

Attending: Betsy Abert, Debby Pizur, Jackie Benka, Jody Johnson, Debbie Wilhelm, Pam Uhrig, Jan Marsh, Rick Kaiser, Brooke Gilley, James Davies, Pat Jursik, Thomas Gardner, Annemarie Adsen

Betsy Abert recently spoke with SM Police Detective Mike Hill about the increase of coyotes in the park. Neighbors have concerns. Information about coyotes can be found on the DNR website at <https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/wildlifehabitat/urbancoyote.html>.

Treasurer's report from Lynn Crawford:

\$5,997.86 Guardian Credit Union

\$10,103.91 The Park People

\$16,101.77 total

We welcomed naturalist Brooke Gilley, from the Wehr Nature Center. She proposed several programs to be held in Grant Park during a facility closure due to construction in the nature center, starting late in 2018. The programs include Owl Prowl on Jan. 4th & 5th; and a pop-up (owl related) nature program on Jan. 26. They will promote the events on their website and TV. She also volunteered to host a Monarch Butterfly tagging program, tentatively scheduled for Sept. 14, 2019, after witnessing their migration through Grant Park last fall. Our help is needed, particularly posting program information on our website and facebook pages. We will keep you posted.

Pat Jursik, former County Supervisor for District 8, addressed our group as a citizen representing the parks advocacy group Preserve Our Parks (POP). She spoke of controversy about parks funding for the future. She mentioned the Earned Revenue Task Force that met behind closed doors to find a way to replace taxpayer funding with earned revenue. Recently, former Parks Director John Dargle was tasked with securing 50% of operating costs as earned revenue to supplement the 50% funding from taxpayers. In the last 10 years, the state legislature has reduced our shared revenue by \$180 million. The state is supposed to send shared revenue to support mandated services (courts, jail, etc.) The revenue reduction impacts the county's non-mandated services (parks, transit, etc.) The 2018 budget for parks assumes 62% of earned revenue (parking meters, beer garden revenue, beach vendors); the 2020 budget assumes 75% of earned revenue; and by 2024, parks will need to be self-supported, with 100% earned revenue. As an example, Summerfest is 100% self-supported by earned revenue. She agrees that not all earned revenue in parks is bad, but rather a slippery slope.

Pat reminded us about the Park East Committee which looked at funding sources to pay for the Bucks Arena. The committee suggested raising the sales tax to its cap to pay for the arena, parks, transit & the public museum. Milwaukee Metropolitan Association of Commerce Director Tim Sheehy promised a sales tax solution, but County Executive Chris Abele made final decisions behind closed doors by selling Park East for \$1 to the Bucks, thereby voiding the agreement of the committee, and bypassing the parks, cultural, transit tie in. The county assumes the entire cost.

As of Feb. 8th, parking meters in parks is not a done deal. If the county board refuses to approve it, that opens a \$1.6 M hole in the budget. The City of Cudahy passed a resolution against parking meters in parks and the City of South Milwaukee may follow suit. There are realistic alternatives. POP proposes dedicated revenue source for parks. The Public Policy Forum studied Milwaukee and found that we had the lowest sales tax supported system in the state. Milwaukee County is considered Class 1, and subject to different restrictions because our population is more than 750,000 residents. We are the only Class 1 county in the state.

Pullin' o' the Green party planning is in full swing. The dinner is scheduled for March 16th at the South Milwaukee Yacht Club. The committee meets again on Feb. 21st at 6 pm at the SMYC for planning purposes.

Rick Kaiser reported that parks has accepted our proposal for maintenance of the ravine signage. The next steps are for parks to approve placement of the signs after determining sewer lines, electric, etc. We should expect to pay the full amount for production of the signs by check, and be reimbursed for 50% of the cost by parks.

Jody Johnson described options for our email network, but large volume providers require a mailing address to be printed at the bottom of each message. Unwilling to use her home address, Jody suggested a P.O. box for FOGP, but costs were prohibitive. She will look for alternatives.

Betsy Abert will talk to Julia Robson to schedule her presentation on the Walk to Sustain the Great Lakes for an Earth Day program, April 12th.

Jackie Benka is ordering t-shirts for FOGP with our new logo (thanks to Sue Hebner). She will order 25 - 30 in quantity, and FOGP members can contact her directly to purchase in advance at cost. Additional shirts will be sold at Pullin' o' the Green, and spring markets at retail pricing.

Grant money of \$300 to \$500 is available for Weed-Out work from SEWISC Invasive Species Council, to purchase loppers, for instance, or for an exam/license required to apply herbicide. Betsy will talk to Natural Areas Coordinator Brian Russart about the grant proposal.

Lastly, a suggestion was made to formalize our group structure to establish legitimacy for future grant applications. We lack a full board of directors and bylaws!

Our next meeting will be held on Thursday, April 12<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm at the Golf Course Clubhouse.

Respectfully submitted by  
Jody Johnson, Temporary Chair and Secretary

[www.fogp.org](http://www.fogp.org)

Facebook: Friends of Grant Park (membership must be requested)