

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

The Public Works Committee of the City of Raleigh met in regular session on Thursday, December 11, 2008, at 8:00 a.m., in the City Council Chamber, Room 201 of the Raleigh Municipal Building, Avery C. Upchurch Government Complex, 222 West Hargett Street, Raleigh, North Carolina with the following present:

Committee

Mr. Stephenson, Presiding
Ms. Baldwin (arrived late)
Mr. Koopman (arrived late)

Staff

Public Works Director Dawson
Deputy City Attorney Botvinick
Transit Program Manager Eatman
Senior Parks Planner Shouse
Parks Design/Development Administrator

Bailey

Assistant Parks Superintendent Hisler

These are summary minutes unless otherwise indicated.

Following a brief delay, in order to establish forum, with the arrival of Mr. Koopman, Mr. Stephenson called the meeting to order at 8:10 a.m. and Mr. Koopman led in the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance; after which the following items were discussed with action taken as shown.

Item #07-44 – Strickland Road Park Master Plan. This item was previously discussed during the November 13, 2008 Public Works Committee meeting and held over for further discussion. Between the November 13 meeting and today’s meeting the Public Works Committee conducted a field trip to the Leesville Road Park site to gather information on the proposed dog park to be located there. Senior Park Planner David Shouse, summarized the following memorandum dated December 5, 2008 included in the agenda:

On October 18, 2008 the Raleigh Parks Recreation and Greenway Advisory Board (PRGAB) voted unanimously to forward the Strickland Road Park Draft Master Plan to City Council for approval with the amendment of a 20 foot increased setback from the west property line and the paved trail and off-leash dog area.

City Council was presented with PRGAB’s recommendation and the Draft Master Plan at their November 4, 2008 meeting. The Council recommended the plan go to the Public Works Committee for review of an alternative location for the off-leash dog area.

Prior to the November 13, 2008 Public Works Meeting the Committee requested staff review the Leesville Community Park as an alternative location for an off-leash dog area. At the meeting the Committee was presented with analysis of the Leesville site and information prepared during the 2007 master planning process for the park. This included a copy of the Leesville Master Plan, the landscape architects assessment of an alternative dog park site on Leesville that was considered, and the PRGAB Program

Statement on Off Leash Dog Areas. (Clerk's note: these documents were attached to the memorandum for back up information.)

After Staff's presentation to the Committee on November 13 public comment was taken. One gentleman wished for the Strickland site to have only neighborhood elements in the plan and did not feel the dog park was an appropriate neighborhood element. Several other residents in attendance expressed their desire for and the benefits of an off-leash dog area. These residents, when asked, did not have a preference whether the off-leash dog park was located at the Strickland Road park site or at the Leesville Community Park. One resident spoke against the Leesville site as an alternative because of possible increased cost, steep slopes and accessibility. The Committee ruled to hold a public meeting at the Leesville property to review the potential site and what impacts building an off-leash dog area there may have.

The Public Works Committee met at the Leesville site on December 1, 2008 to review its potential for an off-leash dog area. Public notice letters were mailed to the 28 neighbors directly bordering the park and the meeting was also posted to the City's calendar. Attendance at the meeting included the three Council Members of the Public Works Committee, City Staff, and many neighbors to the park.

Neighbors to the park questioned why plans for an off-leash dog area were being reconsidered at Leesville after it was removed from the master plan a year ago. Residents also were concerned with the proposed off-leash area's proximity to their property. Staff explained how a potential site at Leesville fits into the goals of the off-leash dog area report completed by an ad-hoc committee to the PRGAB and approved by the City Council. Report calls for appropriate geographical distribution of off-leash areas through out the City. An off-leash area in Northwest Raleigh currently does not exist.

