still have 18 families on the waitlist. It is visible on the registration site but does not take applications.

We haven't had any issues with non-resident families and it hasn't been a capacity issue at any point in time. We want to know, we have 18 families on the waitlist. If we cut it here it would be another 60 individuals. Wanted to know if the board would consider allowing them access to the pool this summer.

Roger Carroll - The 18 on the waitlist have been sponsored by a resident?

Natalie Mullin - One applicant responded I don't have a sponsor yet. I have to reach out to them and the sponsor they listed to confirm the sponsor has a pool membership. They list the current member and I verify it.

Roger Carrool - You don't believe these additional 18 families will cause any capacity issues.

Natalie Mullin - I don't think so. There are days that are extremely hot and we get people, but on average I do not think so.

Roger Carroll - Everyone OK with this? Everyone seems to be nodding their heads yes.

Natalie Mullin - Thank you.

Natalie Mullin - Every three weeks from January I have a meeting with Jacob, Swim Safe. We have 3 managers. We hired 1 new manager. Elise Fox has been promoted within Swim Safe and she has moved to Cincinnati and does work on their safety side. We hired Steve, and I forgot his last name, and he works with Bexley Schools as an intervention specialist. So he is going to work as a head manager. We have one manager from outside, Britney. An internal head guard was promoted, Ellie Bolton. We hit our goal of hiring 45 to 50 guards. We have 8 to 10 confirmed swim instructors hired. And we will also pull in some lifeguards to fill in.

We painted the pool bottoms. We are going to get the splash pad ready to go, weather permits, closer to pool opening. We have the gate so it is open to the public but it just has not been warm enough. We will open back up to the public in September.

Pool Parking Lot

Mike Price - The pool parking lot is part of the city's street project for 2025. They went to bid a couple months ago. The redo of the parking lot as imagined in the master plan is going to be part of that pool parking lot improvements. A big focus was improving the aesthetics of it, improving the drainage control around it and then moving at the west side or creek side of the parking lot, moving the dumpsters so we can create a better interface with the creek. The goals of this would have been to improve the pedestrian walkways from parking to the pool. It's going to accomplish a lot of the things we wanted and have a similar look. It won't happen till after the season is over, in the fall. It will be transformative for that area of the park. Thank you to the street department who runs the program to have this be a part of that.

Tennis Court Resurface / Pickleball Lighting

Mike Price- We were hoping the resurfacing would be done earlier this season. They were scheduled to be out a couple of weeks ago to start the demo on the tennis courts with the rain that was postponed. If there are more delays it will cause us to re-evaluate the timing in general. We cannot just postpone it for example just 3 weeks later because it will impact the existing programming plan. We are trying to thread the needle with all the construction and all the other things that are going on with the use of the space, the use of pickleball, summer camp and everything in between. I was hoping to hear today if it was going to get postponed and if it does we are going to re-evaluate potentially doing it a little later in the season. So we may have to say we are going to postpone the project and here is a better window for us which might be late

July to August . We are trying hard to keep it within our existing programming. I will keep you updated

Aly DeAngelo - How long does the project take?

Mike Price - It's about a week of construction of the actual surface and then the surface has to cure for 30 days before they put paint on it. They build the asphalt surface , cure for 30 days then a subcontractor comes in to paint the surface and put the lines down. That process is another 3 or 4 days and then you can play on it .You are looking at about 6 weeks from start to being able to use it.Our tennis program has been moved to Wolfe Park . We use the tennis courts for pickleball ladder league also.

Because we are taking out the lights, the electricity that services the courts also services the park restrooms as well as the park cabin which are very important to camp. So if we lose the electricity it could cost some delays for some camp programs. We are trying to thread the needle on the timing.

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Pickleball Lights

Mike Price - The RFP will go out next week , I believe Monday. Then we will work on selecting a lighting company for Tennis and Pickleball Courts. That will be more efficient and less light bleed and modernized. Once we get proposals in we will evaluate them and then determine what direction we want to go.

Roger Carroll - You pretty much have the money for that.

Mike Price - We received a \$75,000 grant from the Community Foundation and the city had \$95,000 in Capital Improvements so we think that should be enough.

Roger Carroll - Whenever they resurface the tennis courts, I assume that will be noisy. Will that disrupt the Pickleball and the ladder league notwithstanding that they don't have access to the courts?

Mike Price - Our programming for pickleball happens in the evenings and they would be finished before those things would happen. We asked about dust and dust on the Pickleball surface. We talked about blowing the courts off at the end of each night so that wouldn't be an issue. It's also helpful that the Pickelball courts are west of the tennis courts so generally the wind is going in the other direction.

Roger Carroll - Isn't there a ladder league during the day too?

Mike Price - Yes there will be some noise. Generally speaking it won't have an impact

2025 Summer Activity Brochure Registration

Mike Price - Registration opened April 22 for non-resident April 24. Everything went fairly smooth. There was a slight reduction from 2024 summer registration. Our winter Brochure was way up from year over year and part of that there were programs included that normally are in the Summer Brochure. We just moved where the registration happened. Camp Adventure was part of the Winter registration this year. It was one of the programs that drove that. So year over year we are slightly above 2024. January - May in 2024 we did 6,669 in registration \$38,000 and in 2025 we did 9,930 in registration and \$408,000.

Senior Center

Mike Price - Krisren and the team continue to work to find space for the Senior Center during the construction phase on Cassady Ave. The plan is to move back into the space once it is redeveloped. We met with Capital and took a tour there. We met with a commercial real estate agent to keep a look out for space for us. and we also met with Paramount Church on North Merkel, to look at space. We continue to view private spaces when opportunities arise. The goal is to make a decision by the end of the month. So we can begin planning for the switch over and communication with the members and community. We think we have some workable options. And I will update you at the next meeting. Some of that involves cost and different negotiations

Old Business

Mike Price - AED units are up at Commonwealth, Jeffrey and Schneider Parks. All our parks where we do our sports AED's are up. This is a project we have worked on for a while, Roger you had sent me pictures from Colorado regarding AED's. There are 3 in the Parks, 3 on Main Street, Lee is going to talk to the schools about locating AED on the 3 buildings. We would support that from a Rec. perspective.

Roger Carroll - Where is the one in Jeffrey Park

Mike Price - Park Cabin directly across from the Pickleball Courts. We are now communicating with the public as to where they are.

New Business

Preschool Art Show and Fundraiser

Mike Price - I want to compliment Angela and Kyle and all the teachers. This past Friday we had our first ever art fundraiser at the Jeffrey Mansion Preschool which was an absolutely awesome event. Current families and alumni were also invited. Jeffrey Mansio was decorated with amazing Jeffrey Mansion Preschool Art. The Mayor played the piano, some background music. We had food trucks and it was a very cool event.

It was a great way to highlight the building and the preschool and bring the preschool community together.

Mike Price - Wednesday, May 28 5:30 -7:30 Bloomers Event

Roger Carroll - May I have a motion to adjourn

Tyler Stanley - so moved

Aly DeAngelo - Second

Roger Carroll - All in favor say aye

Motion is approved.

Bs