

CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Restructuring of Boards & Commissions

January 12, 2009 – 6:15 p.m.

Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers

City Council Present: Mayor Ferrini, Assistant Mayor Blalock, Councilors Novelline Clayburgh, Dwyer, Smith, Kennedy, Hejtmank, Pantelakos and Spear,

Officials Present: John P. Bohenko, City Manager; Peirce Island Committee members Kent LaPage, Harold Whitehouse; Recreation Board members Jacqueline Cali-Pitts, Carl Diemer, Patrick McCartney, Kathy Seigel, Elaine Syracuse and Dianne Kirby, Deputy City Clerk

I. Call to Order

At 6:20 p.m., Mayor Ferrini called the work session to order and welcomed the Peirce Island Committee and Recreation Board to this meeting.

II. Discussion and Questions

Councilor Dwyer stated that the Committee has drafted an ordinance for the Recreation, Parks and Open Space Board. She said this ordinance came out of several citizens groups asking the Council to set up a committee for the protection of open spaces, the City Council not wanting to create a committee for every situation and the increasing interest in people thinking about recreation in our community. She said as a Council thinking about how to address all these issues, Councilors Pantelakos, Smith and herself were charged with looking at all the committees and coming up with a strategy of how we might address this. She stated with the idea of trying to elevate the importance of recreation and open space issues and not reducing people's participation on various committees, they came up with a general concept for a super board. She said a recreation, parks and open space board would be charged with addressing those issues that would report back to the City Council. She stated that this committee would be made up of representatives from a series of existing committees and some new committees. She said this committee would be made up of the chairs of the Peirce Island Committee, the Recreation Board, a new Recreation, Parks and Open Space Committee, the Dog Committee and the Cemetery Committee plus additional members designated by the Mayor. She stated that this Committee would assume duties as a "super board" with sub-committees set up by the Mayor.

III. Questions and Discussion

Elaine Syracuse, Recreation Board asked why the School Board representative has been dropped from this "super board". Councilor Pantelakos stated that no one has been dropped. Councilor Spear asked if the School Board was left out of the Recreation Board or the Recreation, Parks and Open Space Board. Elaine Syracuse, Recreation Board said the main board.

Councilor Spear asked how you would determine who would be the chair of this board and sub committees. Mayor Ferrini stated what has happened in the past on these boards is that someone would become the chair and would stay the chair for years. He said we would incorporate a process where chairs were looked at and this can be discussed more deeply at a later date. He said this is a valid point to note. He said the idea is to have an understandable and expectable process.

Kent LaPage, Peirce Island Committee stated the largest amount of open space is in the Schools. He said he thinks someone from the Planning Board should be included on this committee. He said we may be eliminating education and experience from the board by eliminating a Planning Board member. He said he is concerned that Peirce Island Committee was overlooked for discussion on this issue. Mayor Ferrini stated it is the Council's intention to make this an inclusive process and we will certainly listen to everyone's comments. Councilor Smith stated this will not replace the Recreation Board or the Peirce Island Committee. He said this is a separate committee. Councilor Dwyer stated we would have the "super board" along with the present committees. She further said this would allow the Mayor to think about membership and issues coming up.

Councilor Kennedy said if every board was going to stay as it is then the School Board member on the Recreation Board will have a say. She said any issues can be brought through their representative to the "super board". She further said the Planning Board would have the final say on projects so they will also have a say. She said we should concentrate on not making this committee too big. She asked why we can't just have the boards we have now and invite experts in when the need arises instead of creating a whole "super board".

Jacqueline Cali-Pitts, Recreation Board stated the Recreation Board and the School Board have a lot of history. She would like to see a flow-chart with the number of members on the Peirce Island Committee and the Recreation Board. She stated that the Recreation Board is strictly advisory and has no ability to make policies or plans. She said this "super board" is going to get a lot of committees together with their own agenda coming into one committee and try to come out with a consensus. She feels this is very dangerous. Mayor Ferrini stated that all committees are advisory in nature. Councilor Dwyer said the Recreation Board is an advisory board and we are not changing the membership on that board. She said the idea is to create a committee to handle issues, talk them out and come up with a plan prior to their coming to the Council. Jacqueline Cali-Pitts, Recreation Board said this needs to be run slowly.

