

LOWELL TOWN COUNCIL  
WORK SESSION  
APRIL 12, 2021

A Work Session of the Lowell Town Council was called to order on Monday, April 12, 2021, at 5:30 P.M., by President Christopher Salatas. Members present were Michael Gruszka, Todd Angerman, John Alessia, Christopher Salatas, and John Yelkich. Also present were Clerk-Treasurer Judith Walters, Town Manager Craig Hendrix, Public Works Director Kevin Gray, and GIS Director Greg White. Also present were SEH representatives Jason Spain, Beth Miller, and Josh Grabijas, and five interested citizens. The purpose of the work session was general town business.

Liberty Park/Freedom Trail Design - Town Manager Craig Hendrix stated SEH is present to review a concept of the Liberty Park design and to review the map of the projected location of the Freedom Trail. They will need answers on the trail location to move to the next phase of the project. Jason Spain stated the Freedom Trail is considered part of the Liberty Park concept. The Liberty Park preliminary design includes an enclosed event space with indoor/outdoor fireplace for community events, splash pad, amphitheater, upgraded playground equipment, pickle ball court, upgraded maintenance building, and expanded parking lots. Beth Miller reviewed the drawing of the proposal and discussion followed on the use of the building that could be used for festivals, parties, showers, weddings. The capacity of the proposed site would be 125 people at a seated event, and could be opened up to hold events for over 21 by being fenced off. There is an area that could hold 30 picnic tables, and restrooms are attached with a small concession stand. The need for a kitchen was discussed and if the building could be radiated heat, and/or air conditioned. The event space is approximately 1800 square feet and currently shows two male and two female restrooms that could be accessible either from the inside or outside. Mr. Hendrix stated there may be multi-events going on in the park at one time and suggested the need to have bathrooms just for the inside. Councilman Alessia stated he envisioned this being more of a community center being rented out for showers, small parties not wedding receptions. It was noted we have a wedding reception hall in town and didn't want to compete with town businesses.

The Splash Pad with sun shade was reviewed as a small feature of approximately 300 square feet that would have 38 pop-up fountains that are turned on by push buttons, that would hold about fifteen people with a seat wall around. Mr. Spain said splash pads are either pass-thru or recycled systems that allow for the fresh water to drain into the sewer system. Discussion followed on making a larger area for more children to play.

The Amphitheater design, proposed of 1600 square feet was reviewed and Ms. Miller stated the size depends on what the site is going to be used for. She said if it was going to be used for local bands and school bands and choirs and plays the size would be sufficient, but if the town is interested in an orchestra it would have to be enlarged. The design included an equipment room and changing room and would have accessible seating and lawn seating and would face the hill for expanded seating. An in-house PA system and lighting would also need to be included.



Councilman Alessia asked how the phases of the park would be developed and stated he felt the first phase should be the amphitheater, as it would get the most use at first, and then expand from that point to include the buildings. Councilman Gruszka stated he would like to see the splash pad larger and be able to turn into a skating rink in winter. Mr. Hendrix stated the park soil is very spongy and a stormwater storage area is needed where the water naturally flows near the railroad. Mr. Spain stated they tried in Hammond to turn their splash pad into a skating rink and had so many problems they abandoned the idea.


The Freedom Trail will continue through Liberty Park and signage would be high enough for food trucks and trucks for deliveries to drive on. The Liberty Park gateway sign would have to be high enough for emergency access vehicles. The concept map didn't show, but will include lighting and security cameras. The upgraded playground was reviewed and different designs were discussed. Ms. Miller stated depending on what and how large you want the cost could be anywhere from \$250,000 to \$750,000. She suggested funding from private donors and federal grants. Mr. Hendrix stated that Sprint had been sold to T-Mobile and they no longer will need a cell tower, so the water tower will be removed. Signage was discussed and Ms. Miller recommended all signs be similar in design and showed sketching of signs to look like the Welcome to Lowell signs. The estimate for the digital sign for Evergreen Park will be ready this summer and is being paid for by a donation to the park.

Josh Grabijas, reviewed the aerial map of the projected location of the Freedom Trail, that connects Liberty Park near the intersection of Liberty Street and Main Street and runs north along Liberty through a wooded area and comes out within the Timber Springs subdivision on Timber Springs Road and then follows the existing right of way through the platted Freedom Springs subdivision until it exits north into the northern area of Freedom Park near the dog park. The trail of 1.2 miles is half a nature experience, and the other half in the Timber Springs subdivision. Discussion followed on avoiding the wetlands and the need for retaining walls, and boardwalks. Different type of boardwalks such as wood or concrete are accepted by DNR. The area on North Liberty will be upgraded and will be stripped for the trail. Councilman Angerman asked if fences could be put up if the trail is cutting across property owners land. Mr. Hendrix stated he has seen white PVC fencing along routes, but we need to select the route and the hope is not to have to acquire a lot of land. Mr. Hendrix said the environmental study will determine if a permit will be needed from the DNR in the low areas, and if we will have to adjust the route. He said the proposed route is on their back property line not their property, but said INDOT will approve funding for fences. Citizens in the audience started speaking and asking questions about the proposed route and commenting on problems in the parks and crimes that have occurred on other bike trails. One citizen spoke of incidents in Carmel and Bloomington, Indiana and the death of the two girls in Delphi, Indiana. She spoke of a man that sits at Evergreen Park and watches the kids playing. Councilman Yelkich stated that he had spoke with Carmel Police Department and they spoke highly of their bike path, as do Highland and Crown Point. He stated there is no statistics that show there is an increase in crime with a bike trail but research does state your property value will increase 15-20% with a bike path. The citizens said they thought the idea for a bike trail was a phenomenal idea but didn't think this route how been well thought out, and didn't

want in their area. They asked if the route could be built on the wetlands so it would not be right on top of them, and they also didn't agree with the route being on the sidewalk in the subdivisions. One citizen stated she did not want a parade going along her backyard every night. Councilman Alessia stated this is exactly what we want is a safe route for citizens to run, walk, and bike. Councilman Angerman stated we need a safe route to get to Freedom Park for use of the dog park and skate park. Citizens wanted to know why the route didn't follow along Cline Avenue, and they were informed that route did not qualify for an INDOT grant. One citizen commented the whole project is very secretive and felt the town manager didn't give enough information and they should ask the citizens of town what they wanted. Council informed them a Park survey was done a few years ago and the top requests from citizens were a bike trail and splash pad.

SEH will move forward with the environmental study and a revised trail route in the more rural section of the trail.

No further discussion, the work session adjourned at 7:01 P.M.

  
Christopher Salatas, President

Attest:

  
Judith Walters, Clerk-Treasurer