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Doug Gaynor Q's A's from the March 25, 2008 SEA Board Meeting

Q: What is the condition of the mature trees along the lakefront in general and what steps are being taken to protect them?

(We have lost a number of large trees there in recent years. We assume any landscaping changes proposed in the lakefront master plan do not jeopardize the older trees and plan for new taller trees to be planted to maintain the canopy we have now [vs. focusing only on native grasses, bushes and smaller trees]).

A: The trees are generally in good shape. Public trees are protected by a skirt of 1 x 4 boards in case contractors' machinery hits a tree. If a tree is accidentally knocked down, contractors are obligated to replace it with three or up to five new trees, per terms of their contract with the City.

Mr. Gaynor's comment on the Emerald Ash Borer problem: Despite the newspaper insert/ads, there has been no proven and effective prevention or cure found at the moment. Millions of trees have been hit nation-wide. In Evanston, more than 500 trees north of Central have been identified and 80 trees have already been taken down. There are scouts out everyday to monitor and report on the situation. Affected trees on public property will be identified and taken down. Those on private property will also be identified and the owners will be notified to take them down.

Q: What, if anything, can be done to address water quality along our lakefront and mitigate increasing numbers of beach closings each summer due to high bacteria counts?

A: Not much can be done – as Evanston must abide by State guidelines to continue receiving State funding, grants, and services. Chicago follows different set of rules: Swim at your risk. Evanston tests its water quality every day, but bacterial culture results take 24 hours (a full one day lag), so by the time a beach is shut down, you would have been swimming in contaminated water the previous day. Evanston will institute water quality testing later in the day, which may help somewhat with this lag problem. There are records of which beaches have been closed on which days, but there appears to be no one pattern of beach closings repeated.

Q: Has the parks department considered adding an environmental education component to the recreational camps that take place at the Dempster Street Beach in the summer?

(If kids are educated about the natural features and benefits of our lakefront they would be more apt to value it later in life and become stewards of its health and beauty.)

A: A couple of environmental camps are currently being run at Lighthouse Beach. If there are sufficient requests, the Ecology Center can run it [elsewhere].

Q: What is the Parks and Recreation policy about amplified music in parks near residential neighborhoods?

A: Mr. Gaynor passed out copies of the Loudspeaker Permit Application, with the City [noise] ordinance attached. If neighbors complain, police or park ranger will respond immediately. If the offender does not have the permit on site of the amplified music, then the music will be shut down. Park rangers have no policing/arresting authority; they will call the police to enforce matters that need law enforcement. No amplifiers will be placed within 150 feet of residences. A sound engineer from the City typically works with musicians during set up at a scheduled City concert, to sound check and monitor the sound level. If too loud, Mr Gaynor's staff will walk over to the sound technician [of the band/performer] and ask to turn the sound level down.

Q: If completed, can you bring the 2008 calendar for scheduled lakefront events?

A: Yes, it was just approved last night at the City Council Meeting. [Copies were distributed to SEA Board members present].

Q: What is the timetable for installation of the new pedestrian/biking paths?

A: The progress has been slow. It has been demanding and slow going to work closely with the Illinois Dept. of Transportation (IDOT). The work on the new paths, from Clark to Lee, will begin in the Fall of 2009; it is scheduled for completion in the Spring of 2010, if weather *et al* condition favors such a schedule.

Q: Could you explain a little more about the surfaces being considered for both paths and any specific signage designs/plans?

A: Hard surface path will be closer to Sheridan Road and the soft surface path closer to Lake. New paths will be wider than current paths. New paths will have more curves to slow down speeding riders and skaters, etc. New lighting along the paths will incorporate "dark-sky" lighting designs.

Q: Any updates on the discussion about the stretch of Sheridan Road south of South Blvd.?

A: No. There will be a study by Public Works Department. Sheridan Road [in Evanston] is currently a State road has recently become Evanston's (to maintain, etc.) once funding received.

Q: Has Parks and Recreation prioritized various aspects of the recently-approved Plan to decide on the order in which they might be implemented?

A: Bike paths are a priority and the work is moving ahead as this was already planned ahead of the Lakefront Master Plan. Another higher priority is the re-doing of the restrooms at four beaches (Clark, Dempster, Lee and South Blvd.). Lighthouse Beach will have a different type of restroom configuration. With \$405K raised by private efforts, construction of Noah's Playground, a fully accessible park, will begin. The restroom at Lighthouse is currently ADA accessible, but the plan is to make the restroom accessible also from the upper parking level. The restroom will be renovated in this process. The new bathroom plan for all beaches will include entrance from both beach and park sides.

The design, or the architects, or the type of materials, etc. to be used for the new bathrooms have not yet been decided. There will be public meetings.

Q: What do you expect the cost of the boat ramp to be this year? Considering that the boat ramp remains in the lakefront plan, in your mind, what needs to be done to it and when do you expect to make the changes? Where do you expect this money will come from? Is there any thought of returning to daily permits?

A: No to the daily permits. Experience showed that daily users were more abusive (of the environment). The dredging costs about \$35K using the City's own staff and equipment. The combined income from the dog beach and boat ramp operations is a net gain, since the same staff operates manage both. The dredging cycle will begin in April. For best results, the City really needs to bring in coastal engineering experts to show the City how best deal with annual sand migration. If the City can redesign and reconstruct the boat launch to mitigate sand migration, thereby reducing or eliminating the need to dredge, then the boat launch could be a money-maker by itself.

Q: Is the City doing anything about seagulls' droppings (as a possible health hazard, or at least an annoyance)?

A: No, there is no research done at the present time. To date, no study or considerations have been given to "poppers" (noise makers) to scare off the birds.

- End of Q's and A's -