

Creasey Mahan starts process for new park

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By Kenny Colston

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Facing a nearly two-year deadline before losing playground equipment currently on their land, the leaders of Creasey Mahan Nature Preserve are hoping to “re-imagine” the current Harmony Park into a bigger and better space.



Taylor Riley/The Oldham Era

A child eats lunch at the current playground equipment at Harmony Park.

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At their Nov. 10 meeting, the Goshen City Commission voted to remove their playground equipment, which has been housed at Harmony Park at Creasey Mahan for the last 13 years, at the end of their lease in 2016. At that time, the equipment will be moved to a new park located on land the commission recently purchased from North Oldham Baptist Church.

That left the nature preserve with a roughly two-year window to figure out what to do with the land, which its leaders said was a “blessing” considering initial options were to remove the equipment immediately.

“While we regret the potential loss of the playground, we want to thank the Commission for sharing the playground equipment with the Nature Preserve for the last 13 years,” a letter signed by Creasey Mahan Board President Benjamin Gardner and Executive Director Tavia Cathcart Brown and sent to the commission, said. “In addition, we thank you for granting us the additional time to plan for the future before the playground equipment is removed.”

In an interview, Brown said at a recent Creasey Mahan board meeting, the board took the opportunity to think big when it comes to filling the space currently occupied by the playground.

“We’re going to use these two years to accept this challenge to grow our childhood play options,” she said. “We’re going to re-imagine that area as an educational center that may include a playground.”

It’s not determined what the nature preserve, which is a non-profit entity that survives on donations, will exactly do with the land yet, Brown said.

While the commission was debating what to do with the playground equipment, estimates of \$100,000 or more were tossed around when discussing leaving the current playground equipment at Creasey Mahan and purchasing new equipment for the City of Goshen. With a likely large price tag looming, Brown said the preserve would have to fundraise for the future of the playground.

“We really want to use this as an opportunity to enhance the area,” she said.

Brown said the preserve would continue to address this issue in its board meetings, as well as have public meetings on the issue to get the community’s input on how to reshape the area.

One thing is for sure, though, according to the preserve’s letter to the city, and that is the dispute over playground equipment won’t lead to hurt feelings on the part of the Creasey Mahan.

“We congratulate the City of Goshen on the acquisition of additional park land and we believe that the new park has the potential to complement the Nature Preserve and provide ‘bookends’ of open land to be enjoyed and appreciated by all.”

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