

MINUTES  
BROOKINGS PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
City of Brookings 898 Elk Drive, Brookings  
December 16, 2004

**Call to Order**

Chair Boynton called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. followed by the pledge of allegiance led by Commissioner Gordon.

**Roll Call**

*Commissioners present:* Dave Gordon, April Gothard, Bill Boynton, Dori Blodgett, Tony Parrish, Daryn Farmer, and Pat Sherman.

*Commissioners absent:* *Ex Officio Commissioner Paul Cleary.*

*Staff Present:* City Manager Leroy Blodgett, Parks Supervisor Dave Lentz, and Cathie Mahon, Secretary.

*Media:* Brian Bullock for *The Pilot.*

There were approximately 28 people in the audience.

**PUBLIC APPEARANCES**

*Azalea Park:*

Elmo Williams began his presentation stating he would like to erect a structure in Azalea Park as a memorial to his wife Lorraine, who was the key person responsible for the present status of the park. He addressed the Commission on a proposal to erect a nondenominational chapel. He circulated a photo to illustrate what the structure would look like, explaining the architects are designing one that would be 2/3 scale to the one in the photo, measuring 40 feet long, 36 feet high, and 24 feet wide. He stated although it is being referred to as a chapel, it will not any religious affiliation. He added there are eleven (11) structures in the United States designed by Fay Jones, a renowned architect, who followed the Wrightean principles of design.

Williams read a request stating why he was asking the commission to consider his proposal. It report highlighted the different types of stress we have today and the sanctuary would be a place to meditate and some quiet to think things through. He stated a study by the National Health Department claims 46% of our population has health problems related to stress. His hope is anyone can benefit from a quiet place like the chapel. In addition, it could be used for events such as weddings and family reunions. He stated he has no motive, just the satisfaction of knowing someone could benefit from a place to think through life's decisions and a place for people to revive their spirits.

He concluded, stating he was hopeful the members of the commission would base their decision on what is best for the people in our community. If his proposal is approved, he will proceed with finalizing the building plans. If there is dissension or discord, the chapel will not be built. He stated he would like to see it built, but would accept any decision made by the Commission.

Billy Sieg, 17448 Bluff Drive, Brookings, stated she had utmost respect and affection for everything Lorraine and Elmo have done in the community, but felt the definition of a chapel is a place of worship and did not think it was an appropriate use for Azalea Park. She stated there are plenty of chapels in Brookings, adding putting a chapel in a city park may be in violation of church and state. In conclusion, she stated she was of the opinion a meeting place, like a community center was a real need in the community.

Judy Kaplan, P. O. Box 4187, Brookings, stated she held both Lorraine and Elmo in high esteem but strongly opposes building a chapel in Azalea Park. She said references such as a sanctuary or memorial have been used, but chapel keeps taking forefront of the discussion. She was of the opinion the size of the structure was too large for the park; something like the Gazebo is acceptable. Kaplan questioned why the Parks & Recreation Commission and the City Manager met at the site. She also questioned why the City Manager approved clearing of the proposed site before approval by the Commission. She stated the public should be informed of any major change for the park and there should be more public input before any decision is made.

Richard Christale, 867 Jodee Lane, Brookings, stated the community owes a great deal of gratitude for the Williams. He stated he thought having a place to mediate was a wonderful idea.

Paula Ramsay, 17744 Hwy.101, Brookings, stated she and her husband moved into the community a few years ago from Portland and was surprised at the quality and beauty of Azalea Park. When she looked into how it was managed, and how it was funded, she was surprise that volunteers were responsible for a lot of the maintenance of the park. She stated it is a wonderful reflection on the community to have such pro-active volunteerism. She concluded she would be disappointed and sad if Elmo was not allowed to build this tribute to Lorraine.

