

Topic A: Will the park be safe?

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walking the park, too. So will TL police officers “hand-picked by Capt. (Jason) Cherniss,” Suess said. Even looking in from outside, visibility will be improved with the thinner, more transparent perimeter fencing.

Department of Public Works “ambassadors” also will do periodic walk-throughs. Safe Passage will run safety programs. And three security cameras mounted near the main Eddy Street entrance will be watching 24/7. Three more cameras are inside the clubhouse.

There are no guarantees, Suess said, noting that the police station is literally across the street.

What about the surrounding sidewalks? another woman asked.

DPW street cleanings and beat cops will be keeping sidewalks clear, and there are new no-parking red and white zones on the north side of Eddy Street, where cars used to linger for hours, some occupants suspected of dubious activities while sidewalk domino games often covered drug dealing.

But “is the staff trained” to identify and deal with bad actors? Earl Bates asked from the back of the room.

Monday through Friday, the Boys & Girls Club is the main tenant, overseeing its own programs and those of other nonprofits like the YMCA that have contracts to run programs at the park. On weekends, Rec and Park takes over, completing the year-round, seven-days-a-week, 9 a.m.-7 p.m. hours.

“We have the best players,” Suess said.

What if Rec and Park gets its budget chopped again? Bates asked.

The city has a two-year commitment to this plan, Suess said. “And we can lobby for more later.”

The meeting was the last of the community outreach by Trust for Public Land, which had initiated the redesign after the trust’s Jake Gilchrist, now a Rec and Park employee, attended several Friends of Boeddeker Park

meetings years ago and learned not only of the park’s dire needs, but that it had a committed citizens group led by its steady activist-coordinator, Betty Traynor. The trust then devised a plan in 2009, partnered with Rec and Park and raised the money for the redo.

Traynor also will serve on a new citizens advisory committee of representatives of all the nonprofits offering programs at Boeddeker, plus TL police Sgt. Pete Hamilton that will meet monthly. “Once the park opens,” Suess said, “we’ll discover things we didn’t anticipate,” and the committee will help solve those problems.

Of additional concern at the meeting were the park entryways. Some remembered the garbage and junk that plagued the northern gate of Ellis Street before it was closed permanently. Is another gate there? someone asked.

The only public gate is on Eddy next to the clubhouse. A service entrance is there, and another on Ellis. But a public toilet is on the street nearby, said longtime TL resident Ed Evans from the front row, so how vulnerable will the park be to the milling, unpredictable crowds on Ellis, often a haven for homeless encampments? That, too, was a wait-and-see.

But it was obvious people were as happy and proud of the neighborhood’s pre-Christmas present as was Rec and Park regional manager Steve Cismowski, who has been close to the park since its difficult years.

“I can’t thank this community enough,” Cismowski told the crowd “I walked through the park the other day and almost broke into tears. And Betty,” he said, looking at Traynor, “you really made this happen.”

Cismowski explained how Rec and Park will keep the park clean.

Besides daily noontime cleaning, there will be after-hours and early-morning haul-aways of expected dirty needles and other biohazards that might be flung over the fence at night. “Even on holidays,” Cismowski said. And the only park closures he



could imagine, he said, might be for removing big trees.

“If you see something that needs attention, call 311,” Cismowski said. He expects community involvement so “we can address” issues.

Boys & Girls Club Director Esan Looper reviewed the kinds of programs that the club and its nonprofit partners will offer in more than 100 hours of activities weekly. But he said the club’s youth programs at the park are already filled and so are Glide’s. Not so of the YMCA’s, he said, which is moving all its programs to the park —

70 to 80 hours a week of senior, adult and after-school youth programs.

An unexpected clubhouse feature will be availability for birthday parties, free of charge. “You have to have a permit,” said a Rec and Park representative, “but you will not be charged a fee.”

On weekends, Jamie Hopper, who formerly worked at Boeddeker, will be Rec and Park’s overseer when such programs as zumba dancing exercise, tai chi and street hockey will be offered. ■

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