CITY OF GROVE CITY, OHIO
COUNCIL MINUTES

October 28, 2024 — Special Parks Committee Meeting

The special Parks Committee meeting of Council was called to order by President Houk at 5:30 p.m. in City Hall, 4035 Broadway.

Roll was called and the following members were present:

Jodi Burroughs, Melissa Anderson, Mark Sigrist, Randy Holt, Christine Houk, Ted Berry, Rodney Dew

1. Mr. Berry turned the floor over to Mayor Stage to share information about the Brookpark Middle School building and the City's desired use.

Mayor Stage presented a slideshow to explain the Agreement that was approved by Council in 2019, and the 14 acre grounds. He said the City did not exercise their use of the building from 2020 – present. He shared that in 2023 – to present, the School District and the YMCA uses a portion of the building. He said the 2024 Annual Appropriation Ordinance has money earmarked for a feasibility study and building use for Parks & Recreation. He said some Council Members have inquired about field space and Pickleball at this location. He said the Building Division needs better work space and believes the cafeteria could be converted for this use; and the gym can be used for Parks & Recreation space. Also, the auditorium is ready for use and the Little Theater Off Broadway has inquired about using it. He said they are looking into demolishing the parts of the building that are not needed. He shared an estimated figure for converting this building for the proposed uses or building new. He said at a very high level proforma, no matter the choice, it would cost about $100,000.00 a year. He said the Gym is a luxury and available to the City to start using immediately. The Auditorium is unique and able to be used immediately. The Cafeteria can be upgraded for the Building to relocate into. He noted that he and Bill Milburn met with a roofer & electrician today to get an estimate. He said a new facility would cost about $3 million. Using the existing building may require some updating – for relocating the Building Division. He said they are looking at a 12 year horizon, as they hope to have the community center up and running by then. He said they will put together a proposal for what they would like to do and bring it to Council.

Mr. Berry asked about the engineering review. Mayor Stage said the report from the engineer is like a Rolls Royce and some of the things suggested would not be done. He said even with this report, there isn't enough information to know what areas can or cannot be salvaged. Mr. Holt said the $100,000.00 does not include the investment made to bring this building up to Code. Mr. Stage said it does include those things. Ms. Houk shared some concerns and said the School District decided it would be better to build a new school rather than upgrade. She said this is competing with other capital projects Council discussed the pricing to retrofit this building and having an understanding of what the priorities are for next year. Ms. Burroughs asked when the City will begin paying utilities. The Mayor said the School District wants the City to start paying the utilities yet this year. His $100,000.00 per year does not include utilities because they will have to be paid no matter what. Ms. Houk asked about ADA access. Mr. Boso, Chief Bldg. Official, the building is in compliance now. If we make alterations, ADA comes into play, but that is all factored into the figures given. Mr. Holt voiced concern over pumping a bunch of money into an old building, especially when we do not own the land and he doesn't think the school district will ever turn the property over to us. He said the contract allows the school district to use part of the building while the city pays for the utilities, etc. He feels it is better to let Brookpark go and building a new building.

Mayor Stage stated that he has a purchase order open for $16,000.00 in order to use the gym for Pickleball and feels it is a sin to let the gym sit unused another year. Council asked if that included the salary for a site coordinator. The Mayor said no.

Mr. Berry asked if the school supports demolishing the building. Mr. Monte Detterman, SWCS District, said they have had discussion over demolishing the building, but there is a current need for one program. They are looking at what to do with that program long-term. He added that the school district must comply with FCC regulations for its buildings and that played a large part in why they built new. Mr. Berry commented that if the city demolished the building, the school district could come back and want the land back. With this contract, the City will be paying about $60,000.00/yr. for utilities without doing anything else. Ms. Houk said the lease was silent as to the city's termination provisions (it only addresses termination by the landlord), and accordingly, she believes such a termination discussion would only be subject to customary landlord/tenant legal protocols. She asked if the School District would be willing to terminate the lease. Mr. Detterman said that would be a conversation for the District and not something he could answer. Discussion took place about modifications and the District's use of the building. Mr. Detterman said the District selected a portion of the building to use that had a separate access point. He noted that any modifications to the building must go to the District for approval. Bids go out under the School's name and the City reimburses the District for any costs. He said they are here to partner with the City. Mayor Stage said he does not want to fracture that partnership. He noted that 16 acres close to the center of town is hard to come by.

Mr. Sigrist stated that Council is going to have a presentation on the Community Center soon and he feels it is important to hear that before we do something with Brookpark. He believes we should have all the options complete before making a commitment with Brookpark. He said if the City could own the property, it would change the dynamics and the conversation. Mayor Stage said they made a commitment to our citizens with the passage of the ordinance in 2019.

Ms. Anderson stated that the $16,000.00 mentioned is for two pickleball courts. It does not take care of any safety issues or cost for a part-time person. Mayor Stage said the City has to take care of the parking lot and utilities anyway. Ms. Anderson said she needs to see an overall community benefit and she is not sure this answers those needs.

Mr. Holt said the current Building Division office may be crowded but it meets the needs. He said he wants to avoid an incremental takeover of the building. He feels like this is throwing good money after bad. He could consider building a new building on the site, but would only do that if there was a 50 year lease.

Ms. Burroughs stated that she was made aware that the YMCA at Urbancrest has indoor pickleball courts available. She said she wants to see a long-term comprehensive plan for the Brookpark building and land.

Ms. Anderson said she is not on board with spending $16,000.00 this year and need much more information before spending $1 million without knowing the community benefit.

Mr. Dew said he could be on board for using the gym for pickleball. However, the schools have never sold their land and he is concerned spending money on something that the City does not own or control.

Mr. Sigrist said we need a comprehensive plan. He said he could go either way on pickleball, but agrees with Mr. Holt that he doesn't want to open the door for other uses.

Mr. Holt said he is not going to feel pressured to say "yes" to pickleball because he sees it as an incremental takeover of the building. He said he is a fan of cancelling the lease and purchasing land that we own or obtain a long-term lease for the Brookpark property to build a new building on.

Ms. Houk said she doesn't want to spend money before we have a Master Plan for Parks & Recreation. She said housing staff also requires a long-range plan. She said when we disburse city department around the community, it is difficult for residents to know where to go.

Chair Berry allowed the public to share comments:

Mr. Rob Wilson said he believes there is room for three (3) pickleball courts in the gym. That would serve 48 people per hour, as it only takes 15 minutes per game. He said they are aware of all places available and this would be the only place to offer evening hours. He said this gym has plenty of room and other locations do not. He said the City could have a membership or leagues to offset costs. He said it is just going to sit there and cost the City money anyway. The gym should be used or part of the building for something.

Mr. Brian Courtney said he is a history loving guy and is hoping that the classrooms can be used for the arts, cooking, technical classes, a performing arts center, etc. He does not want to see any of it demolished. He said he understands that it is complicated when the City doesn't own the property, but feels strongly about saving the building and using it for a purpose.

In summary, Mr. Berry said he hears from Council's comments that if there is a long-term lease for this property, the conversation could be different. He suggested that the Mayor talk with the School District about a long-term lease in order to invest in it. He said Councils not willing to invest money for pickleball; they want a strategic plan for the use of the property.

Mayor Stage said they will draft an ordinance that speaks to the existing lease with some specificity. He said they will be using the gym this winter season for pickleball without an investment. They will use tape to create the courts.

Adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Tami K. Kelly, MMC
Clerk of Council

Ted Berry, Chair
Parks Committee