Gregory Shinn, 96605 W. Harris Heights, stated he has worked with Elmo and the Azalea Park Foundation for over 8 years. He recounted how ten years ago it was a dumping area and overgrown with blackberry bushes. Today it is something to be proud of and there is something for everyone from *Kidtown* for the children, to the fields for soccer and baseball. When he talks to people about the park they all remark how beautiful it is, especially the gardens. He added he believes the building that Elmo wants to build would add to the enjoyment of the park.

Pat Russell, P. O. Box 1174, Brookings. She stated her concern was what other expenses are involved and what expenses would the City have to incur in the future.

Elmo responded he knows approximately what the project will cost and cannot plan on the garden or caretakers cottage until the building plans are completed. Part of the plan is to place a caretaker's cottage near the sanctuary, where a caretaker can oversee the park. The initial plan is to give someone free rent in return for their presence in the park. The caretaker's cottage may be part of the plan, but details are still being worked out. A suitable structure could be erected for approximately \$32,000. Details for placement of the building and water hook-up would add to that figure.

Ted Fitzgerald, 21225 Carpenterville Road, Brookings. He explained he is an attorney and friend of Elmo's and assisting him with the project. He accompanied Elmo to Arkansas where they met with Fay Jones, a renowned architect who worked under Frank Lloyd Wright. He stated their primary design purpose is to construct a building that fits in with the surroundings. He emphasized the building will be a non-denominational structure, a place of reflection, and will be designed to meld in with the park. He addressed some of the concerns stating once the building is up, a foundation will be established for maintenance; other avenues to generate funds will be from weddings, and donations from the collection box. He concluded by looking at what Elmo has done in the past, his decision to build this as a memorial to his wife, Lorraine, and to turn it over to the city, reflects good judgment. It is a positive thing for the community, and will generate revenue for the park. He added the closest place to one similar is in Los Angeles, and he deemed people will travel here to see it.

Elmo discussed the function of the chapel. He spent a day at the one in Arkansas and was impressed by watching people enter the chapel. At the entrance they were handed an informational pamphlet by an attendant. He spoke with the owner of the Crown Terrace chapel, and she said donations from people visiting and putting money in the box maintained the upkeep, the overhead, and insurance for it.

He stated he intended to establish a foundation for the upkeep on the structure but felt it would self-sustain by revenue collected from the donation box, and functions like weddings. He agreed volunteers would be needed for the upkeep in and around the chapel.

Commissioner Farmer asked if there was any other location to build it. Elmo responded he had been offered a parcel of land in the Ward cemetery but thought few people knew where it was or how to get there. He reiterated he was not building a chapel; there would be no church services or crosses. Using the word chapel was being used only for the sake of discussion; it will be a sanctuary. He emphasized the idea of building it in Azalea Park was very important because he wanted a quiet place for people to reflect on their life and decided on Azalea Park because of its availability to people. Williams responded to Commissioner Sherman's question on what the seating capacity would be. The benches could seat about 70 people.

Commissioner Sherman asked Williams if he considered it a recreational facility. He responded that once it is decided to the City, the City will decide. Williams also responded to a question on why the proposed area was cleared before this meeting. He stated the architects needed to visit the area; they were concerned about the climate and high winds, and would design it according to their findings.

Commissioner Sherman asked if arrangements had been made with a contractor. Williams answered he had contact Paul Viale, a local contractor, who said he would be free to do the job. Since Viale had never built a sanctuary, Williams coordinated a meeting between Viale, and the architect, during the architect's visit here.

Elizabeth Cohen, 324 South Hazel. She stated she opposed the chapel in the park. She also stated she was leery of having Azalea Park turning into a formal park, when she preferred having it stay natural. Cohen suggested an alternative of building it in

Chetco Park. Cohen concluded stating the sanctuary is a wonderful idea in remembrance of a loved one but churches have sanctuaries.

