

**Pleasure House Lake Committee
June 2007 Update**

Sign:

The city has approved the Encroachment Agreement with the civic league to place the sign at the end of Pleasure House Road. The document is awaiting the city manager's signature and will then be recorded at the courthouse.

I am currently preparing the Sign Permit Application as we wait for the final signature and recording of the Encroachment Agreement.

The insurance policy was purchased for the sign and includes general liability insurance (as required by the city to approve the Encroachment Agreement) and \$1,000 coverage for the sign itself. The policy is through Erie Insurance, and Dominion Insurance on Pleasure House Road is the agent. The total cost of the insurance policy is based on the number of members we have. As of May 2007, the membership was 261 and the insurance policy cost \$303 (We paid \$368 based on a previous quote with more members, but will be receiving a refund of \$65 due to the decrease in membership from the previous quote. This refund will be sent to the PO Box.)

* We need to start forming the group who will actually install the posts, pilings, and the sign itself. I will ask for volunteers at the next General Meeting.

Water Quality:

Steve and I attended the Citywide Town Meeting at the VB Convention Center on June 19, 2007, where the topic being discussed was Protecting Waterways. The title of the presentation by the city was "Shaping our Community, and Ourselves, to Protect our Waterways." The city is working toward final recommendations to present to the City Council in September 2007 to protect the city's waterways and improve water quality. A Green Ribbon Committee was formed with the goal of changing ordinances and regulations to improve water quality. Recommendations from the city's committee have been formulated and relate to the following: "Reduce the impact to and extent of existing site impervious cover, preserve and enhance existing natural resources to the maximum extent practicable, and integrate stormwater management to maximize efficiency and effectiveness of the overall system." Some of the specific recommendations focused on reducing impervious cover including retrofitting older parking lots and reducing paving, enhancing natural resources, prohibiting the feeding of wildlife (not to include songbirds), reducing mowing and allowing for sustainable landscapes, implementing erosion control measures including vegetative buffer zones around waterways, implementing low impact building guidelines, preserving trees, and educating the citizens and community about citywide efforts concerning water quality and individual actions that everyone can take to improve water quality in the city. The purpose of the Town Meeting was to gather citizen feedback about the recommendations through numerous small discussion groups of 8-10 people.

At this meeting, I talked with Bill Johnston and Clay Bernick about our water quality issues in all of our neighborhood lakes, and they said that there might be an opportunity for the city to work with our neighborhood as a sort of “pilot” program where they would provide us with basic water quality test kits and we could routinely monitor our water quality. We would report back to the city about our efforts to improve the water quality of our lakes and whether results from the tests were showing improvement. As part of this, the city may be able to provide us with a more extensive annual water quality test which would provide us more detailed information about our lakes. This effort could eventually be a model for the city in how to work with neighborhood civic leagues to improve water quality across the city and would fit with the ideas presented by the city at the Town Meeting.

* I would like to have a vote at the next civic league meeting in support of partnering with the city in a neighborhood-led water quality testing and monitoring program. As part of this, our neighborhood would continue initiatives to improve water quality in all of our lakes and regularly monitor the water quality and report results to the city. After voting, we could submit an official civic league letter and hopefully begin.

In addition, I talked to Steve Mclaughlin and found out that the solar-powered aerators cost around \$25,000 each and where the city places those is based on prioritizing the lakes with the most need. Prioritizing involves looking at the depths and water quality test results for the lakes. There may be an opportunity to participate in a cost sharing plan with the city to buy an aerator as they are doing this with another lake in the city. However, this may take some time because I was told that the companies that manufacture the aerators are disputing how the bidding process took place. This is delaying the city’s plan to put the aerators in three more lakes in the city (Queens Lake, Lake Trashmore, and Stumpy Lake).

* I think we should show the Lynnhaven River 2007 DVD movie at an upcoming General Meeting. It is 13 minutes, and the general principles discussed apply to our waterways as well as the Lynnhaven River.

Other Neighborhood Park Issues:

Parking at Night: Susan Topping of Parks and Recreation Operations is going to have signs made up that say No Parking 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. and place those at the parking area off Beaufort Avenue. These will match the signs on Lauderdale Avenue. People are not interpreting the No Trespassing After Dark signs as applying to parking also. Signs will be made and installed after July 1 when the new fiscal year begins and money is available.

National Wildlife Federation (NWF) Habitat Certification Program: If a yard, school, or property in the community meets certain requirements, it can become a Certified Wildlife Habitat through the NWF.

* I would like our civic league to apply for certification for the neighborhood park to increase awareness of environmentally friendly outdoor and gardening practices. Since the city owns the property, they need to support this. Susan Topping said she would write a letter of support that we could submit with the application and that they have done this with some other city properties as well. The fee is \$15, and the CBCL would submit the application. A copy of everything would also be sent to Susan Topping.

Replacement of Railroad Ties: We are looking to start this replacement in the fall/winter. A new idea that would be less expensive, less labor intensive, and less maintenance is to have only the posts in the ground at appropriate intervals rather than a complete wooden “guardrail” installed horizontally on the posts. Parks in Florida use this method and it looks nice and blends in with the surrounding areas.

Playground at the Neighborhood Park:

After a couple of people asked me about having a playground or equipment at the neighborhood park, I talked to Brian Phelps about the likelihood of this and any possible requirements to make this happen. Brian Phelps designs the playgrounds in the city’s parks.

These are the various requirements or comments that he made:

Space: At a minimum, he looks for a 5,000 square foot “envelope” for borders of the playground area and 3,000 square feet for actual equipment. For a small swing set, requirements would be 16 feet front to back and 18 feet on the sides. But he said that 3,000 square feet would be needed to provide enough equipment for public use (vs. just a few swings). He said that the city wouldn’t want to clear any land because it would be “destroying the environment” and he recalled that open space money was used to purchase the land which was for the purpose of keeping it in a “natural state.” (Susan Topping mentioned that she thought there would need to be clearing of land if anything were going to put up.) Plus, with our water quality issues in PHL, we wouldn’t want to do anything that would contradict our efforts to improve the water quality.

Setbacks: 30 feet from a road.

Water: Not close to the water. He noted that putting playgrounds near water is not a favorable option.

Visibility: Needs to be visible to the public to discourage unsavory activities. There may be an additional concern at our park due to the late night partiers and possible congregating (even though there is no trespassing after dark, this is difficult to enforce).

He didn’t mention funding, but this would probably also be a hurdle. Based on information on the website, there are different phases of these projects such as the design phase, public comment phase, and then the building phase.

Brian Phelps said that from what he recalled of the property, he did not think it was a “feasible location” for playground equipment and that he wouldn’t recommend it as a location.

As an alternative, there may be some empty lots in the neighborhood that are unused extensions of streets and already owned by the city. Perhaps we could examine some of these as possible locations for a playground area. On the other side of the CBBT, there is one location that looks to be a city-owned extension of Seaview that borders Lake Joyce. At one time there was talk about approaching the city about using that as a public park area. Perhaps it could be a site for a playground (it is flat, cleared, and large enough that the equipment could be farther away from the water). It could also provide public access to Lake Joyce for canoeing or kayaking. Any other possible locations could also be examined.