



## V. Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update

Mr. Earman introduced himself to the Commission. He then proceeded to give some background of the existing Parks and Recreation Master Plan with the goal of providing an overview of where we are currently with the master plan and where we intend to go.

Historically, the development and evolution of the Dublin Parks and Recreation system has been a combination of sound planning, policy-formulated development directives and market/product awareness. We took a lot of things into account as we are trying to plan out this community. It is no different from a parks and recreation system. The master plan encompasses three key concepts. You must understand the past, assess the present and envision the future.

Another component of the plan relies heavily on the National Recreation and Parks Association's Commission of Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies. The commission under this association is in charge of making sure that the management system of each agency uses the best practices providing quality improvement assurance and improvement. The agency must meet national standards to qualify. It holds the agency accountable to community needs and quality customer service and it increases operational efficiencies. It requires a substantial number of standards that we must abide by. There are 154 standards, 34 of which are fundamental. Eighty percent of the 154 standards must be met in order to qualify for the accreditation status. Reaccreditation is required every five years. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan and Strategic Action Plan is required as one of the 34 fundamentals. The City of Dublin Parks and Recreation Department was to be reaccredited last year. Due to the pandemic it was pushed up and will take place next week.

The process of the current master plan began in 2006. Dublin City Council adopted the final version of the plan in early 2010. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan complements the community-wide plan. It took us a while but the product we achieved in 2010 was hailed as one of the best master plans that many have seen. We are very proud of that. The process was led by consultants from Kinzelman Kline Gossman and Bucher, Willis and Ratliff, Corp. and involved community stakeholders, businesses, and resident focus groups, survey results, City Council and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission now known as the Community Services Advisory Commission and City staff.

The plan includes twelve chapters.

- Chapter 1: Introduction

**The evolution of Dublin's parks and recreation system is based upon these internal and external factors:**

- Civic Leadership
- Environmental Awareness
- Public Needs, Involvement, and Expectations

- Community Pride and Recognition
  - Regional Market Competitiveness
  - Maintaining the Status quo and anticipating national park and recreation industry trends (facilities and services)
  - Recognizing and accommodating the maturation of the community, the rich and healthy diversification of our population and residents' ever-changing needs and desires
- Chapter 2: Demographics
    - **Chapter Summary:**
      - Citywide and metropolitan area demographic trends as they relate to regional and national trends. Includes U.S. Census Block Groups within Dublin and its surrounding area. Provides a summary of key findings between these demographic trends and how they relate to master planning efforts.
- Chapter 3: Organizational Analysis
    - **Chapter Summary:**
      - Analyzes the approach and organizational system the City uses to deliver its services. Led to multiple organizational structure modifications to improve efficiencies, enhance customer service delivery, decrease duplications among various Divisions and minimize staffing costs.
- Chapter 4: Parks and Natural Resource Analysis
    - **Chapter Summary:**
      - The park inventory and environmental assessment undertaken as part of this plan are two components that guide the land acquisitions and associated connection necessary to maintain the current quantity and quality of parkland.
- Chapter 5: Recreation
    - **Chapter Summary:**
      - The Recreation Services Division offers a wide variety of high-quality programs and services within key areas identified as age-group programs, specialty programs and operations/service. This chapter's content has guided the Division to a more proactive management approach for meeting the community's needs and levels of service.
- Chapter 6: Land Acquisition
    - **Chapter Summary:**
      - While national planning guidelines recommend 10 to 20 acres of land per thousand people, Dublin currently provides roughly 34 acres per 1,000 residents. The City routinely averages over a 90 percent satisfaction rate for the provision, design, and maintenance of parks and open spaces. The City strives to meet and exceed the public's expectation for park land and acquisition.

- Chapter 7: Natural Resource Management

**Chapter Summary:**

- The preservation and management of natural resources has been enhanced through education efforts, expanded resource management practices, further protection of existing resources and the establishment of additional land resources to support diversity of flora and fauna throughout the City.

- Chapter 8: Parkland Development

**Chapter Summary:**

- Parks, greenways, and open space development improve the City's aesthetics, increase recreational opportunities and enhance the quality of life. This chapter analyzes existing parks and open spaces and the parkland development process to maximize the benefits of parkland development.

- Chapter 9: Bikeway and Pedestrian Linkage

**Chapter Summary:**

- A long standing part of the City's planning strategies have been focused on the importance of connectivity through bike path and pedestrian trails for the development of the concept of community, transportation options and recreational opportunities. This chapter focuses on the opportunities to enhance these systems through identification of gaps in key connections and adding alternative routes.

