

**MINUTES  
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING  
JUNE 8, 2021**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Tom Anderson, Tim Faver, Gwenia Fiskevold Gould, Tonya Prim, and Bethany Wesley

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Don Heinonen and Wendy Kvale

**COUNCIL & BOARD REPRESENTATIVE:** Dan Jourdain

**CITY STAFF & OTHERS:** Audrey Stoltenburg, visitor; Marcia Larson and Lolly Randall, city staff

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Tonya Prim called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

**AMENDMENTS TO AGENDA:**

**No amendments were made**

**APPROVAL OF MAY 11, 2021 MEETING MINUTES:**

**Motion by Faver, seconded by Wesley, to approve the May 11, 2021 Meeting Minutes as written. Motion carried.**

**PAUL BUNYAN PARK – PAUL AND BABE**

Marcia reported that the restoration and repair work has been completed on the statues Paul and Babe. The Bemidji Police Department has the video/photos of the people who were climbing on Paul causing damage to his arm and chest and the investigation is ongoing. Marcia explained that the statues are both hollow and made of material that does not withstand the outside elements well so ongoing maintenance is required on them. Every two years they will need to be painted and maybe some patch work done. The paint is the coating that helps protect them. Babe had some repair work done, especially to his nose. Along with the outdoor elements, the public is very interactive with the statues that also causes the constant maintenance to be done on the statues. Longer term a reconstruction may need to be done on Paul using a material that could withstand the elements and the public's interaction with them.

Discussion was held if the City would be liable if someone gets hurt climbing on the statues. Signage won't stop liability if there is any. The city does have recreation immunity. Marcia will discuss this the city's insurance agent to see if they have any recommendation.

Both statues look great after the restoration and repair.

Discussed fundraising for restoration of the statues. This had been done in 2006/2007 that was led by the Chamber of Commerce. It was generally well received by the public. Marcia is working

with Visit Bemidji and other local organizations to start the fundraising process. There is an interest in the community to fundraise for Paul and Babe.

Discussed the drainage issues under Babe and the plan that Brian Grund presented to the Commission. Since Brian Grund's presentation/proposal, a renewed interest of raising Babe to eliminate the drainage issue has surfaced. Jensen Conservation did submit a proposal to raise Babe and deal with the drainage at a cost of \$149,750. Marcia stated that this discussion needs to go to the City Council at a work session. Commissioners discussed if they are in favor of raising Babe or staying with Brian Grund's proposal. Commissioners agreed that either option would be a viable solution but considering the expense, the City Council will need to make the final decision on which option to do. Lifting Babe insures there would not be water drainage issues and the concern with the catch basin option is that they would freeze in the winter months and snow will accumulate underneath Babe so it would require continued maintenance to remove the snow. Discussed researching how other cities in the state deal with these issues in regards to their statues and see if there is funding for such projects. Discussed having a drawing that would show what Babe would look like if/when he is lifted six inches. Marcia will bring both options to the July meeting and the Commissioners can make a final recommendation to the city council. Marcia will compose a list of the cost that has been spent in the past to maintain the statues. They will need to be repainted every two years at the cost of \$3000.00 to \$5000.00.

#### **NORTH COUNTRY PARK NATURAL PLAYGROUND**

A preconstruction meeting was held early May and construction has started this past week. All materials have been ordered and colors chosen. Organizing the schedule for the volunteers build day. An Eagle Scout will be working on the water table projects and will be doing the fundraising for these. There will be weekly construction meetings held on Mondays.

#### **PARKS FACILITIES / STAFFING UPDATE**

Marcia reported that seasonal staff have been hired and all of the recreation staff has been hired and have started work. Have had to be more flexible with schedules to hire the maintenance staff needed. Park rentals are good, the hot weather has reduced some of the park usage. Water fountains were turned on last week.

#### **COMMISSIONER UPDATES / QUESTIONS**

Tom reported that he has seen an electric bike, going very fast, on the trails and was told by a user that the PD told him it was ok. Marcia will research this issue and report back to the Commissioners.

Tonya reported that the DNR will be building the trail by Rako.

Tim reported the confusion of the bicycle markings on Lake Boulevard. Marcia will research this to see why it was marked this way.

Gwenia requested the Google calendar invites to the meetings.

## **DIRECTOR UPDATE**

Marcia reported on the emerald ash bore grant and is working with BSU who will inventory all of the ash trees in the parks, this will start in July and work on this for two months and then develop a preparedness plan for the emerald ash bore.

Day Camp has been moved to City Park and has been working well so far.

Jamie Anderson, Recreation Coordinator, has been invited to be on the board for Community Education. This will help the city better partner with them on programming.

Discussed the buckthorn on Lake Blvd. The city will focus on this in the fall with the help from BSU.

The July meeting will be held at Public Works.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion by Fiskevold Gould, seconded by Anderson, to adjourn the meeting at 5:50 p.m.**  
**Motion carried.**

Respectfully submitted,

Lolly Randall  
Administrative Assistant