



**Special Meeting with Work Session
November 18, 2019**

Call to Order: The special meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Bob Becker, Board Chairperson.
Roll Call: Bob Becker, Sandy Apidone, Jeff Deluca, and Pat Norris

Absent: Meg Slifcak, Bill Smith, and Art Gonzalez - all excused absences

Also in Attendance: Administrative Coordinator Mindy Remec and approximately 22 additional residents/attendees

The Association of Nature Center Administrators (ANCA) Review:

Mr. Becker opened discussion on the final report from ANCA. ANCA representatives were asked to focus on the key issues of Communication and Relationship, Community, and Planning. Mr. Becker led the discussion, summarized and asked for comments and suggestions on each section of the report.

General Observations:

Natural and historic resource:

Mr. Norris noted that entrances could be made more attractive while maintaining the deer fence. Mr. Deluca wished more time had been spent touring and reviewing the property with ANCA. Ms. Ringle questioned ANCA's expertise on historic homes. Other comments included a project to make the entrance more attractive coincide with upgrades to Gund Hall.

Accomplishments:

Mr. Becker (referring to the sentence on page six (6) of the report) says that "a lot of work has been done but that "money has disappeared" in the Richfield Heritage Preserve". He interpreted this statement to mean money has been spent on necessary infrastructure projects. Ms. Richardson said that money has been spent on what the people of Richfield wanted. Ms. Sanderson said that communicating with the public is important. Mr. Becker concurred saying that public relations on accomplishments is starting with the upcoming ribbon cutting and reception.

Financial:

Mr. Becker stated from the report that levy support for infrastructure projects is difficult for taxpayers to appreciate. Mr. Deluca said that as infrastructure projects are completed other projects to make the park more attractive can be started. Mr. Norris said it provides an opportunity to tell our story better.

Diverse stakeholders and partners:

Mr. Becker summarized by saying there is an abundance of partners to collaborate with. Mr. Deluca commented that the board is not communicating well enough with partners and incorporating them into programs.

Facilities:

Mr. Becker stated from the report that limited access and utility infrastructure may not make all facilities suitable for public use. Mr. Norris said parking may be something that should be looked into. Ms. Richardson said the number of shelters and latrines are a benefit. Ms. Ringle said that she hopes the character of the structures and property is maintained. Other comments included that some people may like "primitive" sites.

High skilled individuals within boards and partners:

(the report notes) "Negotiation and compromise are needed to ease tension and resolve differences". Mr. Deluca commented that everyone needs to move on and focus in on the new park and new board. Mr. Norris remarked that we need to operate as a board.

Organization transition stage:

Mr. Becker commented that the organization is moving predictably through growth phases as it completes the initial mission. Hiring a park director is key in moving the board from a working to a governing board. Ms. Ringle said that the Friends supports the hiring of a director and having a single point of contact for consistency. Also discussed were timeframe for hiring and the job description and if the Friends could provide input into the job description. Mr. Becker replied that the description was already approved at the last board meeting. Mr. Deluca and Mr. Norris stressed the importance of hiring the right person. Ms. Ringle asked if the Friends would be part of the process, possibly meeting candidates to make recommendations. Mr. Becker stated all partner groups will be part of the process.

Nearby parks and preserves:

Mr. Becker stated nearby parks provides opportunities to collaboration and connectivity but can also be competitors. Mr. Deluca commented that connectivity is important to him. Mr. Norris said Richfield Heritage Preserve buildings (and property) can be offered to other organizations for their programs. Ms. Sanderson said focus should be on collaboration not competition. Other comments included collaborating with historical societies because of the Ohio History Connection.

Priority 1: Communication and Relationship**Observations:****Everyone wants the Richfield Heritage Preserve to be successful:**

Mr. Becker noted that the passion for the park is the basis for collaboration.

Boards have not been not working as boards:

Mr. Becker said organizations in the same growth phase often have board members that also volunteer. He summarized from the report is that individual board members must refrain from representing their interests as being the interests of the board as a whole. Board members must speak from a unified position representing the entire board's voted decisions. Ms. Ringle reiterating welcoming a director. She noted there has (have) been times when a decision made in a board meeting had been changed by an individual board member. Having one point of contact for consistency in communicating board decisions will be extremely helpful. There was some confusion in enforcement of board approved policies within the park by both board members and attendees. Mr. Norris stated that we should be informing people of park rules, not enforcing. Additional comments included that a positive park culture should be established.

Mr. Becker said the second part of this issue is that a board's bylaws will often include a rotation policy and that a well-run board will embrace changes in members. Ms. Ringle said they are working on

rotating their positions on the Friends board. Mr. Norris endorses a rotation policy and amending the bylaws to include term limits. He stated that another method is for board members to step away and act as advisors to the board. Mr. Becker commented that more buy-in from the township and the village is needed by taking recommendations from existing board members for new appointments. He commented that new board members need to have skillsets that complement the board. In his opinion, continuity is needed during certain phases of board growth to see visions and projects through to completion. Village Councilmember Ms. Healey questioned the RJRD Board's involvement in the appointed process. Mr. Becker said he hoped that Village Council and the Township Board of Trustees would take the RJRD Board's recommendations for appointments. Village Councilmember Mr. Wheeler said that council interviews applicants and that recommendations are taken into consideration.

