

MINUTES OF SPECIAL BOARD MEETING BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS JULY 1, 2020

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Park Commissioners was called to order by President Patinkin at 7:00 p.m. via remote access by Zoom video. Attendance was taken and the following were:

Present: Antokal, Caron, Cohen, Lapin, Patinkin (5)
Absent: None (0)

And there was a quorum in attendance. Also present was Jeff Nehila, Secretary/Executive Director.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Two public comments via email regarding renaming Mitchell Park were received prior to the meeting. Director Nehila read emails from Steve Mitchell and James C. Mitchell Jr. which will be attached and made a part of the minutes of this meeting.

ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO RECOMMEND A NEW NAME FOR MITCHELL PARK, TO PROPOSE OTHER WAYS TO HONOR JAMES MITCHELL AND TO DEVELOP EDUCATIONAL PROPOSALS TO ACCURATELY TEACH THE HISTORY OF THE PERIOD IN COLLABORATION WITH THE DEERFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY, DEERFIELD PUBLIC LIBRARY, VILLAGE OF DEERFIELD, WEST DEERFIELD TOWNSHIP, SCHOOL DISTRICT 109, HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 113, REPRESENTATION FROM THE DISTRICT 113 SOCIAL STUDIES DEPARTMENT, GALE GAND, GRAHAM AMBROSE AND RESIDENTS FROM THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE

Vice-President Caron commented that when the Park Board was asked to look at this issue again, she felt that education was the primary direction to go in, not just a school curriculum but also community education. As she has read 100's of emails and digital media posts, she is more convinced than ever that school education and community education is the major direction we should be going. Taking down a sign with one name and putting up a sign with another name isn't going to make Deerfield more inclusive and more diverse. But having discussions about the past and how people reacted then, what we can learn from that and what we could learn going forward as a community is the direction she would like us to go in. Things have gotten really nasty. Showing how we are an inclusive community is also showing acceptance and respect for people who have differing viewpoints. She would like to see this committee move forward with that in mind.

Commissioner Antokal stated that he didn't know James Mitchell personally. After much reading and research, he has come to believe over the time of his tenure involvement as an elected official of the park district that he acted with the best intentions for the park district and the community as a whole. Was he a flawed individual? Who isn't in some respect or other? Was he a visionary who saw what was needed for the future of the park district and the village to grow? It certainly looks that way. The board has received several hundred communications regarding a name change for Mitchell Park. His hope is that is a strong signal that we are on the precipice of real change. We are confronted with, right now, global change not just that of a name change. Systemic racism, white supremacy, police brutality, given all of that and what the staff, board members and colleagues have gone through, he complimented the outstanding staff at the park district, because while all of this has been going on, the press, the news media, the phone calls, the emails, the constant interruptions, they have quietly and professionally been dealing with a pandemic. Guess what? The pool opens next week, the golf course is already open and busy, the parks are in great shape, Jewett Park had the final role of sod go in this week, the skatepark is once again going to be a special place, the Patty Turner Center is gearing up and will resume activities soon, Sachs Recreation Center is going to be opening next week with limitations and have been operating with virtual fitness classes, (showing the creativity of that staff), add to this the tennis courts, playgrounds and the basketball courts. So aside from adding my voice to those who are now in favor of enjoining an advisory committee to study and make recommendations

regarding a name change for Mitchell Park, Commissioner Antokal stated that he will be working on making suggestions to his colleagues on the park board at future workshop meetings, as to how we become more involved to work on that global inclusive change. It may have been Jim Baldwin that said, “we will not see the end of racism until we change as a society.”

Treasurer Cohen asked how many people should be on this committee. He commented that the Park Board will be selecting the committee members. An application form was prepared by Director Nehila and reviewed by the park board members. The application will be posted on the website. A period of time will be given to submit an application and the board will hold a Special Meeting to review the applications and make a decision. He stated that his personal opinion is that you can't have a committee with 50 people. The larger the committee the less that gets done. Treasurer Cohen recommended limiting the number of committee members to 25. There are already 9 committee members from community organizations and 16 members of the community would make 25 members. Do we limit it to residents?

President Patinkin commented that the body's politic will select their own representatives plus Gale Gand and Graham Ambrose makes 10 members. Alec Lopata forwarded an application to Director Nehila and President Patinkin, based on his day job, a more honed-in application for potential applicants that would presumably provide a better opportunity to let whoever is choosing these other members to get a good insight into the applicants. President Patinkin asked Director Nehila to share this application with commissioners and maybe it could be used to tweak the district's application. He commented that in terms of the number of members, he's not sure if the park board or the core group of the advisory select the other representatives or the body politic make recommendations for the other representatives and the park board has the final say. This is for the board to discuss.