- Chapter 10: Community Art

**Chapter Summary:**

- Dublin's Community Art Plan provides guidance on how and where public art can create a meaningful impact on the lives of residents and visitors in the built and natural environments. The objective is to attain permanent artworks for the enjoyment and education of the community. The plan aspires to offer a variety of interpretations to the events in life of community.

- Chapter 11: Historical Culture

**Chapter Summary:**

- Provides guidance in ways that area and items of historic interest can be used to educate, entertain, and preserve our heritage. The goal is to celebrate history and cultural diversity, preserve significant Dublin's heritage for future generations, support the educational and economic endeavors of the community and promote tourism.

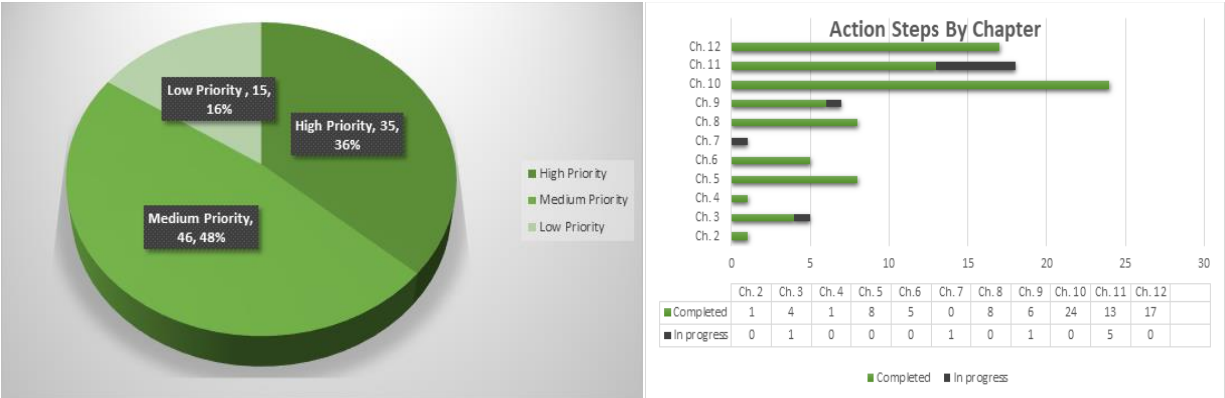
- Chapter 12: Park Maintenance

**Chapter Summary:**

- The City of Dublin Public Services Division is responsible for maintaining more than 1,400 acres of public parkland and open space. The City is committed to providing

and maintaining a safe and accessible park system that meets the demands and diversity of the entire community. This chapter analyzes the CIP and funding, tracking costs, and inventories maintenance responsibilities.

Each chapter was broken down into specific policies, then action steps were created to form strategic goals for Parks and Recreation. From the twelve chapters we identified 96 action steps. We then assigned different priority levels of high, medium and low as shown in the pie chart and monitored progress as shown on the graph. Green=completed. Black=in progress.



This graph represents that roughly 92% of the action steps have been completed with 28 action steps classified as ongoing.



If we would have started this plan update two years ago and worked toward completing it, we would have had to start over due to the pandemic. It hit us in many ways and pivoted us on so many levels, challenging us to provide services under the restrictions that we faced. Many of the adjustments due to the pandemic are likely to remain in place for quite some time. Some may never go away. We currently have non-traditional operational plans for festivals, recreation centers, aquatic facilities, and our camp programs. Most center on social distancing, taking temperatures and wearing masks but those measures are not going to change revenue production. We have seen a dramatic reduction in revenue. Revenue production has had to be re-imagined due to limited operating space and participation ratios. We need to establish a

stronger orientation toward health and social services and engaging the community. Christine Nardecchia, Director of Outreach and Engagement has done a fantastic job of connecting people and services as well as making sure people have what they need.

Advances in technology impacts new social behaviors. Park space design can promote those new miens bringing connectivity to music, phone and device chargers to outdoor settings so people can hold meetings outside or can use the open-air space as their office. With maintenance equipment, there are new technologies such as electronic-based engines verses combustible engines as well as autonomous maintenance equipment. Other non-traditional forms of recreation include augmented reality games, interactive playgrounds, virtual walks and exhibits throughout the parks.

Another new technology growing in popularity is e-sports. E-sports or electronic sports is a form of competition using video games. What differentiates it from standard video gaming is that e-sports is competitive (human-vs-human) and usually has an engaging spectator element to it, like traditional sports. It is an online gaming system where people compete not only for fun but some competitors also earn millions of dollars. The competitions can be on a worldwide basis and often have professional coaching. There is a projected audience of above 600 million worldwide by 2023 and are currently 170 schools offering scholarships to e-gamers. Although some of these new technologies are not necessarily physical, they are pandemic friendly. They help develop social skills sets, friendships, networking and create competitive team working opportunities for people to compete alongside each other. It is a large, up-and-coming program that we could easily offer.