A concept plan has been developed showing a driveway, parking lot, and 1.2 acre off-leash dog along with a 65' tree conservation area along the west park boundary plus a 50' right of way for a future extension of Hilburn Road (see included drawing). Slopes on the west portion of the park present challenges to meet maximum slopes allowed for accessibility. The driveway entrance to the site will need to enter the site at the top of the hill along Country Trail in order to provide adequate site distances for vehicular traffic. The grades at this location will require the bank to be cut down a minimum of four feet to create a 10% maximum slope on the driveway. The driveway leads to a nine stall parking lot where the slope is currently 10%. The parking lot will need to be graded to 5% to meet the maximum allowed slope for accessibility. Accessible pedestrian walks will have to be graded into the 14% slope of to provide access to the off-leash area.

To maximize the size of the dog park while being sensitive to steep slopes, natural drainage patterns, and setbacks for neighboring residential property the northern portion of the off-leash area is located on a **14% slope**. The lower portion of the dog park is 10% slope. With these slopes the mulch used for ground cover in the

off-leash areas will migrate to the bottom of the hill quickly. Compaction of the ground on these slopes may also damage root systems of large over story trees and cause erosion of the top soil in the off-leash area.

The patterns of the slopes on the Leesville site create construction, management and use concerns. Other concerns include: the clearing of old hardwood forest for the driveway, parking lot and sidewalk; the remote location at Leesville will attract unmonitored nighttime use; and the cost to build the off-leash area separate from other park elements will cost approximately twice the amount as building it combined with other park elements. (Clerk's note: examples for Strickland and estimate for Leesville were attached to the memorandum for backup information.)

Mr. Shouse noted that, following the Committee's field trip to the Leesville Road Park site Mr. Stephenson requested additional information and submitted the following memo dated December 10, 2008:

Committee Chair Stephenson requested further information on the schedule and budget for Strickland Road Park, and a possible off-leash dog area at Leesville Park after a site visit to Leesville Park. Attached are summary sheets for both projects, as well as Council minutes from the adoption of the Leesville Master Plan on May 1 2007. Information in the Committee package includes a summary memo, concept for Leesville's western side, and a draft cost estimate.

From strictly a site planning perspective, both the eastern location proposed in the Leesville Draft Master Plan and the current location proposed in the Strickland Road Draft Master Plan are appropriate and practical locations for this recreation element. The western location under consideration at Leesville presents a number of challenges including greater slopes than recommended, isolation from other public recreation elements, and locating a single element without the benefit of full planning for the entire area (which could include a road extension, paved and natural surface trails, and a sewer line.)

In summary, off-leash dog areas have been proposed in both Leesville and Strickland Draft Master Plans, supported by some citizens and opposed by others, and endorsed in both cases by staff, consultants and Parks, Recreation and Greenway Advisory Board.

Mr. Koopman expressed his appreciation to staff for taking out the dog park at the Leesville Road Park site.

Louis Gouveia, 7934 Pine Timber Drive, expressed concern regarding the environmental impact of the dog park upon the creek that runs through the Leesville Road Park site. Mr. Stephenson referred the question to staff where upon Park Staffer Jill Braly cited a recently published article based on the conditions at a similar dog park in Virginia that concluded that conditions were much cleaner than in a supervised dog park. Mr. Stephenson noted that there is more peer pressure at a dog park to clean up after their dogs. Mr. Gouveia stated he was also concerned with congestion in the area and the limited number of parking spaces that were proposed for the dog park section.

Mr. Koopman questioned the peak hours of operation for the dog park with Mr. Shouse responding that he has only anecdotal evidence; however, the peak hours tend to be in the early mornings or after work or on weekends.

Discussion took place regarding number of owners who actually used the dog parks and how the numbers tend to be self limiting especially during warmer weather.

Mr. Koopman indicated that the after work and week end peak hours of operation for dog parks do not conflict with school hours with Mr. Shouse indicating that was correct.

Discussion took place regarding the total cost for the construction of Leesville Road dog park with Mr. Shouse indicating the total cost would be approximately \$147,000 with a 9 space parking lot. Mr. Stephenson pointed out that perhaps the Council can address the initial cost for a larger parking lot during budget deliberations.

Mr. Koopman expressed his concern that the Council needed to make it clear to dog owners that the Council supports a dog park.

