

**Huron Joint Recreation District  
Regular Board Meeting – Minutes  
Tuesday, Feb. 1, 2022 at 6:30pm  
City Municipal Building, Huron, OH**

**Members Present:** Tom Solberg, Matt Grieves, Jen Kilbury, Jonathan Merckens, Elizabeth Laffay, Julie Spitzley

**Present from HPRD/City of Huron:** Doug Steinwart, Brian Croucher, Rick Reinbolt, Dan Weaver

**Members Absent:** Bryan Edwards, Gordon Hahn, Rene' Franklin

**Audience:** Mr. Koch; declined comment pending Board discussion.

**Additional Comments:** Dr. Laffay introduced herself as one of the new School Board members, representing Huron City Schools.

***OLD BUSINESS***

**A. Fish Cleaning Station**

Doug Steinwart provided background: We have partnered with ODNR, Fish and Wildlife, on this project for about a year. We have just finished the engineering stage; now are advertising the project. Opening bids on Feb. 25<sup>th</sup>. He referenced site plan in the Board packet, for location at the Boat Ramp. Will have more information on timeline after Bid Opening. The grant is \$500,000. Funded by ODNR/Fish & Wildlife. Similar agreement as the Boat Ramp: State of Ohio owns it/equipment; we will do maintenance. It will be winterized annually, about the same time as the Boat Ramp restrooms.

**B. Ice Rink at Fabens Park**

Mr. Steinwart reported the Ice Rink opened on Jan. 16<sup>th</sup>. A heavy snow caused the rink to become slush the next day. We have been open for about 11 days. Staff has invested a lot of time; it is a learning curve. Rick and Dan have put a lot of thought and effort into it; and it shows. We have had a lot of positive feedback. Also started a loaner ice skate program, thanks to Bryan Edwards. He had some contacts within the Columbus Blue Jackets organization. He actually drove to Columbus to pick up the 20 pairs of donated skates. Many are youth sizes. We have made some contact with Lorain, in their first year of large rink, and Sandusky—to compare notes; use the best methods. Mr. Steinwart thanked the staff for their efforts. Board reported positive feedback.

***NEW BUSINESS***

**A. Peace Path Discussion**

Mr. Steinwart provided background: A few years ago, a resident approached City Council with this idea. Council thought it was a good idea. It was then brought to our department; the resident did the fundraising, and the signs were displayed at Fabens. Since then, we were approached by the same resident/group to install the signs at Lake Front Park. It was brought to this Board; the HJRD Board felt Lake Shore Electric Trail was a better location. Mr. Steinwart said his understanding was that the sign content was in response to COVID uncertainties, and the increase in suicide rates in this area. He referenced copies of the signs in the hand-out packet. Mrs. Koch's letter, which was sent to the City Manager (also provided in the Board packet), explained her opposition to the signs. The City Manager and Mr. Steinwart both spoke with Mrs. Koch after receiving her letter.

Mr. Koch, in attendance at the meeting, stated that he believes it is a waste of taxpayer money and it expresses only one person's opinion. Mr. Steinwart clarified that the resident group raised the money for the signs. He confirmed that the Parks staff did do the installation—as we would not allow residents to do work/installations on city property for safety/legal reasons. The Board discussed that signs representing different opinions could be submitted to City Council, and go through the same process. Mr. Koch

reiterated that he felt the installation time/money could have been better spent in other areas within the city to benefit more residents. Mr. Koch also stated that we should think about how these things are perceived by the city taxpayers. The Board thanked Mr. Koch for his opinions and attendance at the meeting. The Board suggested that this be discussed at the Council level. Mr. Steinwart suggested that, in the future, we should put a duration for signs/donated items, that will not last forever.