With remote working on the rise, there may be a reduced need for brick and mortar facilities in the community. With the possibility of autonomous vehicles in the future, there could also be a reduced necessity for parking lots or parking garages. Both instances could provide opportunities for potential parklands, nature preserves, athletic fields or converted recreational centers. Moving forward we may need to modify our indoor recreational activities as well. During the pandemic the Dublin Recreation Center did not host a wedding, bar mitzvah or any large gathering. However, our festival planning, park design, community outreach and engagement is in the forefront and we are currently expanding our virtual programming as well as repurposing some of our recreational amenities.

Another local opportunity is potential parkland acquisition. It would require a great deal of work but the opportunities to create recreation or park districts with multiple municipalities is exciting. City-wide philanthropic opportunities are being entertained as an option to expand alternative revenue generation to offset reduced profits. For example, the farmland between Dublin and Marysville could potentially create a philanthropic-type partnership. We must measure our service delivery, identify alternative programs and services gaps as well as take a look at our CIP development. We need to engage community and staff. The staff is important but the community is the driving force. We need to conduct a needs assessment to understand what the community is looking for. What are the short-term and long-term trends and projects? What remains

relevant and irrelevant? As we go through the plan, we need to create an organizational assessment, keeping in mind the financial implications of the results. We will need financial resources to make all those things happen so alternative funding opportunities is another *needs assessment*. Then we will need to develop an implementation plan for:

- Identification of Key Issues
- Visioning Session
- Establish Clear Goals and Objectives
- Assign Teams and Responsibilities
- Measure Completion
- Define and Measure Success

Initially this proposal went before City Council who deferred it to the Public Services Committee and the Community Services Advisory Commission. The Public Services Committee were very supportive of moving forward. They want to take a good look at where we are today and put together a recommendation going forward so our job is to:

- Explore Various Topics for the Update
- Components and Project Scope
- Pinpoint Budget Implications (Internal vs. Consultant-Driven)
- Propose a Timeline
- Prepare a Recommendation to City Council

Mr. Earman said he is looking to send a recommendation back to the Public Services Committee and Dublin City Council with the possibility of putting this proposal into the 2022 Operating Budget. Doing so will give us the rest of this year to take a hard look at the plan. We will be better suited to carry it forward from that point. From there Matt turned the meeting back over to Mr. Dritz and opened the floor for questions and discussion.

Early in his presentation Mr. Earman noted Dublin having 34 acres (of parks and open spaces) per 1000 residents. Mr. Dritz inquired about which municipality in central Ohio has the highest acre per resident ratio. Mr. Earman said Westerville would be comparable to Dublin but did not think they have as much acreage. Mr. Dritz asked about Metro Parks as a regional partner. Mr. Earman confirmed that they partner on occasion. He added Glacier Ridge Metro Park was purchased by the City through such a partnership. A new dog park was recently added to the park.

Mr. Snider said, as a tennis player it would be great to have several additional tennis court locations that have wood (practice) boards. Currently, the only one is located at Llewellyn Farms. At times there is a wait to use it. (This is also one located at the Muirfield courts.) Potentially adding boards at locations such as Coffman Park that are far away from houses would be a great inexpensive amenity.

Mr. Earman commented that tennis activity has decreased somewhat but pickleball had picked up tremendously. Pickleball courts have been constructed near the Justice Center and Coffman Skate Park and we can't open those soon enough. We are also anticipating the addition of a few more tennis courts at that location and have had a request for platform tennis as well.

Mr. Earman went on to say that this type of feedback is what we need. Satisfaction surveys are relied upon heavily but sometimes it is hard to gauge what the actual needs of the community are. He added, when we see grassroots efforts similar to what we are seeing right now with pickleball, we move rapidly. Pickleball is not just a Dublin phenomenon, it is a national and worldwide phenomenon and one that we do not anticipate going away any time soon. Mr. Earman said he would like to have a facilitated community discussion about racquet sports, whether indoor or outdoor. Cricket is popular as well but these sports require space that we don't have. Regarding racquetball, Mr. Snider had a second suggestion. He said himself and approximately 100 others were active racquetball players at Premier. When the facility permanently shut down due to the pandemic, the players were left looking for places for league play. Mr. Snider proposed having the DCRC explore repurposing existing space or adding new space to create indoor racquetball courts. If not feasible, potentially converting existing parking lot space into three wall outdoor racquetball courts would be a less expensive option.

