

Winnemac Park Advisory Council
Monthly Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, June 14, 2023 at 6pm

Attendees:

Cara Bognar
Paul Slomiski
Manny Vega
Lisa Ragucci
Dave Miretzky
Jessica Rio
Amy Williamson
Cathy Vega
Anne Sylvan
Deb Miretzky
Margaret O'Conor
Dan Skisak

Manny called the meeting to order at 6:00PM

New Business:

- National Fitness Campaign - Blue Cross Blue Shield Grants for City Fitness Court – Paul Slomiski
 - Paul is a neighbor and grant writer
 - He came across the National Fitness Campaign which is building outdoor fitness courts which are installed on a college campus, park, etc. and would be free for the public to use.
 - The outdoor gym is a 7-movement/7-minute system which allows you to use your own body weight to get a workout
 - It's very adaptable so anyone can use it regardless of age, skills or physical fitness level.
 - There is a mobile App for the fitness court which will allow you to sign up for classes. You can also scan the digital wall with your phone to obtain access to a library of free workouts to optimize your experience on the fitness court.
 - There is a new public art aspect to the fitness court. Cities can now choose a local artist to design the fitness court.
 - 15 Fitness Courts have already been installed in the suburbs of IL, but this would be the first one in Chicago
 - Paul thought the lakefront or Winnemac Park would be a suitable place to have this gym – especially since we share our campus with schools and the students as well as the community could benefit from it.
 - Blue Cross/Blue Shield is awarding grants for this Fitness Court
 - These grants are in the amount of \$25K-\$75K, although Paul thinks we could get one closer to the \$75K mark since it would be the first one in the city of Chicago, IL
 - The court would cost \$200K – we could look to the CPD for additional grants for the project
 - There was concern voiced about the size of the court and green space that would be lost.
 - There was also concern about trees that could be affected. Paul advised that he wants to put it in an area where no trees would be affected.
 - Dave mentioned that Paul should contact Amundsen High School as they may have interest/ideas for location.
 - Amy provided Paul with the contact information for the athletic director at Amundsen and Manny advised that we are attempting to obtain the information for the contact at the CPD
 - Link: www.nationalfitnesscampaign.com

- Top Tier Lessons - Community Partnership with College Student Athletes:
 - Founder: Cara Bognar. She is a D1 swimmer at the University of Illinois.
 - Top Tier Lessons matches college athletes with parents who want private lessons for their kids.
 - Their organization helps athletes gain opportunities while also giving back and engaging with the local community
 - Top Tier handles calendar, payments, venue, planning
 - Top Tier would need access to the venues (stadium/soccer field/basketball courts) and help getting the word out (flyers, website, social media, etc.).
 - Top Tier kicks off their partnerships by hosting a fundraiser where kids can come to hang out and play with the athletes.
 - The fundraising event would be hosted at our site, but Top Tier would provide insurance, food trucks, etc. and the profits from the fundraiser would go to the park.
 - Top Tier currently operates in the suburbs but would like to expand to Chicago by fall (August/September).
 - Amy mentioned that the stadium is owned/managed by Chicago Public Schools (athletics department) and that some of the facilities (including the pool and gyms) are in the schools and we don't always have access to them. Lisa mentioned that there are no lifeguards assigned to Winnemac so the pool is not accessible at this time.
 - Manny advised that he'd connect her with CPD point of contact (once obtained – in the process of trying to get this contact info.).
 - Link: toptierlessons.com

- Margaret recommended creating a strategic plan to make our intent known to others. There was also discussion about creating a survey to ascertain the priorities/concerns of the patrons of Winnemac Park.

Old Business:

- Establish 501c3 through Chicago Parks Foundation
 - There was a donation of \$250.00. \$75.00 was taken out of that to establish our partnership with the Chicago Parks Foundation for WPAC/Friends of Winnemac Park
 - Manny motioned to open a bank account through the Chicago Parks Foundation at Fifth Third bank for WPAC with current account signers being:
 - Manuel Vega, President and David Miretzky, Vice President.
 - Deb seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion was approved.
 - Dan asked who has control of the money and what it's used for. It was explained that we are reinvigorating the WPAC and that the money would be used for operating expenses. WPAC has control of the money and it would eventually be used for items the park needs and/or events.
 - Deb asked questions about the job description for Treasurer and advised that she may be interested
- Establish the dates and times of the upcoming meetings:
 - The following are the dates for the upcoming meetings:
August 9th, September 13th, October 11th and November 8th
 - Manny motioned to approve the above future meeting dates. All were in favor.
- Update on Proposed Website: winnemacpac.org
 - Anne was unable to make the meeting but emailed information identifying two companies to host the WPAC website.
 - Margaret mentioned communicating with the community through social media to reach more community members. Cathy and Amy located two Winnemac Park Advisory Council Facebook accounts – there was a group and a page with the same name. Cathy will reach out to Mike Vacala to confirm if he is the owner of either and if we can get administrative privileges.

