

New Albany Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan October 2016

Introduction

The New Albany Parks and Recreation Joint Recreational District last completed a Strategic Plan in 2013. Knowing the district was going to place a renewal levy on the ballot in November of 2016 they wanted to update the plan setting the direction for the district moving forward.

The New Albany Park and Recreation Joint Recreational District was initially formed in 1999 between Plain Twp., Village of New Albany, and the New Albany Plain Local School District. The district operates 3 parks totaling approximately 200 acres and offers programs to the community with an emphasis on youth athletics. Programs are offered directly by the department as well as in partnership with a variety of youth organizations.

The district boundaries are essentially the same as the New Albany Plain Local School District encompassing 26 square miles and serving residents within the city of New Albany and Plain Township (and surrounding communities). The community continues to grow which will put pressure on the district to meet the recreational needs of their residents in the future.

The district operates on a property tax levy last approved in 2000. A replacement levy is on the ballot this fall. The levy will allow the department to continue to provide quality programs and to maintain existing facilities at a level expected by the community. It does not however, allow for expanded facilities and programs to keep up with a growing population.

To develop the strategic plan two meetings were held. The first with staff on June 7, 2016 and the second with the board on September 19, 2016. In each meeting the roles of the participants were discussed along with a SWOT analysis and a look at short term as well as long term goals.

Finally, an action items list is developed to provide some direction to the district as they move forward.

Acknowledgements

New Albany Parks and Recreation Staff

Dave Wharton, Director
Brian Smith, Recreation Superintendent
Jeff Mathers, Parks Supervisor
Deana White, Office Manager/Accountant

New Albany Parks and Recreation Board

David Demers
Richard Williams
Scott Dodson
Tim Sokol
Todd Wedekind
Adam Beckman

City of New Albany

Mayor Sloan Spalding

New Albany Foundation

Craig Mohre

New Albany Parks and Recreation

June 7, 2016

Strategic Planning Session

Staff

Attendees:

Dave Wharton, Director
Brian Smith, Recreation Superintendent
Jeff Mathers, Parks Supervisor
Deana White, Office Manager/Accountant

Mission Statement:

Enriching the quality of community life by providing recreational programs and leisure opportunities, well-maintained parks and facilities, and services delivered in a safe, cost-effective manner.

The session began with a SWOT - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats, analysis of the department.

Strengths:

- Dedicated staff - While the staff is small, they are hardworking, efficient and dedicated to the mission of the department.
- Well maintained parks - With limited staff, the maintenance of the parks is high. The maintenance staff have positive contact with the park users.
- Volunteers - There is a strong volunteer base that works with the staff that supports many of the athletic activities in the parks.
- Bevelhymer Park - the size and programming opportunities of this park are a strong asset
- Youth Programming - Strong youth programming is a plus. While some programming occurs with in house staff, the majority is provided through agreements with many athletic associations.
- Customer Service - High level of customer service. Also an opportunity.
- Administration - The department has had strong fiscal responsibility. Also work with staff to create a flexible work environment. Staff can work from locations outside the office.
- Community oriented - promote healthy lifestyles and community. Buzz words include Fun, Healthy, Active.

Weaknesses:

- Adult and Senior Programming - This is an area where more can be done.
- Lack of passive use areas - The parks are heavily oriented towards active recreation due in large part to community needs and lack of additional parkland.

- Deferred maintenance - While overall the parks appear to be in good to excellent condition, there is a concern about the impact of deferred maintenance. Buildings, paved surfaces and equipment needs exceed the current budgets.
- Branding - The branding of the department needs to be strengthened. Should be tied back to the Mission Statement.
- Fees - Not everyone can afford the fees. There is a scholarship program but it is not well advertised.
- No indoor space - indoor programming such as basketball relies on access to other facilities such as schools.

Opportunities:

- Partnerships - There is an opportunity to work more closely with other organizations. Some that were mentioned include Franklin County Metro Parks and Healthy New Albany.
- Customer Service - While this is seen as a strength, it has not been well documented. Implementation of exit surveys and interviews can verify the strength.
- Park Capacity - Need to continue to look for opportunities to add parkland to the system.
- Communication - there is an opportunity to expand communication efforts through social media.
- Non-Athletic programs - Opportunity to expand programming beyond athletics.
- Special Events - This is an area that can grow.

Threats:

- Vandalism/Enforcement - Work with multiple police jurisdictions including Columbus.
- Loss of contracts - Crew Juniors and Rugby. will need to pick up programming.
- Aging out of board members and volunteers - Will need to recruit new citizens to participate.
- Healthy New Albany and Schools - Duplication of programs.

**New Albany Parks and Recreation
September 19, 2016
Strategic Planning Session
New Albany Board**

Attendees:

Dave Wharton, Director
David Demers
Richard Williams
Scott Dodson
Tim Sokol
Todd Wedekind
Adam Beckman

Mission Statement:

The current mission statement below was discussed.

Enriching the quality of community life by providing recreational programs and leisure opportunities, well-maintained parks and facilities, and services delivered in a safe, cost-effective manner.