Mr. Earman said that they looked at racquetball when planning the DCRC and when they renovated it as well. At that point in time they wanted to make sure they could accommodate as many people within the community as possible. Racquetball requires a fairly large space indoors that only accommodates one or two people. It is difficult to integrate indoors but is something to look at possibly incorporating outdoors.

Mr. Arunachalam asked Mr. Earman to elaborate on his vision for e-sports. Mr. Earman stated teenagers are the most difficult clientele to connect with. He said once you begin to figure out what appeals to them, they have moved on to something else. However, as parks and recreation professionals, it is our job to get people off their couches, away from their devices and engaged in social, physical and developmental activities. Nonetheless, technology started creeping in at a pace we could not compete with so we began to explore ways to use technology to our advantage. While e-sports does not necessarily engage youth physically, it could connect teenagers regionally. The DCRC might potentially be a hub where kids can participate in tournaments and professional coaching could provide mentorship.

Mr. Dritz inquired about the recreation master plan as it relates to the community pools. In response, Mr. Earman said a subset study of recreational amenities was conducted in 2014, a few years after the master plan was created. The pools were basically a derivative of the plan but not necessarily included in the plan. Mr. Dritz asked if the renovation of the north pool was part of the master plan. Mr. Earman said it was not a part of the plan but was part of the assessment of the facility over time.



Mr. Dritz asked Mr. Earman what his thoughts were on motorized vehicles, either gas or electric powered using the shared-use paths. Mr. Earman said that topic is one that needs to be reassessed. The original ruling was based on higher speed vehicles such as motorcycles, mini bikes or mopeds. Now there are scooters and e-bikes that are more regulated so we may want to revisit that topic.

Mr. Plouck said he believes the shared use mobility topic may be discussed at the Public Service Committee meeting on May 3<sup>rd</sup>. He invited the commission members to tune in to the livestream.

Mr. Snider inquired about the east side of the river park area as it pertains to different venues and visions for the area. Mr. Earman said he has staff tasked with researching similar areas to acquire an understanding of the types of applications, types of permits issued, and resources that are necessary to accommodate various events. The City has limited capacity so we need to understand how to allocate our resources such as our police department, our parks and street operations. We also need to look at our funding and revenue production. The Covid situation of 2020 stifled progress to some degree so we should not have to worry about large gatherings anytime soon. However, we are seeing the plaza work coming along very well. The upper plaza should hopefully open next month. Covid will restrict heavy usage so we are looking at 2022 for introducing other venues. As you know, the Community Services Advisory Commission did take a look at our event policies and how we apply different permit levels (tier one, two and three) and the criteria required to meet each tier. The commission may be able to get involved with the permitting process for that area because it will be different from other areas in the City.

Mr. Arunachalam commented on an observation about the bike paths not being cleared as swiftly after the back-to-back snow events and wondered if the reason was due to budget cuts caused by the Covid impact. Mr. Earman suggested using the GoDublin app to inform staff of such instances. He also commented on the bike ambassador program that inspects and notes items related to the paths. As far as snow removal on the paths, the priority lies with paths near schools and in the historic Dublin area where heavier pedestrian traffic is prominent.

Mr. Plouck referenced a previous Public Service Committee meeting where, with the help of a consultant, the committee did some brainstorming on what they would like to see from an infrastructure standpoint by 2035. One individual did breach the subject of innovative ways of clearing shared-use paths. Mr. Plouck offered to share the links to the Public Service Committee meetings so that the CSAC members could listen to topics of interest.

Mr. Dritz asked what the next steps will be for the commission as it pertains to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update. Mr. Earman asked the commission to read through each chapter and come back to the next meeting with a series of questions. He said to go through the action steps and policies that were derived from those chapters and categorize them; determine if they are relevant, future-related or need to be spun off. He said it may be possible to get through all

twelve chapters in three meetings. It would be a great exercise for the Commission to give their insight and perspective to City Council at either the committee level or the council level.

Mr. Dritz said with Christine Nardecchia addressing the committee in May perhaps June will be most feasible to circle back with questions and comments regarding the Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update. Mr. Plouck said he would work with Mr. Earman to figure out a schedule so the Commission will have time to read the material. Mr. Earman said before each meeting he would go through each of the actions steps in the chapter and create a survey so the commission members could respond to the items and categorize them as relevant, not relevant or do something different. It would be best to get the feedback a couple of days before the meeting so we can compile it and have discussion and get on the same page moving forward.

#### **VI. Other Items of Interest**

No Other Items of Interest.

#### **VII. Next meeting: May 11, 2021**

The next meeting will be scheduled for Tuesday, May 11, 2021

#### **VIII. Adjournment**

Mr. Dritz adjourned the meeting at 7:53 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by:



Sandra Pickens, Administrative Support III

Attachments: Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update - PowerPoint