Ms. Baldwin questioned how the neighbors will react to Leesville Road dog site with Mr. Stephenson responding he had received several calls and emails however he has not heard from the neighbors to the west of Leesville Road; however, he did receive correspondence but urged that spoke to Strickland Road Park as a better site.

Mr. Gouveia cited the City's web site survey that concluded that there was a more desire of the citizens to locate a dog park at Strickland Road.

Mr. Stephenson indicated he had received many emails however most did not express a desire for a dog park at either location.

Mr. Shouse noted that prior to the Committee's field trip to Leesville Road site notice was sent out in time and word got out pretty quickly. He indicated that only two of the neighbors complained that they did not receive the notification in time.

Mr. Koopman indicated he does not sense opposition to having a dog park at Leesville Road.

Mr. Shouse noted if the Council decides to increase the number of parking spaces at the dog park site whether it would impact the right-of-way from the proposed Hilburn Drive extension with Mr. Stephenson noting that issue would be considered.

Debbie Logue, representing SCAN (Strickland Community Advocate for Nature), indicated the group formed after the second meeting on the Strickland Road Park Master Plan. She stated her organization stands for a limited development on the proposed Strickland Road site to 3 to 4 acres and preserve the natural park of the area. She stated her group is concerned with the proposed removal of trees at the park site. She indicated the plan designates the park as a neighborhood park and should remain that way with

appropriate facilities. She stated her group is concerned that the proposed play lawn would replace designated wetlands. She noted there were several community parks in the area that serve the neighborhood and that there is no neighborhood park in this part of the city. She indicated many of her neighbors used the walking trails of Lake Lynn Park. She summarized her group's concerns using the following outline:

**Strickland Community Advocates for Nature (SCAN)
Position on Strickland Road Neighborhood Park**

Background: Strickland Road Park was classified by the Parks and Recreation Department as a Neighborhood Park through the System Integration Plan (SIP) process. As a Neighborhood Park, it is intended to serve the residents living within ½ mile radius around the park. See next page for information from the Parks Plan about appropriate facilities for Neighborhood Parks.

There is an overwhelming consensus that the neighborhood has requested and approves of the following features:

- A park that is dedicated to nature
- A two mile looped paved trail, a one mile looped unpaved trail
- A large outdoor covered picnic shelter with several picnic tables and BBQ grills
- Children's play areas with www.naturalplaygrounds.com (no metal or plastic)
- Modest, unprogrammed play field for spontaneous, informal sports and passive recreational activities
- Benches for rest areas and nature viewing points
- Open area amphitheater
- Restroom
- Modest parking area for 50 or fewer vehicles
- Dawn to dusk parking and open access to park with limited or no lighting

There is overwhelming consensus that the neighborhood does NOT want:

- Reservation play space or programmed ball park with or without lights
- Off-leash dog play area
- Staffed Community or Neighborhood Center
- 110 parking spaces

Neighborhood concerns about the proposed dog park:

- Putting a dog park in a Neighborhood Park is inappropriate if the neighborhood residents to be served by the park do not want it. There has been considerable neighborhood outcry against this element.

- The majority of people requesting the dog park at this location do not live in the park's service area -- they have been organized by People for Unleashed Parks and other special interest groups to lobby for this park. Many of the advocates live in Cary and other parts of the City and County.
- A dog park was removed from the Leesville Community Park master plan because it was located 100 feet from private property; the dog park at Strickland is also located 100 feet from private property.

Neighborhood concerns about the Programmed Open Space or Baseball field:

- Formal, programmed active recreation is inappropriate for Neighborhood Parks if neighbors served by the park do not want it. Neighbors do not want this feature in the park plan.
- This type of facility will bring people from all over the City and County into this Neighborhood Park.