Individuals making decisions and taking action:

Mr. Becker reiterated that while board members are volunteering they conduct themselves as volunteers only, not board members. Board members and attendees voiced their confusion with this recommendation. Mr. Becker said that board voted decisions must be supported regardless of individual feelings. Mr. Norris stated that if an issue comes up, the response would be to state the board's decision. Ms. Starr said she would never comment that she did not vote for a Friend's board decision.

Mr. Becker asked fellow board members if bylaws should be amended now to include term limits. Mr. Norris said that should be included in the current bylaw review.

Lack of Trust, Personality clashes, and People struggling to let go of the past:

Attendees reviewed the sections on Lack of Trust, Personality Clashes, and People struggling with letting go of the past. Mr. Norris commented that board decisions cannot be reversed by an individual. Ms. Ringle said that some things happen repeatedly so they are hard to let go unless problems are acknowledged and addressed.

Dysfunctional Feedback loops:

Mr. Becker stated that all of these things, such as lack of trust and the inability to let go of the past, have created whirlpools which wastes time and resources. Ms. Sanderson commented that our time is a precious resource and it is frustrating to have that wasted.

Ms. Richardson asked if decisions are being put on hold until after a park director is hired. Mr. Deluca stated that the park needs to continue to move forward. Other comments included that a park director will not be a cure-all.

Mr. Becker said this review and discussion is necessary so that everyone has a common understanding of the report.

People want to be recognized:

Mr. Becker stated that people want to be recognized and need to be thanked for the work they do. Ms. Ringle commented that it is sometimes hurtful for the Friends group to be told they are just like other partner groups. She stated that everyone is important but other partner groups would continue without the park but the Friends group would cease to exist without the Richfield Heritage Preserve. She hoped that the RJRD Board would recognize the Friends as the important resource that they are.

Other comments included: There is a tendency to lump the Friends group in with other partner groups and they would like to be recognized and the RJRD Board has not always supported the Friends.

Ms. Sanderson said that from a marketing standpoint it is important to consistently support each other in a positive way.

Mr. Becker stated that in 2017 the RJRD Board did positive public relations for the Friends in an effort to build the group back up. Ms. Richardson agreed with his statement but feels the relationship has changed since that time. She said it is hard to put energy into a cause when feeling marginalized.

A resident commented that the stakeholders are the residents of the township and village and that partner groups have different agendas than the people who pay taxes to support the park. This is no longer about preserving Crowell Hilaka but preserving the heritage and making it move forward for the village and the township. Ms. Ringle clarified that she did not intend to say the Friends group is more important than the residents of the township and the village.

Recommendations:

Hire a Director:

Mr. Becker stated that hiring a park director is the number one priority.

Learn and implement best practices for boards:

Mr. Deluca voiced confusion on how to stop being a board member while volunteering in the park. Mr. Becker commented that the board must learn to act as a unit, not as individuals and summarized by saying the board needs to transition its role from working to governing. A managing board will not get involved in day-to-day operations but works to set policies and procedures.

Priority 2: Community

Key Issue and Observations:

Mr. Becker stated that a key issue identified by ANCA is that the community needs to be engaged. The RJRD Board can build support through programming. Observed was that many in the community believe in Richfield Heritage Preserve.

Name Confusion:

Mr. Becker said that an important observation by ANCA is the name confusion. The Richfield Joint Recreation District, the Friends of Crowell Hilaka, and the Richfield Heritage Preserve are all referred to by many names and the use of acronyms can be confusing.

Mr. Deluca stated the RJRD Board is the governing body and Richfield Heritage Preserve is the park. He related it to Cleveland Metroparks and the many individual park properties governed by Cleveland Metroparks. His vision is that RJRD may have other parks it governs in addition to the Richfield Heritage Preserve.

Mr. Norris said that the term "District" can be confusing.

Mr. Becker said that his preference is to choose a single name; either Richfield Joint Recreation District or RJRD.

Ms. Ringle commented that the name of the Friends group is an issue they have recently discussed and agree that they will be taking action on. She noted that Crowell Hilaka is a name that has been important

for fundraising purposes and the Friends are putting together a committee on how to properly do a name transition.

Ms. Apidone commented that the name Crowell Hilaka does not necessarily mean anything to longtime Richfield residents. They have always known it as the Girl Scout camp.

Additional comments included: that the governing body's name is not important and the importance should be placed on the park's name, and this topic should be part of the branding and overall marketing. Mr. Becker said that name confusion will be an action item for a future agenda as well as a common agreement on branding.

Visitor experience is unidentified:

Mr. Becker stated the visitor experience was the next issue identified by ANCA, who said it is undefined. This is tied into the lack of visible signs on streets to direct people toward the Richfield Heritage Preserve, the imposing deer fence, and signage within the park.

Knowledge about the Richfield Heritage Preserve and how tax dollars are being spent:


Mr. Becker opened discussion on this section. Comments included the importance of what media outlets are being used for disseminating news and the use of multiple outlets to reach a broader range of ages.

Mr. Becker said an additional meeting to finish the discussion will be needed and the discussion will pick up at this stopping point. He entertained a motion to adjourn.

Adjournment:

MOTION by: Mr. Norris and seconded by Ms. Apidone to adjourn the meeting at 8:47 p.m.
FURTHER DISCUSSION: NONE
MOTION PASSED: Vote taken by voice Yea, which was unanimous

Submitted by:


Mindy Renec, Administrative
Coordinator

Accepted by:


Bob Becker, Board Chairperson