

etc.

Parks

(continued from page 1)

"Given that there is a great need for softball and soccer facilities, and knowing that there are 50 acres out there in north Bryan, I am inclined to say that (developing) it might be a good plan, but I want to see how it relates to the overall comprehensive plan."

Is in fact north Bryan the most appropriate place? he asked. And, if the land does fit into the plan, is it fair for the citizens to have to develop it? "Are we willing to come up with the bucks to have a plan, to have engineers go out there and survey and lay it out correctly?" he asked. "Or are we going to end up with another Travis Park? We've got a bunch of fields over there that are useless and we did that makeshift — pur of the moment kind of thing — and that's exactly why a plan is important." Travis Park's softball fields are too short to satisfy softball regulations.

Blatchley said he is happy that the citizens are willing to give up their time and energy, but he doesn't think that is the most appropriate way to approach the problem.

That same citizen support, Mike Reuwsaat said, is the most important aspect of the master planning process.

"The advisory board can advise the council to act on recommendations, but if there isn't any public support, if the special interest groups aren't here, if the board is not there at the council meetings, then staff will get cut out and it will go another year," he said.

Jan Winniford agrees that it is through citizen input that steps are being taken to alleviate the problems.

"It's input like the softball association showing up at city council meetings and other kinds of complaints and concerns that is having an impact," she said. "It helps people to see that there is a need for allocation in that area."

The citizens have been vocal for the last few months, attending both council and board meetings.

At a meeting of the council on June 28, members of both the soccer and softball associations jammed the chamber to ask for better playing fields and facilities.

Buddy Haney, a spokesman for the Bryan Softball Association, voiced complaints to the council about lack of facilities. Bryan has four softball fields, including the two at Travis Park which are not regulation size.

Linda Martin, spokesperson for the Bryan Soccer Association, told the council that there are only eight soccer fields in Bryan, three of which are on school property, and there are 800 children who play. She also said adults must go to College Station to play because the existing fields aren't large enough.

Both Haney and Martin complained about the poor maintenance of the existing facilities,

including bathrooms that were not working and a fire ant problem.

Connie and Doug Weedon presented their plan to the council on July 6, and again to the advisory board on July 21.

At the same time as the discussions about poor maintenance and facilities and the public presentations calling for the problem to be solved, Reuwsaat said he and Recreation Superintendent Roy Ross were discussing the possibility of a master planning process for the Bryan parks.

At a meeting of the council and the advisory board on July 6, a comprehensive plan was discussed publicly for the first time.

Mayor Richard Smith said at that meeting that he felt it would be a mistake to spend large amounts of money — for the Weedon's plan, for example — without stepping back and looking at the entire parks and recreation program.

It was after that meeting that Reuwsaat was enlisted to suggest a possible master planning process.

At the July 21 meeting of the board, Reuwsaat outlined suggestions for a possible comprehensive plan. Reuwsaat used as examples the plans from the Austin and Waco parks, and a study done on the Bryan parks in 1977 by a Texas A&M University parks and recreation class.

"Everything has to be evaluated," Reuwsaat said, "not only in quantity, but in quality and level of development as well." In other words, he said, what is the level of development now, compared with what it could be or should be?

Reuwsaat said the plan would break the city into zones and an inventory would be taken to find out what property the parks department currently owns and what the department's current responsibilities and services are.

Then, a needs assessment survey would be done, he said. The needs assessment would establish priorities in each zone to determine what is needed in that zone. The assessment, he said, would be done through a community survey.

A master plan would be devised based on the inventory evaluations and the input of the citizen participation plan. Reuwsaat said the evaluation is important because needs will be different in each of the zones.

Dr. Williams gave as an example a tennis court that has never been used in one part of the city. The department took down the backstops and the nets and replaced them with basketball goals.

"They're wearing down the pavement over there now," he said. A steering committee, composed of four advisory board members and a member of the city planning staff, has been appointed to construct the plan. The committee has come up with a cost estimate of \$98,175 to accomplish the planning process. Reuwsaat stressed that the

money is only for the plan, not implementation.

"A master plan is a policy plan," he said. "We have to come up with the policies to guide an action or implementation plan. The end product to all of this is a bond issue."

The last bond issue passed was in 1980 which provided \$100,000 for the renovation of Williamson and Bonham parks.

"I assume that we would have to pass a bond issue to do what we're talking about," Blatchley said.

But, he said, the problem that arises could be one in which a facility is temporarily constructed to take care of the immediate need. He said once that happens, it's very difficult to make a change.

"What happens is we get a council that is not quite as interested in a bond issue because we've satisfied — as temporary as it may be — that need," he said.

What he said he would like to see done is an evaluation of existing parks and construction of temporary facilities on those, rather than trying up new lands.

"I was at Thomas Park the other night and there's plenty of area out there for two or three soccer fields," he said. "That's our park already."

"Now, it may not be the most ideal situation, but we can put up with that until we can come up with a plan to do it right."

Jan Winniford agrees that a bond issue is the end product of the master planning process.

"To really get things going — to develop a comprehensive park plan — we'll have to try to pass a bond issue," she said.

But, Blatchley said, bond issues are usually controversial especially for parks.

"A very small percentage of the people are interested in parks," he said. "Most people have no interest in parks whatsoever."

He said that most people in Bryan are concerned about spending millions of dollars in

bond money on dilapidated sewer and water pipes, not the parks.

In 1981, College Station passed a bond issue worth \$3 million. Steve Beachy, director of

the College Station Parks and Recreation Department, said that \$1 million of that would be used for acquisition of new land, and \$2 million would go toward maintenance and development

of old land. Blatchley said he hates to compare Bryan and College Station parks because there is a distinct difference in clientele in the two cities.

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