Neighborhood concerns about the proposed community center:

- Staffed community centers are inappropriate for a neighborhood park unless the neighborhood specifically wants this type of amenity. The neighbors did not request this facility.
- Strickland Road Neighborhood Park sits inside **FOUR** different Community Park service areas: All of these parks have or will have sizable staffed community centers (Lynn roughly 25,000 square feet, Leesville 40,000 square feet, Brier Creek 30,000, Baileywick 20,000 square feet). This area of the City is very well served with staffed community centers.
- Adding a fifth staffed community center at Strickland Neighborhood Park, against the neighborhood's wishes, is duplicative and a wasteful allocation of scarce public funds.

Ms. Logue talked about the Parks Department's open space policy and its reservation system for use for organized sports and how such use would turn Strickland Road Park to a community park setting.

Ms. Baldwin questioned why SCAN did not want a community center constructed with Ms. Logue responding that the group did not want a "designation park with established programs." She talked about the number of community centers in surrounding parks noting that a community center located at Strickland Road would be redundant and may require the additional removal of mature trees and expressed her concern for the possible environmental impact of such construction.

Mr. Koopman questioned if there was information as to how much wildlife inhabits the site with Ms. Logue responding that there is plenty of wildlife in the park area, and so much so that it spills over into the adjoining neighborhoods.

Joel Reames, 9013 Breeland Way, noted he also owns property near the proposed park site and is also a member of SCAN. He expressed his support for Ms. Logue's remarks and expressed his concern that organizations like CASL would take over the use of the open field. He noted this is a neighborhood park and there needs to be some unstructured open space and urged the committee to do anything to make the open space unusable to organize sports. Mr. Koopman questioned whether such changes would alter the natural area with Mr. Reames responding there will be some changes made anyway; just make it unusable to organized sports.

Mr. Koopman talked about survey conducted during the Horseshoe Farm Park master plan process wherein response indicated a desire for more natural areas and questioned whether the survey has been updated with Parks Recreation Director Sauer responding that the survey has not been updated.

Mr. Koopman noted in a recent survey that only 30 percent of the families in Wake County have children and wondered whether the same is true from within the City of Raleigh.

Discussion took place regarding the cost estimates for both the Leesville Road and Strickland Road sites with Mr. Shouse pointing out \$75,000 is currently available for the redesign available toward the redesign of each park site. Mr. Shouse pointed out that the cost of the Leesville Road dog park city was included as part of the phase I construction cost.

Ms. Baldwin questioned the parts project usage noting that she had heard complaints by citizens that there are not enough recreational facilities especially in the North Raleigh area. He noted the community center at Strickland Road would only be approximately 4,000 square feet in size and include such facilities as a meeting room, computer lab, etc. and would be similar to the Top Green Community Center. In response to questions, Mr. Shouse noted the goal for the Strickland Road site is to provide a broader base for participation in nature programs in neighborhood parks.

Mr. Koopman expressed his concern for the long term need of creating and preserving value with Mr. Shouse responding the staff is doing its best to find that balance to best utilize city, county and state facilities. He noted the Strickland Road master plan provide for access to large natural areas for public enjoyment.

Mr. Koopman talked about a recent trip he took to Los Angeles noting as he flew into the airport there was a lack of natural areas and expressed its desire for the City of Raleigh to protect what natural areas it has.

Brief discussion took place regarding the amount of open space available in the city and the Parks and Recreation Department's open space policy.

Mr. Koopman noted that on weekends he and his children would ride their bikes in the greenway and as they enter Kiwanis Park he has noted that it has been invaded by soccer players and that there is a lot of garbage left there. He is concerned that the open space policy need reservation and monitoring systems are not working there.

Mr. Stephenson questioned if additional trails could be constructed at the Strickland Road site with Amy McIntosh, Landscape Engineer, noted that there are 8/10 of a mile of paved trails in the park with another 8/10 of a mile of unpaved trails. She noted the unpaved portions of the trails moved over a steep slope area and pointed out if that trail were to be paved it would require a 40 to 50 foot wide trail clearing which is not desired. She noted that inserting an additional two miles of trails would be a stretch.

Brief discussion took place regarding the location of a picnic shelter.

