

Minutes of February 15, 2023, Special Meeting of the Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioners

Location: Virtual via Microsoft Teams

**Call to Order:** President Trumble called the meeting to order at 9:09 AM.

**Establish Quorum:** Members present included Susan Klingensmith, Amel Morris, Jenny Selin, Cal Shamberger, Jenny Thoma, and Danielle Trumble.

**Action Items:**

**Agreement for the Site Analysis, Public Survey, BOPARC/Community Engagement, Concepts-Lower Marilla Park.** Jenny Thoma moved to approve the agreement for the Site Analysis, Public Survey, BOPARC/Community Engagement, and Concepts for Lower Marilla Park, and Susan Klingensmith seconded. Motion passed 6-0.

**Bids-Ice Arena Improvement Project**

Director Wiles read the following background information regarding the Ice Arena project forwarded to the board:

**Background:**

This project was initiated with levy funds that totaled \$2.5 million over the first five years and approximately \$1 million over the next four years, ending in 2024. These funds were not sufficient to fully complete needed improvements, but some necessary upgrades to the facility were carried out and Mills Group was chosen through a competitive RFQ process to complete study, stakeholder engagement, public input and present designs. Three designs were formulated, and the board chose the most desirable concept, which had an initial cost range of 10-12 million dollars in 2018 with the glue-laminate beams remaining in place (August 2018) In August of 2020 the estimated construction cost was advised to be \$21 million and a great deal of work was done to retain what essentials we could, while moving it into the designated budget range of \$10 million. The desire for a glulam-free overhaul or new arena was driven by MHA and WVU hockey and we understand that they would prefer a new ice facility with better sight lines. This project does have some funding limitations. The original building was constructed in part with land and water conservation grant funds and needs to remain a public recreation space. The levy funds are available for improvements, upgrades and renovations to the Morgantown ice arena and the West Virginia auditor's, local government services division advised us that, while we could seek a legal opinion otherwise, they did not see any way those funds could be used to construct a new ice facility elsewhere. Because of those limitations and the desire by MHA and WVU for facility upgrades, we moved forward with the design for a significant facility upgrade. Recall that this project was unfunded until the city adopted a sales tax and then dedicated 25% of the revenue to BOPARC. In the end, that is the only way we were able to conceive of funding the project. We do not have contributions from partners, or significant grant funds, although we are pursuing additional land and water conservation funds. While not ideal, this would have allowed us to improve the facility and continue its use as a host for MHA and WVU events.

Now to the present moment –

We have received bids for the project and they exceed the estimates. Upon a cursory review, we believed they were at \$12.7 million. However, one of the bids for the ice making function was

disqualified and the remaining bid would put the project at just over \$15 million as it was submitted. In addition, as MHA and WVU strongly stated last Wednesday, they do not want to use this facility. MHA has stated that a new ice facility with the amenities they want can be built for \$5-6 million dollars. We know there is an engineering firm that advertised a rink in a box design estimated at \$6 million dollars – we saw the same in 2020. However, the information we received when we explored this concept over two years ago put the expected cost in a range similar to the estimates – but not the bids – for our current project. This was before the past two years of supply chain disruptions and high inflation. Similar projects around the country have recently come in at anywhere from \$14 million to \$20 to \$34 million and we have shared those links with MHA, WVU our Board and others, as well as included them on our website project page. We also understand that MHA has stated they are in discussions with the Pittsburgh Penguins and others who work in this field and are able to deliver a new rink at a lower cost. At this same time, Mylan Park is exploring construction of a new rink that serves the purpose of hosting leagues and tournaments for MHA and WVU Hockey. We've been in discussions with Mylan Park about this option and the City, Mylan and BOPARC have proposed a joint statement about those discussions, which will be read shortly. Initial cost projections for this new facility are similar to those we've looked at previously, with a range of \$10-11 million for a single sheet of ice. With Mylan Park considering this option and given the different needs for ice facilities in the community, we don't believe going to construction as our arena is currently designed, and at such a cost, would be prudent. After all – the design took into account an honest attempt at serving the same hockey league and WVU uses that we have attempted to serve in the past. If WVU and MHA plan to use a different facility built with a focus on competitive hockey and tournament use if constructed at Mylan Park, our facility would best be used to offer community recreation – public skating, figure skating, lessons, curling, BOPARC adult and youth programs, etc. If another rink is not built, we can certainly vet the MHA contacts who expect to deliver an ice facility for \$6million dollars. Keep in mind this figure does not involve property acquisition costs. We have nowhere to place another ice arena. Our athletic fields are viable recreational spaces that are enjoyed by the community in several capacities. Our green spaces and forests as well. All of the information we have received to this point suggests that the price would be higher than this quote and based on delay it could also turn out to be higher than the current bids. So it is almost certain that the same project done later would cost more. So, given the uncertainty of future use for this project and the passionate opposition from MHA and WVU Hockey, we do not see that a recommendation to award these bids at this time is possible. We are fortunate to have substantial public funds to improve our community's recreational opportunities due to the city's sales tax allocation. But, we need to be responsible when using those funds. If the funds are not needed for an ice arena to host competitive leagues and tournaments, our community can benefit from them elsewhere within the system.

Our plan forward is this -

We will look at ice arena improvements that support the current purposes of our facility. We will need to determine extent and cost – the current facility condition is that of an aging space with several needed upgrades and outdated equipment, roof, and building envelope. However, if we can improve the current facility and have additional funds available for other capital projects, we think that would be an excellent use of these public funds. And, our rink would be compatible with a new ice arena that caters more to the needs that groups like MHA and WVU Hockey have, should one be built in the area. As stated previously, we would be glad to work with Frank Oliverio and Matt Nelson to vet the information from their hockey industry contacts and sort out the most accurate and up-to-date costs. We will continue to have collaborative discussions with Mylan Park on complementary ice facilities as

they explore the potential of a new ice facility so that we can plan for the whole community's needs. We will develop a scope of work that will improve our current facility for community use in the likely event that that league and tournament play is moving to a new facility. And, unrelated and yet related to this matter – we will have an augmented and updated capital improvement list for the overall system for our board at our March meeting.

Amel Morris moved to reject the Ice Arena Improvement Project bids, and Susan Klingensmith seconded. The motion passed 6-0.

**Board Comments:** None.

**Adjournment:** Susan Klingensmith moved to adjourn the meeting, and Cal Shamberger seconded. Meeting was adjourned at 9:30 am.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cal Shamberger

April 6, 2023

Entered Into Record:



APRIL 12, 2023

Melissa Wiles, Executive Director