

DRAKE NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING MEETING
PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND TRAILS SUB-COMMITTEE
Thursday, April 16, 2009 at 7:00pm

- I. **Welcome and Introductions**
- II. **Parks Department General Operations – Kevin Moran**
- III. **Drake Park Operation and Maintenance – Mike Gaul**
- IV. **Witmer Park Operation and Maintenance – Scott Wallace**

Next meeting will be Thursday, May 21st at 7:00pm
The meeting topic will be Drake Area Beautification

MEETING NOTES:

General Parks Discussion

Kevin Moran opened the meeting giving a brief overview of the Parks Department and discussing the recent staff changes. He indicated that there were four Parks Planners on staff, one for each Council Ward. Kevin is the Parks Planner responsible for Ward 1, where Witmer and Drake Park are located. There are also Horticulture Specialists assigned to the Parks to oversee the operation and maintenance. Mike Gaul is assigned to Drake Park and Scott Wallace is assigned to Witmer Park. Mike and Scott have replaced Teva Dawson who is now assigned to Gray's Lake Park. It was suggested that the DNA should consider a newsletter article on these recent staff changes.

Kevin added that the Parks Department is moving toward having master plans prepared for the parks as a way of planning and implementing major improvements. Typically master plans are up to a year long process with public input meetings. Improvements will typically follow the master plan within 2-3 years as funding becomes available. The floods of 2008 have delayed many of the capital improvement projects in parks across the City. Neither Witmer nor Drake Park have a master plan prepared and it is uncertain when master plans may be conducted for these two parks.

The idea of private fundraising was brought up to do master plans or other improvements in both Witmer and Drake Parks. Kevin mentioned there were a limited number of private fundraising sources, he mentioned *KaBoom* as one. *KaBoom* is a national non-profit that helps to build playgrounds and skateparks. Private fundraising may be a goal for the neighborhood association to have in the plan to pursue as opportunities arise. Another idea was to solicit design professions to do master plan work pro-bono, Kevin said that any donated service for design or construction in City owned Parks would have to be approved by the City's Legal Department.

The City Council has recently decided to privatize the parks maintenance duties. A+ Lawn and Landscaping is responsible for mowing and trimming services in the two parks. Bojo's Carpet and Tile Care is responsible for the maintenance of park shelters and restrooms.

It was noted that there are no bike racks at either park. Parks staff will consider adding bike racks.

The issue of pocket parks was briefly discussed. Kevin indicated that there was no minimum size and that pocket parks were typically considered on a case-by-case basis.

Watering of the plantings within Kingman Boulevard are a challenge for the neighborhood. Parks staff mentioned that Des Moines Water Works can provide a meter box to the neighborhood, which can be connected to any fire hydrant to supply water. The meter box then tracks the usage and the neighborhood is charged for the water used.

Drake Park Discussion

It was mentioned that Drake Park seemed to be getting more and more use over the past few years and that more families with kids were moving into the neighborhood. This is creating a need for play equipment for all ages. The idea of “natural play” elements was mentioned as a possible addition to Drake Park.

The basket ball courts at Drake Park get a lot of use throughout the year. There are currently no nets on the hoops, but Mike indicated that he would look into getting nets put up. On occasion those who use the basketball courts will park in the Cottage Grove Presbyterian Church parking lot and cause problems such as drinking, fighting and loud noise. When this occurs neighbors are encouraged to call their NBSD Sergeant or the Police.

Witmer Park Discussion

The shelter at Witmer Park was recently torn down due to poor structural condition. It was deemed that the shelter had become unsafe and a potential safety hazard to the public. Kevin indicated that there currently isn't funding in place to replace the shelter, but it will be considered in the future. The shelter site will be graded and seeded for the time being. The fountain/aerator in the pond was powered by the electrical system of the shelter and will have to be replaced now that the shelter has been removed.

Storm drainage issues are a problem during heavy rain events in Witmer Park basin. Heavy rains carry sediment that collects in a detention basin prior to reaching the pond. One idea was to plant more native plantings and/or bioswells in this area, if appropriate, to assist in storm water management. The storm water issues fall under the direction of the Public Works Department and should be discussed by the Infrastructure committee in phase 2 of the neighborhood planning process.

It was also mentioned that the road leading up to the shelter was in poor condition and that the road was part of the larger trail network within the park. Parks staff will take a look at the road to evaluate the condition and decide what the appropriate course of action is.

Ice skating will continue to be allowed at Witmer as long as the ice is thick enough. If deemed safe for skating, the Parks staff will clear the snow off the ice and put out a sign allowing skating.

Community gardens were briefly discussed. If there is enough interest among neighborhood residents, Scott mentioned that one could possibly be established at Witmer. Kevin V. should discuss this further with Scott.