

**MINUTES
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING
SEPTEMBER 13, 2022**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Tom Anderson, Kristine Bommersbach, Gwenia Fiskevold Gould, and Bethany Wesley

MEMBERS ABSENT: Tonya Prim, Don Heinonen, and Tim Faver

COUNCIL & BOARD REPRESENTATIVE: Dan Jourdain

CITY STAFF & OTHERS: Marcia Larson, Lolly Randall, Joe Czapiewski, Dave Hengel, Kayla Winkler, CT Marhula, Ted Will, David Hoefler, and Nate Mathews

CALL TO ORDER:

Bethany Wesley called the meeting to order at 4:40 p.m.

AMENDMENTS TO AGENDA:

Motion by Fiskevold Gould, seconded by Bommersbach to approve the agenda as written.

APPROVAL OF AUGUST 11, 2022 SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES AND AUGUST 16, 2022 MEETING MINUTES:

Motion by Bommersbach, seconded by Fiskevold Gould, to approve the August 11, 2022 Special Meeting Minutes and the August 16, 2022 Meeting Minutes with adding Tom Anderson in attendance at the August 11, 2022 Special Meeting. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Meeting was opened as Ted Will was talking at 4:40. Shared his concern with crime and prevention within the city.

WELLNESS CENTER UPDATE – DAVE HENGEL AND KAYLA WINKLER

Dave Hengel, of Greater Bemidji, gave some background on the Wellness Center. Sanford gave a \$10 million community gift towards a wellness center to be built in Bemidji. He explained that the center will be similar to a YMCA with aquatics and ice sheets and a multi-use surface gym. It will be a private sector development located in the downtown rail corridor. Krause Anderson will be the master developer of the site. They are working on a purchase agreement with the city for the property. Sanford Health has committed the \$10 million and will lease and operate the facility. The city tax payers will not be responsible for the facility. Greater Bemidji will be raising funds that are necessary for the project to happen and have set a \$15 million goal and they have currently raised half of that amount. City of Bemidji is also a player, working through the purchase agreement and to help steer how the area gets developed. There are several parks involved in the development and the Veterans Memorial will remain as is. They want to develop part of the area similar to The Lights located in West Fargo. The development team is working the owners of the old union station which is now Union Station Thrift Store.

Planning has been in process for two years. The development will fit in the site and the total cost of the project is \$85 million; the largest development in the history of Bemidji. The Neilson Foundation put in \$4 million donation contingent on it being located downtown.

Kayla Winkler, Community Relations at Sanford Health, discussed how they did community outreach to gather information as to the needs and wants of the residents. They have held several listening sessions. They did a 50 cups of coffee program where they gathered information on a one on one session with individuals from a wide range of demographics in the community. Some of the top concerns people had are accessibility and affordability. They plan to do partnerships with other entities such as BSU, Community Ed and the city's Recreation Department. Transportation is also a priority and the location makes it easy to get to and/or transport people to. They will do programs that will help bring in revenue to allow them to have a sliding fee scale and scholarships for lower income people.

Discussed that the location where the parks would be are not buildable lots so it makes sense to develop parks on them and will look to the Parks & Recreation Commission for input on the development of them.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS UPDATE – JFC STRATEGIC SERVICE

Joe Czapiewski of JFC Strategic Service, gave a summary of the five focus groups held so far. There was a parks group, trail user group, general public community group, low-income group and BIPOC group. There will be a youth focus group held at the high school in early October. Working on scheduling a “town hall” meeting to be held on a Thursday, October 6th at 6:00 p.m., the location is yet to be determined. Some of the concerns that came out of the focus groups were access to the parks and transportation to parks. Maintenance and safety were also very important. Playgrounds are very popular but would like to see more diversity in the playgrounds for a variety of age groups.

DIRECTOR'S UPDATES

The construction on the plaza is going well and the concrete is being poured today. Lights were installed in the dog park in and the parking lot at Nymore Park.

Hired Patrick Hanson from Edina as the new Parks Superintendent, he will start October 3rd.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Fiskevold Gould, seconded by Anderson, to adjourn the meeting at 6:15 p.m.
Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Lolly Randall
Administrative Assistant