Treasurer Cohen stated that the committee needs to be a diverse committee. He doesn't want a group where all the members have the same mindset to control what happens.

Vice-President Caron stated that she was under the impression that if this is set up as an advisory of the park district the park board would choose the members. She stated that Director Nehila had recommended matching the number of body politic representatives with the same number of members of the community. That would be 18 total members.

President Patinkin commented that he agrees we should avoid a huge number. His personal opinion is probably along the lines of what Director Nehila suggested not what Treasurer Cohen suggested or somewhere in between.

Director Nehila commented that part of the Citizen Input policy dictates that the board selects the advisory applicants. He suggested staying with that policy. Staff will collect the applications and submit them to the board with recommendations. The form sent by Alec is relatively close to what we use. We don't ask a lot of demographic information. Director Nehila doesn't feel getting more demographic information is necessary unless the board does. Director Nehila is hoping to finalize the form and get it on the website as soon as possible.

Commissioner Antokal commented that he likes Director Nehila's reasoning and doesn't want the board to forget that the 8 different government bodies are also members of the community at large. They have been elected and will be selected amongst themselves. He recommended a 15-member committee.

President Patinkin asked what the response has been from the body's politics. The Deerfield Historical Society will be meeting on July 8 to select a representative. SD#113 already has 2 teachers from the Social

Studies Dept. that are interested. President Patinkin feels that only one representative from the Social Studies Dept. should be involved.

Commissioners agreed that we should continue with the process that has been used successfully over the years.

Commissioner Lapin asked if we could be ready to review and vote on a committee at the July board meeting. Director Nehila responded that the only way to do that would be to have the application posted tomorrow and due in one week. Treasurer Cohen commented that if 100 applications were received there wouldn't be time to review them and recommends against it.

President Patinkin asked if there was currently any topic scheduled for the August workshop? Director Nehila responded not at this time. President Patinkin asked if the different body's politic provided any indication of a date for selection of a representative. Director Nehila responded not at this time. They might have to go to an official board meeting for an official appointment.

Director Nehila commented that if you have 8 body politic members, plus two original member from the group already appointed makes 10. We could add 7 community members for a committee of 17. Vice-President Caron asked if the 7 community members would be Deerfield residents. Commissioners responded that they all feel that the 7 community members should be Deerfield residents.

Director Nehila stated that one of the agencies might choose to appoint a staff member instead of a board member and ask how the board collectively felt about that. Commissioners agreed that they can voice their preference that the representative be an elected official but can't force them to do that and they should still be represented.

Vice-President Caron expressed concern about the committee being able have major discussion and come up with thorough recommendations by the September 17, 2020 deadline and asked if that date could be a status update instead. She doesn't want the committee to say they didn't have an adequate amount of time to complete the goals.

Commissioner Antokal asked if the board would be establishing a chair or co-chair or leave that up to the committee. Vice-President Caron commented that all of the other advisory committees are led by our staff and she feels this committee should be as well. Director Nehila will serve on the committee.

Commissioners discussed which board member would be part of the committee. After discussion, Commissioners agreed that President Patinkin should serve on the committee. President Patinkin stated that he would be happy and honored to serve.

Director Nehila will have the application posted on the website on July 2 with a deadline of Monday, July 27, 2020. This will provide him enough time to forward the applications to the board and make recommendations to the board.

Once committee members are selected and meetings begin, it will need to be pressed upon members that they can speak to the media for themselves but not on behalf of the park district.

Director Nehila noted that it may take time to get the meeting schedule set.

Director Nehila noted that also needed will be parameters for the renaming of the park to help the committee.

Vice-President Caron stated that the guide for the board and the committee is that we want to get this right. We are trying to right a wrong in our history and need to be correct in what we do and need to be thoughtful and take the time to consider all aspects. She hopes those applying for the committee will come with that attitude.

Commissioner Lapin stated the most important part of this committee is that everyone goes in with an open mind. Based on the emails the Park Board has received there are a lot of minds not open.

Vice-President Caron commented that being inclusive and tolerant includes being inclusive and tolerant of other opinions. She would like to see this group work together and bring the town together in a meaningful solution to this issue.

Other

Stimulus Money

Director Nehila reported that he received word from IAPD that there may be stimulus money left in the CARES Act distributed to certain counties in Illinois. Staff is collaborating with other park districts and putting together a request for funding and assistance. Staff will keep commissioners posted.

Board Meeting Time

Treasurer Cohen suggested changing the board meeting time to 7:00 p.m. as long as we are doing Zoom meetings.

Director Nehila noted that in-person meetings can resume if desired. Commissioners were not comfortable with holding in-person meetings and would like the July board meeting to be on Zoom.

