



**MINUTES OF THE PARK COMMISSION MEETING  
MONDAY, JUNE 10, 2024, AT 9 AM**

**PRESENT:** Wesley Posvar, Chairperson; Carrie Casey, Nicholas Muller, Steve Whittingham, Jeffrey Cohen, Melinda Guinn, Members; Gary Koehler, Borough Manager; Larry Kurpakus, PWD Director; Michael Stevens, Chief of Police; Shawn M. Peterson, Borough Secretary

**ALSO PRESENT:** Alex Scott, Mayor; Betsy Monroe, Park Commission Liaison to Borough Council; Frederick Leech, Councilmember; Jim Bonner, Audobon Society of Western PA; Ginny Merchant, Resident

**VIA ZOOM:** Jay Troutman, Jeffrey Beyer, Members

**ABSENT:** Susan Crookston, Member

Wes Posvar called the meeting to order at 9:01 AM.

The minutes of the April 22, 2024, meeting were unanimously approved.

**RESIDENT COMMENTS**

None

**FOX CHAPEL BOROUGH – NEW POLICIES**

Mr. Posvar summarized the new policy for volunteers in the Borough, such as the Park Commission, who must submit background checks and abuse clearances. He also summarized the volunteer waiver produced by the Borough Solicitor for members of the public who wish to volunteer at Borough events such as tree planting, garlic mustard pull, or clean up day. Individuals who refuse to sign the waiver cannot participate in the Borough event.

**PARK PUBLIC SAFETY**

Chief Stevens stated the “Permit Parking Only” signs have been installed in all parking lots that require a permit to park. The Police Department will begin issuing citations to all violators without a permit.

This information was suggested to be placed in the Borough newsletter, alerting residents of this issue.

Chief Stevens also said there have been a few vehicle break-ins at the golf courses in the Borough. The suspects use window breakers to access purses, wallets, and other valuables left in the vehicles in plain sight. He recommends that anyone who wishes to leave these items in their vehicle should place them in the trunk, where they are not visible.

Fox Chapel Day 2024

Fox Chapel Day 2024 will be held on Saturday, June 15<sup>th</sup>, from noon to 4 p.m. The Park Commission will share a tent with the Fox Chapel Parks Conservatory. A craft for children, volunteer waivers for future projects, and trail maps will be available at the tent.

**BIRD TOWN PENNSYLVANIA PROGRAM**

Jim Bonner from the Audobon Society of Western Pennsylvania summarized the Bird Town Pennsylvania Program. He stated it was a community recognition program that helps communities with education, advocacy, and awareness of birds in the area. He said the Borough would need to complete an application to become a program member and pass a resolution adopting the program.

Mr. Posvar moved to recommend to Borough Council that Fox Chapel participate in the Bird Town Pennsylvania Program. Mr. Troutman seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Ms. Casey stated she would like to take the initiative to get the Borough signed up for this program with the help of Ms. Guinn, Mr. Beyer, and Ms. Crookston.

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### **PUBLIC WORKS REPORT**

Mr. Kurpakus stated that the PWD had resumed work at Hardie Valley Park. Old Mill Road will be closed from June 10 through June 14 as they install sewer pipes across the roadway. Once this area is complete, they will begin replacing sewer pipes through the parking lot. While the PWD works in this area, the trailhead at the parking lot may need to be closed to pedestrian traffic. Mr. Kurpakus said it would only be closed for a day or two while they completed the work. Signs will be posted.

Mr. Kurpakus provided the Park Commission with a Trail Condition Survey that informs the members of the condition of the park trails. He said that Riding Meadow Park and Salamander Park have muddy areas that must be addressed. He also said that stream crossings in Hidden Falls Park may need permits to add stepping stone crossings and wanted to know if the Park Commissions wanted to pursue that further. Mr. Kurpakus will investigate whether permits are required for three of the five crossings.

Mr. Kurpakus also stated that the Hill n' Dale trail is a hard-surface trail that is due for repair as it is beginning to crumble. He said he would need to talk with the Borough Engineer to determine the options available if the Commission wants to maintain a hard surface.

Ms. Guinn asked what the environmental effects would be if they let the trail continue to crumble or resurface. Mr. Kurpakus stated he would talk with the engineer.

Mr. Cohen stated he would add this issue to the Priority Management spreadsheet, and an ad-hoc group could meet with Mr. Kurpakus to discuss it.

### **PROPOSED 1 MILE/5K TRAIL RUN**

Mr. Cohen stated that this event is tentatively scheduled for Sunday, September 8, 2024. It will consist of a one-mile family run followed immediately by a 5K run. The race would begin at McCahill Park. Mr. Cohen will host a meeting to review items that need to be accomplished for the event.

Mr. Posvar moved to recommend to Borough Council that the one-mile/5K Trail Run on Sunday, September 8, 2024, be approved. Ms. Guinn seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

### **10 MILLION TREE PROJECT**

Ms. Guinn stated Allegheny County will be obtaining 10,000 trees this fall. It would be beneficial for the Borough to sign up soon to obtain some of the 10,000 trees. There will be three upcoming planting opportunities this fall, spring 2025, and fall 2025. Ms. Guinn asked the Commission if they had ideas on where they would want to plant in the future. Mr. Koehler stated it would be beneficial to plant the trees in an area that could act as a nursery for the seedlings until there are areas throughout the Borough that need planting.

The Commission decided to proceed with the 10 Million Tree Project Program this fall and in the fall of 2025.