Penny Goolsby, 15948 Oceanview Drive, Harbor. She favored the edifice as a place of spiritual renewal and from the photo it appears like it would meld with the trees and other plants. Having a place like the proposal would give people an opportunity to stop and reflect, reconnect with the spiritual part of ourselves. She stated it has been repeatedly noted that it will be non-denominational. She welcomed the idea to have musical concerts, poet readings, in it. She concluded stating we need spiritual recreation as well as the physical realm. She added she was grateful to Elmo for his willingness to build the structure.

City Manager Blodgett addressed several issues. He answered why the site was cleared. He stated Elmo Williams came before the Commissioner months ago with the concept and what he would like to do. The Commission told him they liked the concept, to get more information and return with the proposed project. (Secretary Note: At the January 23, 2003, meeting, Lorraine Williams submitted a list of items needed for improvements of the park. On that list was mentioned of "an edifice ... to accommodate weddings and family reunions").

Blodgett continued stating he had numerous conversations with both Elmo and Ted Fitzgerald. Both of the men approached him that they were going back to Arkansas to meet with the architects. Following that step, Williams informed him the architect was coming to Brookings to check-out the proposed area for the building. Blodgett stated he gave approval to Elmo to clear the area so the architect could look at the site and do a topography study.

Blodgett addressed the church-state issue. He realized those questioning the religious connotation with the project but affirmed this is a non-denominational building; there is no issue of state (city) and church. He responded to those concerned about maintenance of the sanctuary, stating the Azalea Foundation volunteers have shown in the past to maintain the park. He added with a new facility like the Skate Park or when we build a new ball field, the issue of maintenance has to be looked at. He addressed the issue of building approval, affirming the process would be like any other building project: it would be reviewed by the site plan committee which reviews all building applications.

Blodgett answered the concern if the proposal was an acceptable use. He explained the POS (public-open space) zoning lists common uses in the zone district, but noted Skate Parks, and Gazebos are not listed but deemed acceptable for the POS zone. He read the purpose for the *Public Open Space District* "*the purpose of this district is to recognize, preserve, and enhance publicly owned recreation, open space, educational and cultural areas...consistent with the policies of the city.*" A number of specific uses are listed such as community centers, public schools, etc., and recreational facilities. The question to answer is, is the proposal a permitted use? And are the band shell and the gazebo a recreational facility? Some are easy to identify. He stated in his opinion there is no difference between the band shell and the sanctuary; they both provide entertainment for people. He added there were 15 weddings performed at Azalea Park; this facility could serve as a different venue for the same type of use. He concluded stating those that do not want it, can say it is not a recreational facility; those in favor can say it is.

Commissioner Sherman stated she was concerned if the proposed sanctuary is an appropriate use for the park, followed by the question if the commission should be making this kind of question. By deferring the decision, there would be time for the public to visit the site. She concluded it should be referred to City Council.

Elmo responded stating he was not going to be involved with numerous meetings and studies. The issue is do you want sanctuary or not. He added if it is decided to disallow his proposal, he will simply walk away.

Commissioner Gordon questioned the process of public notice and if the public received enough information before the present hearing. City Manager Blodgett repeated again the process. Elmo came before the Commission, presented what he'd like to do, and the Commission responded they liked the concept. He was directed to return to the Commission after he had definite building plans. Blodgett strongly noted that Elmo got permission from him to clear the site area, which was necessary for the architect to do his study of the topography, and environment.

Dori Blodgett made a motion and it was seconded to send it to City Council with a recommendation of an approval from the Parks and Recreation Commission. The motion was denied with a 3-4 vote (Commissioners Blodgett, Gordon, and Chair Boynton voted in favor of the motion; Commissioners Farmer, Gothard, Parrish, and Sherman voted against the motion).

Discussion ensued. Commissioner Parrish discussed sending it to City Council with no recommendation from the Commission. A motion was made by Commissioner Parrish to refer the proposal to City Council for a final decision. The motion was passed 5-2 (Commissioners Sherman, Farmer, Parrish, Blodgett, and Chair Boynton voted in the affirmative, Commissioners Gordon and Gothard voted against the motion). City Manager Blodgett said the proposal would probably be an agenda item at the January 10<sup>th</sup> City Council meeting.