There was some thought that it might be too wordy and suggestions were made for updating the statement. A suggested statement follows:

*Enriching the community by providing **fun healthy active** recreation through well-maintained facilities and quality services.*

While this has not been approved by the board, further discussion should and action formally taken if the decision is to update the statement.

Role of the Board:

The 6 member board under the ORC is responsible for overseeing the programming and operations of the parks. They retain the director and staff to handle the day to day operations. They have felt that their role has been constrained by the budget. Decisions on programming and maintenance priorities are limited due to addressing immediate needs.

The current priority of the board is to support the current levy efforts. Assuming passage of the November Levy, the opportunity to have more input into the needs of the operation and assist in setting priorities.

SWOT Analysis:

Strengths:

- The board is engaged and supportive of the staff.
- Staff are very efficient in delivering the programs and maintaining the facilities.

- In general the board believes feedback from the community is positive. They receive very few complaints or negative feedback.
- Programs and facilities are of a high quality.
- The district programs provide a tremendous value with limited resources.

Weaknesses:

- Budget limitations create financial constraints.
- Ability to identify additional funding opportunities.
- Lack of a foundation.
- Youth athletic programming dominates the parks. Need for more non-athletic park activities.
- No indoor facility. Currently use school sites and have limited access.

Opportunities:

- Levy funding.
- Strengthen partnerships with other jurisdictions.

Threats:

- Growth - the community continues to grow at a fast pace putting additional strain on facilities.
- Columbus Crew has 2 years left on current contract. If they leave will put additional stress on funding.
- There has been discussion about the development of private athletic facilities with potential of drawing use from the park having a negative impact on funding.
- Lack of available land and cost of land for future expansion.

Goals:

Short Term

- Pass Levy
- Continue to improve turf management programs. Additional irrigation of fields a priority.
- Complete the loop trail at Thompson Park.
- Maintain existing facilities.

Long Term Goals

- Begin setting aside funds for larger projects.
- Current bond issues are paid off in 2023 - 2024. Once dept is retired consider future bond issue for acquisition and improvements.

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Action Plan

Communication/Marketing:

1. Review and update the Mission Statement (this was discussed at the board retreat).
2. Identify a clear vision for the department such as **Fun, Healthy, Active.**
3. The mission statement and vision should be included on all publications such as the web page, face book posts, newsletters and correspondence.
4. The department should undertake a professionally developed, statistically valid, community survey. This can provide information to determine the future needs of the system including facilities, programming and satisfaction with the department. If funding can not be identified, alternatives to be considered would include an online survey monkey and/or partnering with other agencies undertaking surveys such as the city of New Albany to include questions regarding parks and recreation.

Partnership:

1. Continue to work closely with youth athletic associations that provide much of the programming that occurs within the parks.
2. Strengthen relationships with adjacent agencies including the Franklin County Metro Parks, city of Columbus and New Albany Board of Education. Opportunities for shared or joint development as well as shared programming should be explored.
3. Strengthen the relationships with the city of New Albany, New Albany Partnership, Plain Township and New Albany Schools. While board members are appointed by these agencies, a stronger working relationship could produce more opportunities for funding and potential land acquisition.

Fundraising:

1. Consider creating a foundation for parks and recreation. If this can not be accomplished potential for creation of a fund within the New Albany Foundation should be explored.
2. Work with the board to take a stronger leadership role with fundraising efforts.

Programming:

1. Clearly define the programming goals of the department so that the public has a clear understanding of the recreational opportunities.
2. As opportunities for growth present themselves, identify community needs and trends within the industry and prioritize them for future implementation.

Capital:

Capital dollars have been limited and hard to identify for future significant future improvements. Until another source of capital dollars can be identified, funds should be spent on existing facilities.

1. Maintain existing parks and improvements to maximize their use and the departments ability to maintain. Priority items include:
 - a. turf management and irrigation
 - b. field sport lighting
 - c. shelter maintenance
 - d. asphalt and parking maintenance.
2. As funds are available, identify projects that expand recreational opportunities. Potential projects could include:
 - a. completion of the trail at Thompson Park
 - b. development of the open space around the pond at Bevelhymer Park.
3. Determine long term capital priorities and seek additional funding to implement. Potential projects include:
 - a. Land acquisition - demand for recreational opportunities will continue to grow. In addition to capital dollars, grants and foundations should be looked at. Work with the city of New Albany, Plain Township and the New Albany Company to identify acquisition opportunities.
 - b. An indoor facility to address year round programming should be considered.
4. Consider another bond issue once the debt on the current issues is retired.

Conclusion:

The New Albany Park and Recreation District provides a high quality service with limited resources. The challenge moving forward is how best to continue to deliver those services in a fast growing community. The board and staff will need to be aggressive in identifying the resources to meet those needs. Promoting the value that quality parks and recreation programming brings to a community and understanding the future needs of the community are key to meeting those demands. Additionally, the district should work closely with existing and future partners to identify common ground that can help address the needs of the community.