- 4th of July fireworks in Winnemac Park
 - Manny suggested we should do something around the 4th of July. Fundraising and creating community awareness for the WPAC.
 - Margaret mentioned that we should take a stance and put out a statement or talk to the press. It may be a terrific opportunity to socialize that there is an active PAC and that we are concerned about the impact on the facilities. Manny mentioned reaching out to Alex Hernandez from Block Club Chicago if we would like to put out a statement.
 - Amy mentioned that without bathrooms, there are individuals that use the nature areas as restrooms.
 - Amy thinks the message communicated should focus on the preservation of the nature areas, fields and overall sanitation.
 - Amy volunteered to work on a WPAC position statement.
 - Dave mentioned that he went to a Police meeting (Area 3, District 20, Beat 2032) and he asked them to be sure to clear the park after it's closed and then clear it again if necessary.
 - Amy noted the need for more garbage cans in the park in general, but especially for the holiday weekends.
 - Lisa reached out to the CPD after getting emails from Deb and Cathy and that the CPD garbage cans were stolen from the location that houses them and it may not be possible to get more before July 4th.
 - Amy suggested handing out trash bags and asking community members to clean up after themselves and take their trash with them.
 - There was also a mention of asking the Alderman if he would sponsor port-o-johns for the park for the night of the 4th of July. We also discussed asking him to post our statement on his website, in the newsletter or on social media so that it would reach more people.

Updates:

- Winnemac Park TIF Update: Manny Vega
 - There is no project update yet.
 - Maria Stone advised that they hired a consultant to work on the design of the field and are working on internally hiring planning staff for the rest of the project. Maria advised that as soon as they have a design to share, they will reach out to the WPAC for community input.
 - We will continue to monitor progress with the Chicago Park District to ensure that the project moves forward to get it completed by the end of 2024.
- Keep Winnemac Green: Deb
 - There are no current updates and Deb mentioned that this no longer needs to be an agenda item.
- Prairie / Natural Areas Team – Amy Williamson:
 - Deb mentioned the fact that there are 1 million dollars in funds from the City of Chicago to support saving the ash trees.
 - The money from the city isn't earmarked for a specific location, but it's suspected that most of the money is being spent in the south and west neighborhoods.
 - Amy has been referred to Maria Hadden (Alderperson for the 49th Ward) when making inquiries about the project
 - Deb shared that Heart of Lincoln Square neighborhood association has a Save Your Ash campaign to address inoculating the infested trees.
 - Lisa mentioned that there are no Ash trees within Winnemac Park.
 - The trees on the parkways surrounding Winnemac Park have been addressed by the Save Your Ash campaign.
- Winnemac Park Unleashed
 - No update, but Deb and Cathy are monitoring the situation.
- Park Supervisor: Lisa Ragucci
 - Winnemac Park now has a permanent hourly instructor – Omar
 - The NeverEnding Story is being shown in Winnemac Park this Saturday, June 17th at Dusk

- The Toddlers, Tunes and Turtles event will be held in the nature oasis of Winnemac Park on June 28, 2023 from 5-7PM. There will be live animals from 5-6:30PM and family friendly music and hands-on nature exploration from 6:15-7PM.
- July 17, 2023 there will be a dance group performing in Winnemac
- Manny mentioned National Night Out – Lisa advised that she hasn't been approached about National Night Out (August 1, 2023) yet.
- Facility & Grounds: Anne Sylvan
 - Lisa advised that the Fall and Spring clean-ups and the upkeep of the Children's Garden were great.

Announcements:

- Documentation to ChiParks for board members:
 - Manny reminded the board members that they would need to fill out the adult volunteer form and Biometrics form (biometrics fingerprinting is required for all board members).
- Edits to the WPAC By-laws:
 - This is still in process. The approval of the by-laws was deferred to the next meeting.

Manny: Motion to Adjourn - 7:31PM. Dave seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion carried.

Next Monthly Meeting: The next WPAC meeting will be Wednesday, August 9, 2023 at 6PM in the meeting room under Jorndt Stadium (enter on the East side of the stadium)