



Legislation Text

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TITLE:

Discussion of Future Development of the Martin Luther King Jr. Park Property

PURPOSE: The purpose of this agenda item is for the Board of Aldermen to revisit the potential development of Martin Luther King Jr. Park scheduled for 2016.

DEPARTMENT: Recreation and Parks and Planning

CONTACT INFORMATION: Anita Jones-McNair 918-7381, Patricia McGuire 918-7327 and Wendell Rodgers 918-7371

INFORMATION: Funds were approved in FY 2013-14 budget to update the Martin Luther King Jr. master plan. Staff is currently working on a RFQ and is seeking Board comments and direction prior to moving forward.

The idea to update the plan completed in 2004 has been discussed over the course of several years. The current plan was approved by the Board in October 2004. Since the current plan was completed, requests for space to hold art and vendor oriented events have increased and the needs/wishes of the community have evolved. Additionally, changes in population also make the need to update the master plan for the park more pertinent.

The construction was originally slated for 2008-2009. In the 2007-08 CIP it was recommended and adopted to delay the construction until 2010-11 in order to minimize any potential impact or ballooning effect on the potential tax burden due to implementation of the Fire Station and issuance of bonds for sidewalks and greenways. In the 2009-10 CIP it was recommended and adopted to delay the development until 2011-12 for the same reasons. Also in the 2011-12 CIP it was recommended and adopted to delay the construction until 2012-13. The park is currently slated for planning and design in 2016 and construction in 2017.

In 2011 the Board had an opportunity to discuss the park plan which was scheduled at that time to begin construction in 2013. During that meeting the Board provided the following direction to Town staff:

- 1) Preserve space for the Community Gardens with the understanding that the Gardens will be incorporated into a future MLK Jr Park Master Plan; and,
- 2) Remove the word “future” from the current sign; and,
- 3) Provide the Board at a future time with information on how, and if, attributes may be phased

into the park without triggering a development application. This information should also include estimated costs.

In summary, the current plan includes a “spray ground”, open field, community playground, picnic shelters, restrooms, wildlife native habitat/garden, plaza with concrete ping pong table, sculpture garden, multi-purpose field, bird sanctuary, wildflower display and 24’ road with two 12’ lanes and 45 degree angled spaces long the road in strategic locations to serve the park along the southern edge (see attached master plan and park design).

Since the original plan the community garden was incorporated in the future design and discussion of other suggested amenities include an amphitheater, adult fitness circuit, and skate park. Additionally, the new park master plan will study the initially proposed Tripp Farm Road Extension. It will evaluate the effectiveness (e.g. cost and otherwise) and consistency with the vision for the park off a street connecting Hillsborough Road and Tripp Farm Road versus a series of parking lots. A design other than one with a connecting street has implications for Town policies and regulations; adjustments would be needed for such a design to be permitted.

Should the Board of Aldermen consider development or use of the park for other than the current uses, there will be a significant impact on debt service, personnel and operating costs.

FISCAL & STAFF IMPACT:

To date the Town has acquired the park land at a cost of \$552,701. Other expenses include:
\$ 42,000 master plan
\$ 4,500 engineering cost for street design
\$ 12,150 environmental assessment
\$ 9,500 sewer extension cost
Total expenses to date for the MLK Park \$620,851

Included in the current year’s operating budget is \$25,000 to update the master plan. Based on the original adopted master plan, we had anticipated additional park design and construction cost of roughly \$2.3 million. It may be possible to reduce the park design and construction to around \$2.0 million; however, the actual costs will depend upon the updated master plan.

Once the park is developed, an annual operating cost for personnel, maintenance, supplies and equipment will be assessed and included.

RECOMMENDATION: Town Staff recommends that the Board of Aldermen discuss the future development of the Martin Luther King Jr. Park and provide direction to staff on how to proceed.