

MINUTES
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING
AUGUST 8, 2023

MEMBERS PRESENT: Tom Anderson, Mike Cronin, Tim Faver, Don Heinonen, Tonya Prim, and Bethany Wesley

MEMBERS ABSENT: Kristine Bommersbach

COUNCIL & BOARD REPRESENTATIVE: Gwenia Fiskevold Gould

CITY STAFF & OTHERS: C.T. Marhula, Marcia Larson, Scott Schroeder, and Lolly Randall

CALL TO ORDER:

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

AMENDMENTS TO AGENDA:

Motion by Heinonen, seconded by Faver, to add cannabis discussion to the agenda. Motion Carried.

APPROVAL OF JULY 11, 2023 MEETING MINUTES:

Motion by Heinonen, seconded by Faver, to approve the July 11, 2023 Meeting Minutes as written. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

C.T. Marhula, 4524 Birchmont Drive #10, stated that he appreciated the proposed shade structures at the dog park. He complimented the Parks and Recreation Department for all the activities that have been held this season. He asked the Commissioners if they would discuss a splash pad and its location so he would know if he should move forward with fund raising for it.

DIAMOND POINT BUILDING DISCUSSION

BSU has not returned Larson's request for a meeting regarding their future plans to rent the OPC. Mark Morrisey confirmed that their equipment will be removed by the end of September 2023.

Larson presented an operation plan for the OPC that including using it as a combined space for the Kids in Motion Camp, rental space for the public, and another location for rental of amenities like the rentals done at the TIC. Diamond Point Park is a favorite for the Kids in Motion Day camp because it provides a safe space, is closer to the water and is a cooler location during the hot days of summer. Discussed the possibility of renting the space and amenities as a package deal. These plans would provide revenue and access for the community. Discussed installing a service window that would allow doing amenity rentals at the same time day camps are running. Cleaning, painting and minor repairs will be done to the building and completed by the spring of 2024.

Discussed installing a fishing pier directly north of the building. Fishing piers are in high demand, the one located at the water front gets used heavily. The city can work with the DNR to purchase and install the fishing pier.

Discussed if BSU would be selling any of their canoes or kayaks that the city could purchase. Larson will continue to reach out to BSU to see if they would be interested in selling any items.

Discussed renaming the building and possibly using an Ojibwa word. Larson will look into some options.

SHADE STRUCTURES DISCUSSION

Larson reviewed the options for shade structures with the Commissioners. Midwest Playscapes provided two quotes for shade structures that are similar to what is at the lakefront. One is for a 12' - single post pyramid style at a cost of \$5,031.10. This structure would work well at the dog park and at that price, two could be purchased. Larson recommended allocating \$12,000 to purchase these structures. Discussed placing the shade structures further into the dog park rather than close to the entrance to alleviate any congestion.

Motion by Heinonen, seconded by Cronin, to approve the Midwest Playscapes Shade Structures for the Nymore Dog Park in the amount of \$11,612.42. Motion carried.

Received a quote for a larger shade structure for North Country Park at a price of \$15,993.75. Larson will be looking for a grant to purchase this shade structure in 2024.

CANNABIS USE IN CITY PARKS

Discussed following the same guidelines/rules for use of cannabis as tobacco in the parks. Currently it is just a policy, not an ordinance.

Fiskevold Gould stated that she is opposed to the strict restrictions the City Council is considering on the public use of Cannabis and thinks people should be allowed to smoke cannabis for example, if they were taking their dog for a walk on a public sidewalk.

The consensus among the Commissioners is that the restriction should affect all parks and trails as it aligns with the Minnesota Clean Air Act. The definition of Cannabis was briefly discussed but Commission determined that the definition of Cannabis was a Council decision to be included in the Ordinance.

Discussed supporting the City Council approving the cannabis ordinance they are considering since it will apply to the city parks. Discussed the issues of enforcement for law enforcement.

Motion by Heinonen, seconded by Anderson, to add Cannabis to the Parks and Recreation current Tobacco and Vaping Free Policy and support the Cannabis Ordinance as presented.

COMMISSIONER UPDATES

Faver asked Larson if there are specific workers assigned to specific parks. Larson shared that they all have specific routes they do. Faver shared he had visited all the parks and was impressed with how well the parks were taken care of in terms of maintenance except Diamond Point Park.

Specifically, the length of the grass, the weeds and a small tree growing out of a building and there was a broken window.

Prim commented on how well the maintenance was done at the dragon boat event.

Discussed C.T. Marhula's request to let him know if a splash pad is being considered for North Country Park. Larson stated that she does not believe there is enough room for a splash pad at North County Park and is concerned with the high cost to maintain one. She will reach out to the Rotary Club's President to discuss this.

DIRECTOR'S UPDATES

The grant for Algoma was not funded.

Bemidji Pickleball Association contacted Larson to meet this week and discuss adding more courts at Algoma park. Discussed if the parking at Algoma is adequate to add more courts.

The Wild organization is set up at the waterfront today.

Larson requested two new staff positions to be added to the CIP/budget for 2024.

Working on the Sanford Event Center landscaping.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Anderson, seconded by Prim, to adjourn the meeting at 5:40 p.m. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Lolly Randall
Administrative Assistant