



COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE Minutes March 12, 2024

Attendance and Opening

The Community Preservation Committee convened a meeting on March 12, 2024, with Mr. Brody leading in the absence of the usual Chair or Vice-Chair.

Dan Brody, Acting Chair

Judy Weber, Member

Martin Smargiassi, Member

Buzz Dunker, Member

Jennifer Molinsky, Member

Mollie Hutchings, Staff

Spears Park Community Garden Pre-Proposal Discussion

The new business item discussed was a pre-proposal for the Tasun Community Gardens at Spears Park, which was presented by Luis Perez Demorizi, Director of Parks and Open Space for the city, and Assistant Director Ahron Lerman. The proposal process was explained by Mr. Brody, noting that a pre-proposal is first presented to the committee members, followed by a public hearing if the committee invites the applicants to submit a full proposal. There was discussion about whether the meeting was open to public comment, with Mr. Brody clarifying that public testimony would be taken only when the full proposal comes before the committee.

Mr. Perez Demorizi introduced the Spears Park Community Garden project, which is aimed at filling gaps in open space resources in the city. The project has received support from the Friends of Tasun Community Gardens group and some funding through state earmarks, grants, and the allocation of ARPA funds. The project is currently in development and has been in progress for a few years. Ms. Hutchings clarified that the Parks Department had applied specifically for construction funding, as they already completed their design.

Design Presentation

Mr. Lerman discussed the design for the community garden. He highlighted the area's history and its current informal use. The new plans would install inclusive garden beds, stone dust pathways, and yard hydrants. He also emphasized the importance of maintaining a safe, clean, and pest-free garden, which would be enclosed with fencing. Mr. Lerman also shared that the raised beds would be finished with a special, sustainable burning technique, which is part of a collaboration with an Eagle Scout project.

Mr. Lerman also mentioned plans for the following amenities:

- a small storage container
- benches/a picnic table,
- a bike rack, and
- pollinator plants to buffer noise
- a community notice board and a welcome sign to make the space inviting and community-oriented.

Mr. Lerman discussed the approved park layout concept and ongoing design tweaks, including changes in garden bed orientation and reducing the size of the fenced-off area. The team had worked with the City Forestry Department to identify problematic trees, leading to design changes. The revised design was currently in progress.

Budget Presentation

The budget for the project, as presented by Mr. Perez Demorizi, was estimated at \$349,519, with allocations for staff time and planning. The request for the CPA is \$150,000. Mr. Perez Demorizi confirmed the city's maintenance department's involvement in the upkeep, and the reliance on volunteers and gardeners to maintain their plots.

Discussion

Ms. Weber, Mr. Perez Demorizi, and Mr. Lerman discussed the design of a community garden. They clarified that raised beds would be used to maintain tidiness and aesthetics, and that a fence would be constructed around the garden for protection. Ms. Molinsky expressed support for the project and asked about the management of pesticides and other environmental concerns. Mr. Perez Demorizi responded they would rely on a strong Friends group to manage those concerns, and also referenced a handbook that is used for the operation of the existing community garden in Nahanton Park.

Ms. Hutchings clarified that there is no public comment on the pre-proposal but noted to anyone attending that committee members have received letters and emails regarding the project.

The committee voted unanimously (5-0) to invite the Parks Department to submit a full proposal.

As a side note and in answer to Ms. Weber's question, Mr. Perez Demorizi shares that construction on the Gath Pool (another Parks Department project that received CPA funding) is going well, with no construction hiccups and no major supply chain issues to date.

Overview of Finances at a Glance

Ms. Hutchings presented the revised Finances at a Glance Spreadsheet. Changes included City Council's approval of the Second Church in Newton and an updated state match number. She also mentioned that the Coalition expected the State match for the next fiscal year to be below 20% for the first time in a long time. Ms. Hutchings noted that this would not affect this year's budget, but would be reflected in the FY25 budget section of the front page.

Minutes and Miscellaneous Items

Mr. Brody then discussed the presence of three sets of minutes in the packet, leading to a discussion about minor proofing edits. Ms. Molinsky pointed out that a sentence in the November minutes seemed vague and Ms. Hutchings agreed to revise it for clarity. The January minutes were held for discussion in the next meeting, while the November and February minutes were approved. The team also discussed an upcoming webinar from the Community Preservation Coalition, with the exact date TBD. There was a discussion about two presenters, Mr. Perez Demorizi and Mr. Lerman, and their roles in ongoing projects, with the team expressing satisfaction with their performance. Mr. Brody proposed a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Ms. Molinsky and approved by the rest.