Mr. Stephenson questioned if the play field is to be irrigated with Mr. Shouse responding the affirmative Mr. Stephenson questioned who the open space field will be irrigated with City Assistant Parks Superintendant Ken Hisler noted there are 7 to 8 such irrigated fields throughout the City for organize for its use and talked about future upgrades for other existing park play fields per the City's open space policy.

Mr. Koopman questioned whether the irrigation system would reuse water or regular water. Mr. Hassler stated there is a certain amount of irrigation is needed to provide safe playing surfaces.

Mr. Koopman questioned his concerns regarding the use of fertilization and pesticides on the playing fields with Mr. Hisler responding fertilizer and pesticide use would be per her Neuse River guidelines as to levels of nitrogen levels and the use of pesticides would be monitored and used for product specifications. Mr. Koopman expressed concern in the recent studies which indicate the use of fertilizer and pesticides coincide with increased incidents of childhood leukemia and questioned whether the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides at all in regard to the safety issue.

Discussion took place concerning the type of grass used or where the playing fields with Mr. Stephenson questioning if the City could reduce cost by not irrigating the fields.

Mr. Shouse talked about the opportunity to designate Strickland Road space for youth play only noting there is a similar situation over at Method Park and the same can apply to Kiwanis Park. Parks Director Sawyer indicated it is an opportunity to designate the Strickland Road open space for play only, talked about a situation over at Method Park similar to that of Kiwanis Park noting the participates were banded from using the Method Park for six months due to the conditions that were left once the field was used. She noted that Method Park and Eastgate Park are being designated for youth play only.

Ms. Logue noted she use to live in the Quail Hollow area and talked about how for some time the neighbors could not use the park due to the heavy use by soccer organizations. She stated her neighborhood would hold parties every Monday to clean up the garbage

left over from the previous weekend. She stated complaints to Parks staff and the Police resulted in no response. She stalked about a similar situation that took place over at Wooten Meadows Park and expressed the desire for her organization to make sure that this doe not happen at the Strickland Road with Parks Design/Development Administrator Dick Bailey indicated the City's open space policy was established in response to the East Gate Park situation.

Discussion took place regarding new designing Strickland Road Park for a more neighborhood field without a dog park.

Further discussion took place regarding authorizing staff to continue to move forward with the design of Leesville Road dog park keeping in mind potential for the Hilburn Drive extension and the installation of additional pedestrian trails with Public Works Director Dawson indicated staff will research to see if additional parking spaces for the dog park are possible. Ms. Baldwin questioned the time frame for the construction of the dog park with Mr. Shouse responding the dog park would be completed sometime in 2009 depending upon if any additional community meetings are site plan issues.

Mr. Dawson questioned if the \$75,000 of available city funds would be used for the design with Mr. Shouse responding in the affirmative. Mr. Koopman questioned the total cost of the design with Mr. Shouse responding he would research it and bring that information back. Mr. Shouse pointed out the total cost for construction depends on the cost of the Phase I of Leesville Park. He noted at the community meetings, residents expressed their desire to be able to walk to the Leesville Road Park site.

Ms. Baldwin questioned whether a motion was required to authorize staff to redesign Strickland Road Park with Deputy City Attorney Botvinick responding in the affirmative.

Mr. Stephenson made a motion to recommend that staff be authorized to proceed with the designs for the dog park at Leesville Road site to include design items expressed in Mr. Shouse's report for the west side of the park and that funds are available for the design. His motion was seconded by Mr. Koopman and put to a vote which passed unanimously. Mr. Stephenson ruled the motion adopted.

Mr. Stephenson made a motion to authorize staff to proceed with the redesign of Strickland Road Park eliminating the dog park to move the proposed open space to the west side and to designate such site for youth play and include additional pedestrian trails. His motion was seconded by Mr. Koopman.

Mr. Bailey questioned if staff were to bring the master plan design back to committee with Mr. Stephenson responding in the affirmative.

Brief discussion took place regarding whether the item is to be held in committee with Mr. Dawson urging the Board to hold the item in Committee until the master plan is above. The motion as stated was put to a vote which passed unanimously. Mr. Stephenson ruled the motion adopted.