



City of Ashtabula

Ashtabula City Council

Community Development/Economic Development/Parks & Recreation Committee Meeting

Tuesday, February 14, 2023 at 4:00 PM

4717 Main Avenue, Ashtabula, OH 44004

Minutes

Opening of Committee Meeting

Call to Order

The meeting of the Ashtabula City Council Community Development/ Economic Development/ Parks & Recreation Committee was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Committee Chair Haines-DiGiacomo.

Roll Call

Members Present: Chair: Ward 5 Councilor Jane Haines-DiGiacomo, Vice Chair: Ward 4 Councilor Jodi Mills, Member: President John Roskovics

Absent: None

Officers Present: City Manager James Timonere, Clerk of Council McKenzie Borgan

Parks & Recreation Board Members Present: Chair: Ken Vanyo, Rev. Emory Moore

Visitors: Sharone Sing on behalf of the Hubbard House Underground Railroad

Sunshine Law Certification

A quorum was established as defined by the Ashtabula City Council Rules of Order. The meeting met the requirements of the Ohio Sunshine Law Open Meetings Act.

Welcome and Acknowledgement of Visitors

Chair Ward 5 Councilor Jane Haines-DiGiacomo welcomed guest Sharone Sing on behalf of the Hubbard House Underground Railroad.

Special Guest Presentation

Sharone Sing on behalf of the Hubbard House Underground Railroad

Sharone Sing introduced himself as the chairman of the board at the Hubbard House and a pastor at the Grace Christian Assembly. He stated that sometimes in our community we tend to overlook our rich history and heritage. He shared a video created by Lakeside High School and Edgewood High School students that shows a little bit about the Hubbard House and its history. This video can be found on the Hubbard House's Facebook page. After the video, he explained that the Hubbard House is more than just a house. The house was built in the 1840s by a family of abolitionists. Abolitionists were staunchly against slavery. The Hubbards came from the New York and Connecticut area to Ashtabula when their Uncle, Nehemiah Hubbard, who was a quartermaster for the Revolutionary War, was paid for his services in discounted land. He was able to purchase land at 33 cents an acre and purchased \$19,000 worth of land, which is about 57,000-58,000 acres. William Hubbard was sent by his uncle to sell the land and make profits off the land. William Hubbard and his family stayed in the East Point Hotel upon arriving in Ashtabula until they could purchase their own land and build their house, which is now known as the Hubbard House. The East Point Hotel was where Point Park currently stands. A runaway slave by the name of Uncle Jake was the mason

who built the bricks for the Hubbard House as it stands today. The Hubbard House is a symbol of the Hubbard family's belief that no other person should be able to own a human being. The Hubbard family was willing to risk their own livelihood to stand up for their beliefs as abolitionists. William Hubbard even had to go to Columbus as he was being charged with helping slaves. The charges were dropped but, he had a great willingness to risk his livelihood for what he believed in. The County of Ashtabula, in the free state of Ohio, had a reputation that it would be easier for a sinner to get out of hell than for a freedom seeker to be returned to slavery. If runaway slaves made it to Ashtabula, they believed they did not have to worry as much about being returned to slavery based on the reputation Ashtabula held in regard to keeping slaves free. The Hubbard family owned a shipping industry and were able to get boats for freedom seekers to get on and they would be taken across Lake Erie to Canada, where it was always illegal to have slaves. This is the history that needs to be spoken about to children so they can see how rich our history is and that we can take pride in our community for being on the right side and standing up for what is right.

The Hubbard House will be having a recognition this Saturday, February 18th for Black History Month. The service will start at 10:00 a.m. Two individuals will be recognized for their contributions to Ashtabula. The Hubbard House, Ashtabula Arts Center, the NAACP, and others are working on a Juneteenth Celebration that will have significant points throughout the whole month of June.

The Hubbard House opens to the public on Memorial Day weekend and will be open through Labor Day weekend. They can provide tours outside of these dates when requested.

Chair Ward 5 Councilor Janes Haines-DiGiacomo asked when they are open in the summertime. Mr. Sing stated that they are currently open Saturdays and Sundays. Mrs. Haines-DiGiacomo asked if he knew their hours of operation on those days and Mr. Sing stated they were from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Mrs. Haines-DiGiacomo asked if the Saturday, February 18th event would be open to the public. Mr. Sing stated it is open to the public but, they do have a limit on how many people can be in the house at once.

Member Council President John Roskovics stated that many years ago the Hubbard House was not utilized and the City Recreation Department helped restore it to what it is now. Mr. Roskovics stated it is nice that it is now being utilized. Mr. Sing stated that in about 1983 the house was close to being torn down but, a Hubbard family descendant, Tim Hubbard, was able to get a group together and have the Hubbard House declared a National Historical Site. Restoration projects then took place to have the building restored.

Chair Ward 5 Councilor Janes Haines-DiGiacomo stated that she knows there were multiple houses within the city that were a part of the Underground Railroad that have been torn down. She stated it is wonderful we did not lose the Hubbard House building. Mr. Sing stated that their saying "Against Slavery Then, Against Oppression Now" is the same attitude the community needs to have now.