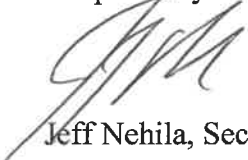
Motion made by Commissioner Lapin, seconded by Vice-President Caron to adjourn the Special Meeting at 7:58 p.m. Roll call vote as follows:

AYES: Lapin, Caron, Antokal, Cohen, Patinkin (5)

NAYS: None (0)

Motion passed in a roll call vote.

Respectfully submitted,



Jeff Nehila, Secretary

Jeff Nehila

From: Steve Mitchell <smitchell@noisebarriers.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 18, 2020 7:39 PM
To: Jeff Nehila
Cc: Dave Mitchell; Billbenefits@aol. com; james c mitchell jr
Subject: Re-naming of James C Mitchell Park

To The Members of the Deerfield Park District Board

My name is Steve Mitchell. I am the 3rd of four sons of James C. Mitchell

I am writing to you to provide some perspective on why this park was named after our father. We do not believe it had anything to do with our father's desire to keep low income housing out of Deerfield nor to prevent any member of the black community community from moving to Deerfield.

In the mid 1950's Deerfield had less than 3,500 citizens. The School Board and the Park Board were both struggling to find the monies available to handle the growth that was happening and projected to happen. The schools found it difficult to purchase land, the park district had money for land but not money for recreational facilities. Children had to walk to school as there were no busses to transport us. The DPD under our father's leadership came us with a creative solution. The DPD would buy the land and maintain the land since they had equipment. Enough land was deeded to the schools for the footprint of their school buildings. In exchange the DPD had access to the school facilities for activities. Many schools in Deerfield are on land the DPD provided.

Since there were no busses the School Board deemed it necessary to have every school within one half mile of every resident. The Park District agreed so this master plan developed. This innovative agreement saved Deerfield taxpayers a great deal of money over the years. This land was being pursued by the Park District before the developer ever showed up because it fit that plan. There was a lot of other land available just across Wilmot road and where Caruso school is that could have been developed. The Park District was merely proceeding with their plans. They never imagined the huge court case would follow. In this court case the The Supreme Court of the US sided with the DPD that the DPD had the right to acquire this land thru Eminent Domain. This was not about denying any people access to Deerfield.

The Mitchell pool until just a couple of years ago was aluminum. It lasted almost 50 years. Find a concrete pool that lasts that long. This was innovative and again saved taxpayers a lot of money.

The tennis courts at Mitchell Park are built on top of water storage tanks owned by the Deerfield. This was another innovative solution to a funding issue Jim Mitchell pioneered. The park provided land for the storage tanks so Deerfield didn't have to purchase land. In exchange Deerfield paid for the tennis courts so the park district saved that cost. This is creative thinking and management.

To suggest he was racially motivated is just wrong. And people should be ashamed of themselves for thinking this.

Our father served on the Deerfield Park District Board for 16 years, 11 as President. He spent countless hours away from his wife and children to dedicate himself to building a better Deerfield.

He had a park named after him by a community grateful for his service. He deserved it then and he still does.

Respectfully Submitted,

Steve Mitchell
s.mitchell@noisebarriers.com

Jeff Nehila

From: james c mitchell jr <1557birdwatching@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, June 27, 2020 8:08 AM
To: james mitchell Jr
Subject: 'Housing Is Everybody's Problem'

<https://placesjournal.org/article/housing-is-everybodys-problem/#.XvcxaM-9zKc.mailto>

Where does any one start to digest the significance of the Deerfield contribution to this discussion beginning in 1959 and smoldering to recently.

This biography of Milgram is informative and has a significant bibliography. Coincidentally, the author currently lives in a community, Ruth Lampton lived in.

The Zoom recording the Deerfield Park District recorded contained a summarized list of James Mitchell's contributions to Deerfield not as a social visionary but as a dedicated ELECTED servant in Deerfield.

Not for profit or personal gain but to provide the best public service according to law with personal integrity!

That cannot be said of the press, the resident complainants and others who had leadership roles in various capacities in Deerfield.

I believe the Deerfield Park District Board did the best they could, alone!

Current events outside of Deerfield was stampeding a rush to judgment forced upon the Deerfield Park District for the wrong reasons and the threat of unwarranted community anarchy if they did not respond with demands.

EXTORTION, left the Deerfield Park Board little choice but to remove James Mitchell's name to protect the Village of Deerfield from further selfish stupidity regardless of how well intentioned.

THEY, the DPD BOARD, retained the community integrity with sincerity, recognizing James Mitchell's legacy for the current park district's programs and leadership in the continuing success of the Village of Deerfield.

The Treaty of Deerfield, the appellate court decision, explains it all, truthfully for all, especially the media and press who screwed everybody for a buck and false journalism recognition.

Jim