Ulli Mentzel, 313 Hazel. She expressed she was a recent resident, has been to park a few times, but was interested as to where the proposed site is in the park. Blodgett referred to aerial photos displayed on chambers wall to point out the proposed site.

A short recess was declared at 8:45 p.m. The meeting was reconvened at 8:50 p.m

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Stout Park: Commissioner Parrish reported he like the trash cans but suggested a better location of placement within the park. Commissioner Gothard asked if signs could be posted on Oak Street to limit parking to one side because of the constant trucks parked in front of Brookings Florist. Parrish commented they are often parked for days at the same location.

Chetco Park: City Manager Blodgett reported the property has been surveyed and the City is working with South Coast Lumber for a transfer of property and an easement.

Softball/Soccer Parks: Commissioner Gordon had no report.

Kidtown: Commissioner Dori Blodgett had no report on the park. She invited the people in the audience to consider serving on the Commission because her term expires in February and she will not be re-applying.

Bud Cross Park: Commissioner Farmer had no report, adding he has not heard anything about the bike park.

Azalea Foundation: Commissioner Sherman reported at the recent meeting a fund raiser was discussed.

Easy Manor: Commissioner Gothard stated the park is status quo.

STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS/CONCERNS/FOLLOW-UPS:

City Manager: City Manager Blodgett reported he contacted ODOT and state parks to find out what they are using for restrooms in their parks. The first park for restrooms will be Azalea Park and we will probably use modularity similar to what ODOT uses. A bulldozer comes in, removes the old, and places the new ones; the downtime is minimal.

Blodgett reported the City Council will be having their *goal setting* session at the beginning of next year. He said the commission should start thinking about what items are needed to include in the 2005-06 budget.

He mentioned the "*Making a Splash*" 2005 calendar. Women posed in their bathing suits, one for each month. Currently the sale of the calendars has been successful; the printing has been paid for, additional monies collected will go toward a heater for the swimming pool.

Commissioner's Comments:

Commissioner Farmer stated he and Lentz are coordinating with the soccer and baseball team leaders to alleviate conflicting field schedules for the 2004-05 season. Lentz stated he was sending a letter to all the sport leaders to attend a January 26, 2005 meeting at 2:00 p.m. He warned, if they don't show up, they could lose their playing times.

Commissioner Gordon announced this would be his last meeting on the Parks and Recreation Commission because in January 2005, he will take a city Council seat. He commented how much he has enjoyed the education during his commissioner tenure but looks forward to the challenges on the council.

Commissioner Gothard stated the building proposed by Elmo Williams is beautiful and she recognizes Elmo's intentions but the controversy is apparent.

Commissioner Sherman recapped events brought before the Commission during her 4-year tenure: the Park Master Plan was completed, the city received grant money for Chetco Park improvements such as handicapped accessibility, landscaping, and picnic areas, we turned down the dog park, we considered tennis courts at Azalea Park, we considered *disc golf*, and we finished the *Snackshack*. She concluded, the most difficult decision was the chapel proposal from Elmo.

Commissioner Dori Blodgett stated this was the end of her four-year tenure. She directed kudos to Park Supervisor Lentz for his input at meetings and especially for his direction on upgrading Kidtown. She impressed with staff stating there has been twice as much work with the same staff.

Chair Boynton expressed, people need to take into account if it had not been for people like Lorraine and Elmo Williams, and the Hansons, cleaning up that area the park would not be what it is today, adding and we owe it to Elmo to allow him to put up this structure.

With no further business before the Commission, Commissioner Blodgett moved to adjoin the meeting at 9:20 p. m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cathie Mahon  
Recording Secretary

Approved by the Parks and Recreation Commission

February 24, 2005