Vice Chair Ward 4 Councilor Jodi Mills stated that she did a few tours at the Hubbard House and that at one point she had rented one of the homes that were utilized for the Underground Railroad. She asked if the schools come to do any private tours. Mr. Sing stated that they are constantly doing tours for schools, within the county and out into the Cleveland area, different organizations and groups, and tourists who make a special stop in our community just for a tour.

Member Council President John Roskovics stated he appreciates the Hubbard House's slogan. He spoke about the courage the Hubbard family had to have to do what they did.

City Manager's Report

No report.

Parks & Recreation Committee Report

February Meeting Minutes

Chair Ken Vanyo reported on their February 7th meeting. He stated they discussed the mats for the beach and that they received information on a 6 ft by 30 ft mat that would cost about \$5,800. He also stated they discussed a shower at the beach and they wanted to request that. He stated one of the board members had questions about the park on West 38th St. and they would like to know what was going to go in at Smith Field.

Chair Ward 5 Councilor Jane Haines-DiGiacomo stated that her understanding of the shower was that it was suggested for the east side of the parking lot. Mr. Vanyo stated yes and there is currently only a little washing area there. He also stressed the importance of beach mats for handicapped individuals. Mrs. Haines-DiGiacomo stated that if we got a shower there it would help keep a lot of the sand out of the bathrooms. Mr. Vanyo also stated people have asked if there would be lifeguards again this year. He also asked about having basketball and pickleball courts at Smiths Field.

City Manager Jim Timonere stated the plan is the same for Smith Field. They will be using grant funding to add a basketball and pickleball court and extend the left field fencing towards the parking lot to accommodate a football or soccer field in the fall. The entire track will also be paved. This will allow for a multi-use field. This will cost over \$150,000. \$150,000 is allocation and then \$80,000 has been put aside out of the park levy for the matching portion of the grant. Vice Chair Ward 4 Councilor Jodi Mills asked if there was a start date for this. Mr. Timonere stated there is not as there is a lot that goes into this grant. He would like this project to be done by the end of this year. Mr. Timonere stated he has a company that will be coming, hopefully sometime in June, to stripe the tennis courts with pickleball lines so the courts can be used for both sports. Mr. Timonere stated the beach mats can be done he just needs the Parks Board to let him know how much closer to the water they want to go as the water level changes with storms and weather. Mr. Timonere stated he would see what could be done about the shower. It is not an easy project. He stated a shower used to be there and the Parks Board suggested they go to a foot wash instead and that is what was done.

Chair Ward 5 Councilor Jane Haines-DiGiacomo reiterated that Mr. Timonere needs to know how long they want the beach mats to be. Mr. Vanyo stated they would discuss that. Mr. Timonere stated that he and his staff have contacted the Board of Developmental Disabilities to see if they would like to partner up to make one of the parks more all-inclusive. They are trying to set up a meeting with the superintendent to further discuss this.

City Manager Timonere stated he has reached out to an agency to replace the swim buoys in the lake. The current ones were received through a grant almost 8 years ago, so new ones are needed. The grant has been written but, no response has been received yet. Lifeguards are at the beach every year. The city works with the YMCA each year to get a contract with them created for lifeguards to be at the beach.

Mr. Vanyo stated he would love to have everyone attend their meetings.

Rev. Emory Moore asked about the park on West 38th St. and if it had been given to AMHA yet. Mr. Timonere stated it has been a couple of years since they originally expressed interest in taking over the park. The city still owns this property. Mr. Timonere explained that property can be transferred between government/quasi-government agencies but, for anyone that is not a government agency, the property would have to go out for bid. A lease could potentially be entertained for a specific number of years for a low price but, he believes it would still have to go out for bid and the agency that leases the property would have to take care of and insure the park.

Unfinished Business

City Clean Up

Vice Chair Ward 4 Councilor Jodi Mills stated that emails are being sent out. If you have responded, we will get back to you and if we have not received a response yet, we will reach out again. If you are interested in participating in this event let us know by contacting the Clerk of Council, Mrs. Haines-DiGiacomo, or Mrs. Mills herself. The City Clean Up is scheduled for Earth Day, Saturday, April 22nd, and will go from 8:30 a.m. until noon. Lunch will be provided at the YMCA all-purpose room sponsored by Signature Health afterward. Mrs. Mills encourages everyone, even if you are unable to attend this event, to participate by cleaning up your own street or even helping an elderly neighbor.

New Business

Motion: Member Council President John Roskovics moved to bring the letter welcoming new businesses to the council; Vice Chair Ward 4 Councilor Jodi Mills seconded.

Discussion: None

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Chair Ward 5 Councilor Jane Haines-DiGiacomo, Vice Chair Ward 4 Councilor Jodi Mills, Member Council President John Roskovics

Nays: None

Motion passed.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 14th, at 4:00 p.m. Realtor, Bruce Schlosser, will be our guest.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:48 PM by Chair Ward 5 Councilor Jane Haines-DiGiacomo.

Attested by:

Clerk of Council McKenzie Burgan