

**MINUTES
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING
SEPTEMBER 12, 2023**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Kristine Bommersbach, Mike Cronin, Tim Faver, Tonya Prim, and Bethany Wesley

MEMBERS ABSENT: Tom Anderson and Don Heinonen

COUNCIL & BOARD REPRESENTATIVE: Gwenia Fiskevold Gould

CITY STAFF & OTHERS: Duane Biehn from BSU, Sherry Hill and Dave Rave from Bemidji Pickleball Association, Marcia Larson, Scott Schroeder, and Lolly Randall

CALL TO ORDER:

Bethany Wesley called the meeting to order at 4:32 p.m.

AMENDMENTS TO AGENDA:

Motion by Faver, seconded by Cronin, to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF AUGUST 8, 2023 MEETING MINUTES:

Motion by Faver, seconded by Prim, to approve the August 8, 2023 Meeting Minutes with the correction to Faver's comments. Motion carried.

DIAMOND POINT BUILDING DISCUSSION

Duane Biehn from BSU, explained that they will remove their items from the OPC by the end of September and will start this process September 18th. There are other departments at BSU that are interested in most of the equipment but as they move items out there be some things they could offer to the city if interested. BSU is not planning to do anything in the future with the OPC. There are two dragon boats that will be moved out this fall or early spring and Larson is working with the Dragon Boat Club on this. The fishing pier has been approved by the DNR and those plans are in process.

ALGOMA PARK UPDATES

Sherry Hill and Dave Rave of the Pickleball Association, stated that the Association is interested in expanding the number of courts at Algoma Park. They were initially working with the Sanford Center on having pickle ball courts at the future wellness center but since Sanford has withdrawn from that project, they are back to looking for a location that can have additional courts. They believe they need 12 courts that are individually fenced to adequately serve the amount of people playing pickleball in Bemidji but to host a tournament, you need to have 8 courts.

Discussed fundraising and grants other communities have done. The cost is approximately \$25,000 per court to build and there are also maintenance costs to be considered. There have been concerns raised by neighbors about the parking, so the parking lot needs to be addressed. Larson stated she could continue to look for potential grants to help with the costs but they would require a match and maybe the Pickleball Association could help with the match.

Discussion was held about the amenities the neighborhood stated they would like to see in the park such as basketball courts and a playground and they also enjoy the green space currently in the park. Concerns were raised by Commissioners about turning Algoma Park into a “pickle ball” park and if this is the right park for pickle ball.

Larson will put together a prioritized list and submit it to Jillian at Widseth, who will submit a draft plan along with costs with a December timeline. Larson stated she does not believe there is not enough room in the park for 12 courts but possibly eight.

Larson stated there could possibly be a MOU (memorandum of understanding) between the city and the Pickle Ball Association that would include use of the courts, tournaments, and financial support for the maintenance of the courts. Larson stated that the Association has already purchased nets and helped by putting them up and taking them down. Larson will also look for grants to help purchase a playground for the park and the Rotary may be interested in helping with the install of it.

CANNABIS USE UPDATE

At a recent meeting, the City Council decided not to regulate cannabis use at any city properties at this time. Discussed changing the parks policy to take out cannabis. Larson will be attending conferences where there will be discussion of how other city’s parks and recreation departments are handling the use of cannabis.

COMMISSIONER UPDATES

Cronin expressed concerns with bicycling issues throughout the city. Specifically, how people can access the parks who don’t drive and addressing some of the issues outlined in the strategic plan regarding safe bicycling throughout the community.

Prim has heard from folks that the South Shore Park and Cameron Park could use shade structures.

DIRECTOR’S UPDATES

Parks has items for sale on minnbid and would like to use these funds to purchase shade structures for a few of the parks that need them.

Motion by Bommersbach, seconded by Prin, to allocate the funds from MinnBid sales to the purchase of shade structures in the parks. Motion carried.

The additional parks maintenance position is still in the future CIP budget after the City Council budget work session.

Eric Fenson resigned from the Curling C and Larson will be meeting with the new president to discuss the building and operation during this transition.

Solar array is up and running and the rebate application has been submitted to Ottertail Electric.

The planting at Paul Bunyan Park was completed.

Visit Bemidji will be renewing the MOU and this needs to be reviewed.

The claw machine has been installed at the TIC and is bringing in revenue.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Bommersbach, seconded by Faver, to adjourn the meeting at 6:00 p.m. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Lolly Randall
Administrative Assistant