### **B. Huron Pier Discussion**

Mr. Steinwart referenced letter, provided by Ms. Spitzley, in the Board packets. Mr. Steinwart provided background—the City has a lease with the Army Corp of Engineers for access to the pier from the Showboat to the blockhouse. In 2018 the City’s Engineer’s Dept. looked at safety measures in the City, including the Pier. At that time there were seven steel ladders in various states of disrepair. They were roughly 400-feet apart, and no life rings. This info went to the Safety Committee, which resulted in a Nature Works funding grant. This process took two years, include authorization from the Army Corp of Engineers. There are now nine ladders, about 200-feet apart, and six life rings; installed in 2020. The life rings were damaged during the following two years. We initially thought the damage was vandalism; we now believe the rings were damaged by the relentless weather conditions on the pier. This past September, we ordered replacement rings made of fiberglass. They were backordered. We plan to add three more rings, to have nine throw rings on the pier year-round.

Ms. Spitzley stated she was informed about the incident the following day, and spoke to the person involved. Her intent was not to ask that the pier be closed for recreation or to bikers. She wanted to communicate what it was like from the water, trying to get to safety. A second layer of ice prevented her from reaching safety; she was frantic and did not recognize ladder locations. Ms. Spitzley suggested consideration of yellow paint on pier “wall” facing the water, near the ladders—also “hand bars.” She also mentioned signage at the pier entrance, pending legal review. Mr. Steinwart stated anything has to go through Army Corp approval. Mr. Steinwart suggested, since this started with the Safety Committee (which includes Safety Forces representatives), that may be the appropriate starting point. When conditions warrant the Pier being closed, it is through the Police Dept. and Fire Dept. working together. Concern was expressed that involving the Army Corp could result in the pier being closed altogether; but we also want safety. Also discussed reminder of ladders in newsletter. The Board concluded that the Safety Committee should be asked to re-visit the subject.

### **C. Misc. Parks & Recreation**

Mr. Croucher presented updates: We are in our planning time; working on programs, coordinated with schools and coaches. We have five tournaments at Fabens this year, and are sending out those contracts. We are also again renting out Fields 8 and 9 to teams. Huron Baseball/Softball program will again be using fields 1-7. We just met with the President of Huron Baseball/Softball—they had some of their highest registration numbers last year. One change last year was that we invited the Baseball/Softball to run Fabens concessions, which was very successful. It builds our relationship with the program, and allows them a source of additional funding. An example of the benefits of this partnership is that the Baseball program purchased new nets for the batting cages, and we will do the installation this spring. Mr. Steinwart mentioned that the Baseball program just instituted a new website, online registration, etc. Mr. Croucher reported that we are also working on seasonal staffing. Nickel Plate Beach has been extremely busy; it is a high-profile place. We will hire at least two gate attendants. If you know of anyone, send them our way. Mr. Croucher also stated that we plan to bring back the “City Wide Clean Up” sometime in the end of April. Ms. Spitzley, and Mr. Solberg, volunteered to be involved/sponsor. Additional suggestions: Boy Scout and High School students (for community service hours).

Mr. Croucher also recapped the Indoor Soccer program. Highlighted how successful it has been working with Mr. Asher, the high school coach. Ten years into it; the program has helped them build their high school team numbers. He now has high school team members helping with the program; who were Kindergarten students when they began Indoor Soccer. It's a successful program we are proud of—and gratifying to see high school students “giving back.”

Mr. Steinwart stated we have the event schedule for the Boat Basin finalized; working on the brochure with schedule. Hope to have it available for our next meeting. He added that staff will be attending the trade show portion of the Ohio Parks & Recreation Conference at Kalahari next week. He also updated on snow removal—our department, primarily on Rick and Dan's shoulders, does a lot of the City parking lots, crosswalks, the walkover bridge, sidewalks on the Huron River bridge. And then try to make all our parks 12-month accessible.

***CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS***

Mr. Solberg welcomed Dr. Laffay and Mr. Grieves, and said the Ice Rink has generated a lot of positive comments. Mr. Merckens stated he also has heard only positives on the Ice Rink. Mr. Grieves and Ms. Spitzley again thanked the staff. Mr. Steinwart again thanked Bryan Edwards for the skate contact with Blue Jackets, and his efforts.

***OTHER MATTERS – ADJOURNMENT***

Motion to adjourn by Ms. Spitzley; second by Mr. Merckens.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Irvin, Administrative Coordinator  
Huron Parks & Recreation