

Minutes of Wimberley Parks and Recreation Committee Meeting  
December 17, 2000

1. The first meeting of the Parks and Recreation Committee of the Wimberley Village Council met at City Hall at 5:00 p.m. Council member Martha Knies presided; Committee members Kris Cusack, Jane Morton, Thad Nance, and Bob Shearer were present; members Fred Franz, Kathleen Cline and Rick Stephan were absent. Martha asked Dell Hood to consider joining the committee and to act as temporary secretary; he agreed to be secretary tonight and will decide on joining the committee by the next meeting.

2. Martha Knies opened with a brief explanation of why this committee was formed: even before the incorporation of Wimberley, there were many expressions of interest in local parks and recreation facilities by residents and visitors, and these concerns have continued and grown since incorporation. With an active committee working on these issues and trying to create our own public spaces, we will be able to have a voice in other bodies and fora and to seek grants to buy, equip and improve facilities. It will be a long, slow and challenging process. One issue is to decide what "park" means for us in Wimberley. Martha's special interest is in "pocket parks", small public areas with picnic tables and flower beds where anyone could come out on a nice day for a picnic and enjoy the wonderful atmosphere of Wimberley.

3. Committee members then introduced themselves, gave brief biographical sketches and stated their interest in parks and recreation. Several members have children involved in sports and other activities for which there are no adequate grounds and facilities in Wimberley; others are concerned that Wimberley will become less attractive to the tourists who make substantial contributions to our economy if we continue to have no public spaces for them to relax and no public access to the Blanco River and Cypress Creek.

4. Martha Knies described a workshop she and Kris Cusack recently attended on parks and recreation sponsored by the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) at McKinney Roughs State Park. At this workshop, which she described as a wonderful program, Martha and Kris were able to start networking with others already involved in this kind of work. The Parks and Recreation supervisor in Seguin sent Martha a copy of that town's Master Plan for P & R.

5. Based on what they saw at the workshop, Martha and Kris drew up an Agenda for this first meeting. Bob Shearer said he had written a Statement of Responsibility while in the Parks and Recreation Department in San Marcos, and thinks we should have a similar document which sets out the "rules of the road" for the committee, defining how we conduct ourselves, what we can and cannot do, and how we relate to the village government. Martha explained that the Village Council has already made those kinds of decisions for itself and its subordinate units. Our meetings are open to the public; we can not take any official action; we are to function basically as a research and planning group for the Village Council, which then decides what to do. On January 25 a Village Council meeting will be held at 7:00 p.m. at which all commissions and committees are to report their progress to date.

6. Kris commented on our proposed Mission Statement, which she and Martha developed based on what they learned at the LCRA workshop and on their own ideas about what Wimberley needs. We are at an early development stage and everything we do for the present will be at the level of development. Parks, recreation, and open space are all separate from each other and differ in their meanings to people and how people use them. Developers will sometimes put open spaces in their developments to enhance their attractiveness and make properties more salable. The economic benefits of parks and rec facilities will be very important for Wimberley; people come here to get in the Blanco River, but they can't because there is no public access to it. We have to have a system to benefit the tourist community coming to Wimberley, many of whom are interested in walking and bicycle paths around the downtown area and the river. This would be a clean, non-polluting benefit that would continue to draw tourists to Wimberley.

7. Bob said he thinks the Statement needs to state that our P & R system will be an on-going, dynamic system which will be flexible and adaptable to changing conditions. Without an explicit statement to this effect, we could end up with some people saying that once we get the parks and rec facilities we want, there will no longer be a need for our work.

8. After discussion of whether such a statement should be included, Martha said we should think about it and wait until our next meeting to come up with a final statement, especially since three members are absent tonight. She then said the committee needs to decide on a chairperson. Bob nominated Kris Cusack, Thad seconded the nomination, there were no other nominations, and the voice vote was unanimous for Kris.