### **DELAFIELD CONNECTOR TRAIL**

Mr. Posvar stated that a walk-through will occur in late fall after the leaves have fallen. It is estimated that once the walk-through occurs and the trail's needs are addressed, it can be usable by spring 2025.

### **TRILLIUM TRAIL PARK**

#### Susan Kalisz – Request for Research Renewal

Mr. Posvar stated that Ms. Kalisz began her research on the interaction of deer and plants in the Borough in 1999. The study is planned to continue until 2028. The study encompasses five 14-m square plots, some of which are fenced and some open for access. Mr. Posvar said there has been no direct contact with the group in years, and Mr. Koehler has requested Ms. Kalisz agree to the following before the Borough agrees to the renewal.

- Confirmation of timeline/expiration
- A location map of study plots
- Agree to remove all when completed
- Agree to monthly maintenance

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- Monthly updates of collaborators on-site
- Collaborators must have their clearances
- All collaborators will follow FCB park rules
- Notify of findings Borough may implement

Mr. Posvar added a request to have an annual summary and plan for the following year. The Borough will wait for Ms. Kalisz's response to the requests.

### Proposed Eagle Scout Project – Targeting Hemlock Woolly Adelgid

Mr. Posvar stated that an Eagle Scout would like to conduct a research project that will begin in the fall. The project would mark afflicted Hemlocks in the Borough, introduce predatory beetle colonies, and monitor the results. Mr. Posvar said he would like to meet with the Eagle Scout and an ad-hoc group to discuss the project further.

Ms. Guinn stated that beetle colonies can cost up to \$300 per colony, while insecticide costs \$1,000 per twenty acres and is longer-lasting. She also said that when meeting with the scout, it may be beneficial to have them assist the Borough in identifying the number of Hemlocks in the Borough and have them treat some of the affected trees with beetles while the Borough treats others with insecticide.

Mr. Muller stated introducing a new species may not be a good idea without knowing the full effects.

Ms. Casey recommended the scout consider installing chimney swifts in the parks as their project, instead. The Audobon Society of Western PA has funding available and is willing to assist with the installation of the swifts.

### **OTHER VOLUNTEER EVENTS**

Mr. Posvar said eleven volunteers participated in the Garlic Mustard Pull event on May 4th, collecting 20 bags of garlic mustard from Borough parks.

He also stated that invasive removal in Borough parks is ongoing. He asked that anyone who is pulling privet from the parks communicate with Borough PWD to ensure the debris in the parks is removed.

Ms. Casey commended Ms. Guinn and Mr. Beyer's efforts and hours of volunteer work to remove privet in the parks. She also said that they are great at communicating where they are working and what debris needs to be removed.

### **PLANNING AND PRIORITIES**

#### Comprehensive Plan Update

Mr. Posvar stated the Comprehensive Plan's *Committee Review Edition* has been distributed to committee members. When this edition has been updated, it can be distributed to Park Commission members. He also said there will be a full Joint Comprehensive Plan Committee meeting on June 27, 2024.

#### Park Plan Proposal

Mr. Posvar stated that the Park Master Plan was last updated in 2006. He told the Commission members that he would send them an electronic copy of the 2006 edition for them to review. Mr. Koehler recommended waiting for the Comprehensive Plan to be adopted before working on an updated Park Master Plan.

#### Priority Management Program

Mr. Cohen stated that at least a dozen items have been completed on the Priority Spreadsheet created after the April 22, 2024, Park Commission meeting. He would like to have another ad-hoc meeting to address the needs within Borough parks.

### **PARK STEWARD REPORTS**

Ms. Casey stated she would like to discuss funding for plantings on a hillside at Hardie Valley Park with Fox Chapel Parks Conservancy members. This would create another volunteer planting event.

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Mr. Muller stated that there is a decomposing bench on the trail at Riding Meadow Park. Mr. Kurpakus said he would address this issue. Mr. Muller also requested a trash can on the trail at Riding Meadow Park, where two trails meet to create a loop. He said many dog waste bags are being left in this area.

Ms. Guinn stated the loose boards on the Trillium Trail have been removed. She would like to find a way to remove the piers from the old boardwalk on the trail. Mr. Kurpakus stated he would see if the PWD could determine the best way to remove the piers without having to take an excavator up the trail, as this could harm the Trillium.

Ms. Guinn also said that nettles have been reported to be growing alongside trails in Trillium Park. She advised anyone visiting the park to wear long pants on the hiking trails to avoid brushing against the nettles.

Mr. Cohen stated the new connector trail between Scott Park and the Trillium Trail parking lot is lovely. Mayor Scott said he is having signs made to alert hikers of the trail and raise awareness of its location.

Mr. Whittingham stated the first annual Tunes for Tots class at Annie's Park in McCahill Park was a huge success. The Fox Chapel Presbyterian Church, along with the music teacher from O'Hara Elementary School, conducted the musical event session utilizing the new musical instruments that were installed recently.

Mr. Posvar stated the crosswalk along Fox Chapel Road near Salamander Park has faded and is almost non-recognizable. Mr. Kurpakus said he would contact Allegheny County to alert them of this issue.

### **UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS**

- Fox Chapel Day – McCahill Park: Saturday, June 15, from noon to 4 p.m.
- Park Commission Meet and Greet with Borough Council: Monday, June 17, at 5:15 p.m.
- 1-mile/5K Trail Run: Sunday, September 8, 2024
- The next Park Commission Meeting is on Monday, September 9, 2024, at 9 AM

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:12 AM.

Shawn M. Peterson  
Borough Secretary