

Re-Designation Proposal for Tower Park Name: “South Library Park”

Offered by the Holy Trinity-Longfellow Neighborhood Association, 2017

A. Introduction and Motivation

At the May 2016 meeting of the Holy Trinity-Longfellow Neighborhood Association (HTLNA) a representative from the Parks and Recreation Department of the City of La Crosse discussed Department plans for the city’s park system. Not surprisingly the meeting led to comments and questions about the single park that resides in the HTLNA area: Tower Park. The interchange led to the establishment of a committee to investigate a more meaningful name to the park.

The HTL Neighborhood Association Plan (April 2016), lists the park near the library as a neighborhood asset, and Goal C states in part: “Maintain and improve the natural environment and green spaces within our neighborhood boundaries.” Clearly, the park and its positive status and identity are important to HTLNA members who have not only the motivation but the direct experience with the park which informs this effort to find a fitting and meaningful name for the facility.

B. Specific Criteria to Qualify for a Naming

The City government has provided criteria to guide proposals for naming (or renaming) public facilities. In summary these are:

- * it should be in the public interest to honor any person(s) included in the name;
- * generally the name should have a direct association to the facility;
- * any individual will generally be deceased;
- * the name should be acceptable to the local citizenry;
- * if the name is geographical or historical, it should relate to the facility being named.

The association considered each of these factors in the following proposal.

C. Names Previously Used for the Park

Tower Park: This is apparently as close as we get to an official name since it is the name used in the Parks and Recreation Department’s Plan. However, it is not a name readily recognized even among Department staff so its significance seems shaky. “Tower Park” refers to a relatively short-lived playground feature that was erected in 1982 but led to problems and controversy before it was finally replaced by new equipment supplied by the City. Currently there is no tower in or near the park and, consequently, no direct association for the name to the facility.

Mader Park: For a time there was a sign posted on a fence demarcating the park that identified the area as Mader Park but this was never authorized and has been removed. There was a Mader family who lived near Holy Trinity for many years and whose brick company supplied materials for the church. Additionally, Mader family members made a request to designate the park

“Mader Park.” While the Maders may be worthy of honor there is no direct or historical relationship between the family and the park. No official action on the request to designate this facility as Mader Park has been taken.

Library Park: Many of the people in the neighborhood refer to the park as “Library Park”, and indeed it is attached to the South Community Library in historical ways. There is concern, however, that the name is too generic in its simplicity and not strongly enough associated with this particular park since there are other library buildings in the City and at least one of those also has a park nearby.

D. Historical Overview of the Park’s Development

In 1939, due to the national focus on developing public facilities and the offer of federal financial support, the City began an effort to acquire land for a library on the south end of the City. At that time Farnam and 16th Streets were at the south edge of residential development so land was sought in that area. The parcels that now comprise the library and park lands were owned by Virginia Rehfuss and Emma Lawrence. Unfortunately, the process to acquire the land was not as congenial as hoped, and ultimately the library portion of the Rehfuss land was taken through condemnation, which was finally settled by a State Supreme Court decision in 1942. In 1946 the library board recommended the acquisition of additional land in that same vicinity (between Farnam Street and Park Avenue, and 16th and 17th Streets) “for further expansion of library facilities to meet future requirements ... but in the meantime will make available space for play grounds, recreational and park purposes ...” [Resolution 8508] By the end of 1947 all the land now related to the library and the park had been purchased by the City; construction on the library began in 1951.

E. HTLNA Recommendation for Re-Designation

Clearly, from the beginning, the library and the park have been closely associated with each other, and thus “library” as a part of the park name is fitting based on the naming criteria. Therefore, after study, consideration, and a vote on April 17, 2017, the HTLNA recommends that the park behind the South Community Library be formally designated:

“South Library Park”

Respectfully submitted: June 5, 2017