9. Kris accepted the chair with thanks. She said that at the LCRA workshop she saw P & R plans from other towns and cities and learned some of the basic requirements. Grant money is available from Texas Parks & Wildlife (TPW) for these activities, but communities have to develop a lot of documentation to get the grants. Martha passed out an information sheet from TPW and a copy of the P & R Master Plan from Seguin. A master plan is not required to apply for TPW grant programs, but the closer we get to an actual plan, the better our proposal will appear to be the result of a planning process. Martha noted that a master plan will serve not just in applying for grants but will also be a plan of action for the committee. Once a master plan is done, we would submit it to the Village Council, which would review it and make sure it meets Council requirements. The Council would then adopt the plan by resolution. The time period our plan should cover should be at least five years, but we could put it in the framework of a five-to-fifteen year period. The plan should also relate to other key planning documents being prepared, especially those which identify population trends and growth projections.

10. Dell summarized a telephone conversation he had with Elaine Dill in the Parks & Recreation office at TPW. She explained the process of applying for grants, the basic requirements a community must meet, and offered the assistance of her office on how to write our application for the best chance of success. Grant applications are judged on a point system, with points awarded for first-time applicants, for projects involving water access facilities, and for applications which target minority communities.

11. Referring to a paper from TPW on the Texas Recreation & Parks Account Program on developing master plans, Martha noted there are several sections we can begin work on immediately and should be able to complete ourselves. Kris said we can start with an inventory of facilities in our area. There was extended discussion on what the inventory should include and how to begin it. It should include public, semi-private and private facilities, so that we have some basic data on the number and types of parks and recreation facilities there are in the Wimberley area. There was a question of how extensive an area the inventory should cover - only the basic area of the incorporated Village, that plus the ETJ, or an even broader area. The consensus was that we should try to cover as broad an area as possible and to include this information in our grant application. It was noted that Hays County recently did a survey on parks and recreation and that we could get a copy of it. It was agreed that we could divide the area into seven or eight sectors, with a committee member responsible for each one. Contacts with property owner and subdivision associations, the various private sports and recreation groups, schools, and other such groups would be a starting point.

12. Referring to item C. 2 on our Agenda on developing local partnerships and coalitions, Kris said that grantors want to know that their grant recipients are working with local groups to enlarge and strengthen the base of stake-holders in the parks and recreation process. Taking on big projects alone will not earn points in the application reviews. Among the groups with which we can seek to build these partnerships are churches, the Lions, VFW, our schools, local voluntary groups, the Wimberley Valley Watershed Association, the Winters-Wimberley House project. We must also include private land developers because they have the land available for dedication to parks and recreation. All these groups are also ones we need to contact for an inventory of facilities.

13. It was mentioned that we should get an article in the Wimberley newspapers to let the public know what we are working on and to ask for any information the public can provide on present and planned facilities. The article can also ask for ideas and suggestions from the public on what is needed.

14. It was suggested there may be a computer program which will let us keep track of all the information and data we may get and manipulate it for our needs. Bob said he has a lot of experience on Corel and Microsoft Word programs and agreed to be our computer specialist.

15. Jane Morton gave a summary of the problems the Wimberley Soccer Association has had with using Camp Young Judea and other sites. Landowners are afraid of their legal liability in letting people play sports on their land, and do not like to have neighbors complaining about noise, crowds, parked cars, trash and other side effects of sports groups using their land. At present the WSA has no dedicated site available, although it has been allowed to practice on Wimberley school land. Jane said the arrangement is not permanent nor entirely satisfactory for the WSA, which would definitely benefit from public recreation space.

16. The committee agreed that for the time being meetings will be on Sunday evenings. The next meeting will be on January 7 at 5:00 p.m. Martha and Kris will work on developing a list of all the groups we can contact for an inventory of facilities and will have an agenda that will be posted as required at least 72 hours in advance of the meeting. There was discussion about the possibility of having speakers come in to talk to us about specific park and recreation issues, such as David Baker of the Wimberley Valley Watershed Association, a representative of the Lions Club, and someone from the Parks and Recreation Departments of neighboring towns such as Seguin, San Marcos, and others.

17. Bob repeated his request that we develop a Statement of Responsibility which will include the scope of our concerns, interests, and duties, especially in relation to the Village Council. He will try to get such a document from his contacts in San Marcos. He also noted that when we reach the point of actually working on our facilities we will need muscle power and said we need to involve young people and students.

18. Kris concluded with the observation that to be successful, we need to "get our act together", work in a professional manner, and become a solid and involved part of the comprehensive planning process.

Minutes recorded by Dell Hood; corrected January 7, 2001.