Harold Whitehouse, Peirce Island Committee stated that he takes tasks seriously and he can't understand why we are doing this as the committees are doing fine as they are. He stated that many committee members are leaving because of this. He said he would like to see the Peirce Island Master Plan completed.

Patrick McCartney, Recreation Board invited the Councilors to a Recreation Board meeting and see what they are doing. Councilor Pantelakos stated that she served on this board and she has seen when this committee has needed to interact with other committees/boards and had to wait weeks to get an answer back. She said this is what the "super board" would do. Councilor Smith agrees with Councilor Pantelakos. He said these small committees would

have to wait months to get information back from other committees. He said he does not want to change the Recreation Board, but we have to make things more efficient and move things along faster. Councilor Hejtmanek said he does not see the little committees being less in power than they are now. He said they would just have the upper advisory board to go to. Councilor Spear stated he agrees. He said this will keep everyone that wants to be involved, involved and still move things along.

Kent LaPage, Peirce Island Committee stated the largest single savings to the City was the combining of the Recreation and Athletic Director which expanded the sports programs for grades 9-12. He said he thinks this should be expanded to encompass grades K-12. He further stated he does not want to see another layer of bureaucracy. He said the committees have worked extremely well together and the issue of time to get information from other committees is not correct. He stated that we usually have an answer by the next meeting. He stated this "super board" will take away the relationships between already great bonds with other boards. Councilor Dwyer stated there is nothing to prevent the Recreation Board and Peirce Island Committee from interaction together. She stated there is a lot of value in this.

Councilor Kennedy suggested we took the four (4) members appointed at large off and had a meeting of the committees headed by a Council representative. Councilor Dwyer stated it is a possibility. She said the idea of adding the additional members was so when the job we need to handle is large it would give the Mayor the opportunity to add additional people to the committee. Councilor Kennedy suggested taking out the four (4) members and have members from each committee. She said this would give credence to what she is hearing that the people want. She said they want to feel their committee is important, which we all know they are. She said if the Mayor or a committee needs extra experts to come they can be brought in as guests.

Assistant Mayor Blalock said he did not want to limit the participation of committees and their effectiveness at all. He said what he is hearing is we are going to preserve the present committee structure, but give them a coordination avenue so when there is overlapping issues that become cumbersome, they can be ironed out at the "super board" and get to the Council quicker. He further stated he would only support any change if this is what the change is about.

Mayor Ferrini read the Action Plan for Economic Development Plan. He stated that is all we are trying to create.

Carl Diemer, Recreation Board stated the success of the Recreation Department has been because of the people involved in it and the focus they have on it. He said the scope of their responsibility is large. He said the Recreation Department runs over 70 plus programs and this doesn't even include the school programs. He said there is a lot of planning and responsibility in that area. He stated he is apprehensive of taking on dogs, the dog park and restoring cemeteries as they have a completely different scope from recreation, parks and open spaces. Councilor Dwyer stated that Mr. Diemer's point is the same as they have wrestled with. She said the reason to add other members is to add their expertise and balance. She stated this is why we added those four (4) extra members.

Jacqueline Cali-Pitts, Recreation Board asked if the Recreation Director would still be considered staff. City Manager Bohenko stated that all Department Heads report directly to him.

Councilor Novelline Clayburgh stated she agrees with Ms. Cali-Pitts concerning the organizational structure and what each member would do and how it would all play together. She said we need that. She stated she worries about having another level to stall or prolong issues. She stated she would like more information on this prior to voting on it.

Mayor Ferrini stated that he appreciated having more food for thought. He stated we have to reformulate this and he is sure we will.

IV. Adjournment

At 7:00 p.m., Mayor Ferrini closed the meeting.

Respectfully submitted by:

Dianne M. Kirby, Deputy City Clerk