

INC PARC Meeting Notes for March 19, 2013

INC Parks and Recreation Committee (PARC) met at 6:00 p.m. March 19. Present were co-chairs Katie Fisher and Maggie Price, Kathleen Wells, Cindy Johnstone, Marlene Johnson, Diana Helper, Dave Felice, Ray Ehrenstein, James Sample, Ronnie Crawford, Brad Cameron, and from Denver Parks & Rec (DPR), Jeff Green.

The committee discussed the flier sent from DPR that day, entitled "Outdoor Fee Based Events" which announced four public meetings to be held April 9-20. Marlene and the committee agreed that this title was misleading, and the actual reason for the meetings, and the input that DPR wished to receive from the public, was not apparent. The presumed topic was what has been called "Commercial Use Policy" heretofore. DPR will be notified promptly that a new flier with considerably more and clearer information should be sent.

The need for DPR to get next year's budget in place has resulted in a rush to get a commercial use policy in place by summer. Although Denver's parks are generally over-used already, and a use policy might better address "less use" rather than more, DPR's position is that people already are using the public parks to do commercial business, so instead of saying they may not do so, DPR will charge them and try to regulate their venues. Marlene had received a map of the park in her area showing DPR's selection of "commercial areas," which did not consider the lack of parking or the over-use for those areas.

Because park land is not adequate for the increasing population of Denver, the fear is that it will be over-used until it is no longer usable, and there will be no large tracts in the city to replace it. Kathleen is writing a draft of a statement to address the importance of looking ahead and being proper stewards of the park land that Denver has. She also is embarking, with help from Ray, on a study of park acquisition, designation, preservation, and de-acquisition policy in other cities. PARC believes there is a need for public knowledge about DPR's present policy, and which "parks" are designated parks, which are open space, and which are not really parks.

Cindy suggested that a basic endeavor of DPR should be the educational value of our parks in teaching about nature, plants, grasses, trees, clean air, wild life, and benefit of being able to spend time in a quiet, natural setting. This is known to be of great value to mental and physical health. It was the original purpose of the Denver Park System. She asked that we invite members of DPR's Nature Staff to come to a PARC meeting.

Brad stated that we need to focus on the DPR plan to designate all parks, and have citizens help with this project. PARC wishes to have a citizen committee to help with this, and to have regular updates on its progress. Neighbors of parks under consideration should be asked for input to help with needed information. PARC will write to DPR requesting this.

Dave spoke about the difference between DPR's calculation of "open space" or "park space" as its entirety, and the reality that much of the space therein may be paved, or buildings, or other uses that are not truly open space. He also stated that the "conflict of interest" regarding the Hentzell Park swap, is to be discussed at the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB) retreat.

Katie asked that as many as possible attend City Council on April 1 when the Hentzell Park swap is to be voted on, so that a large number may stand if opponents are asked to stand. She said that she will read aloud the INC statement at that meeting.

Maggie said that there has been no resolution to the parking concern for City Park Playground. PARC discussed the dangers of park-goers getting to parks from outside the park boundaries, crossing major streets. Especially to a playground, they'll have children. Cindy said this is a problem of the "drawing power" of the park. If it has great draw, either daily or for special events, how can DPR control the problems such events elicit. It is the venue that is creating the problem. Again the great need for a permanent Festival Park was stated by PARC.

Meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m. Next meeting 6 p.m. Apr. 16, 2020 S. Monroe St.

Diana Helper, PARC member