

MINUTES
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING
MAY 24, 2023

MEMBERS PRESENT: Kristine Bommersbach, Tim Faver, Don Heinonen, Tonya Prim, and Bethany Wesley

MEMBERS ABSENT: Tom Anderson

COUNCIL & BOARD REPRESENTATIVE: Gwenia Fiskevold Gould

CITY STAFF & OTHERS: Travis Green and Duane Biehn-BSU, Monica Hansmeyer, Michelle Miller, Marcia Larson, and Lolly Randall

CALL TO ORDER:

Bethany Wesley called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

REVIEW PROPOSAL FROM BSU REGARDING OUTDOOR PROGRAM CENTER

Larson explained the process to date between the city and Bemidji State University. Discussions have been held about the short term and long term for BSU's use/lease of the outdoor program center located in Diamond Point Park. Larson explained that the Recreation Department partners frequently with BSU's OPC and Gillette Center. The short term goal is to find options that work for both the city and BSU to continue the partnership through the current season since their lease on the building ends in June 2023.

BSU agreed that they want to continue a presence at the building but need to make changes due their limited/challenging budget and this is what brings them to the Parks & Recreation Commission. Larson felt the proposal was adequate and believes it is important to keep the building operating for the remainder of the season. BSU stated that the OPC will have limited hours and operations this summer. They will continue to work with some of their regular customers and will be open to taking reservations if they can accommodate the requests times and dates but the building will not be open to the public as it has been in the past. The longer term option is to address the city's desire to have specific hours/days to have the building open.

Larson explained that if the city does not have a partnership with BSU for the rest of this season, the building will be closed because the city does not have the capacity to run it. BSU explained that they do not intend to keep the revenue – after expenses are paid.

Both BSU and the city will remain flexible in programs offered and the amount of days the Recreation Department can access the Gillette Center. BSU will continue to keep insurance on the building and the maintenance will stay as stated in the original lease for the short term. Their goal is to continue operating the OPC but will need to look at the cost of the lease and terms for the long term.

BSU will put together an official short term proposal for the City Council to approve after it is reviewed by the Parks and Recreation Commission. It will be important for the Commissioners to continue discussion regarding the long term use of the building.

Discussed if there was a third party that could be hired to either run the rental or assist BSU in operating the building. It was agreed that a third party will most likely cut into the city's profits and it is too late in the season to find someone who would be interested.

Commissioners discussed their concerns with the building being closed every day this season to the general public. BSU stated they will definitely take this concern into consideration when looking at the long term options. Commissioners would also like to see language / clarifications addressed in Larson's Agenda Item memo.

There was consensus among the Parks and Recreation Commissioners to move forward with the short term proposal put forward by BSU.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Bommersbach, seconded by Faver, to adjourn the meeting at 5:20 p.m. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Lolly Randall
Administrative Assistant