

**MINUTES
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING
AUGUST 10, 2021**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Tim Faver, Tonya Prim, and Bethany Wesley

MEMBERS ABSENT: Gwenia Fiskevold Gould, Don Heinonen, Tom Anderson

COUNCIL & BOARD REPRESENTATIVE: Dan Jourdain

CITY STAFF & OTHERS: Marcia Larson and Lolly Randall

CALL TO ORDER:

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

AMENDMENTS TO AGENDA:

No Amendments were made.

APPROVAL OF JULY 13, 2021 MEETING MINUTES:

Motion by Faver, seconded by Wesley, to approve the July 13, 2021 Meeting Minutes as written. Motion carried.

Paul Bunyan Park

Larson included several reports in the Commissioners packet regarding the drainage issue under Babe. She spoke to Jensen Conservation Services, Inc. who repaired Babe's hooves as well as other repairs to Babe and Paul Bunyan statues this year, about the process he would go through to raise Babe. Larson is also reviewing some of his references. Staff met with the City Manager regarding what the City Council might want to do with the statue and plaza area to address the drainage issue. Brian Grund believes that raising the statue is the best solution to resolve the problem. There is also the option to do nothing and see if and when the water affects the hooves again. The different options costs range from \$90,000 to \$150,000. Discussed having different contractors look at the problem to see if there are other contractors that could do the work cheaper. Discussed parks staff making sure the snow is removed from the area during the winter months in the meantime and look at potential grants to help with costs. Larson will forward information she gets from Jensen onto the Commissioners. There is a City Council work session to discuss this scheduled for August 23rd.

Trails:

Lake Boulevard – Larson explained that after discussion with the City Engineer and Mn/DOT, the on road bike lane is for southbound bike travel and the shared use trail is for northbound bike travel. The trail design is included in the packet. Discussed that there is not signage indicating this. The lanes also need to be repainted and Larson will discuss this with the Street Department.

It was suggested to have a solid line designating the bike lane with bikes only using this lane to travel north and south and pedestrians only using the sidewalk. Larson will bring the idea to the engineering department for safety compliance, discuss it with the local bike groups and report back to the Commissioners.

E-Bikes (electric-assist bicycles) – There is not a city ordinance or a park policy regarding e-bikes and there have been no complaints received about them and excessive speed. Larson will do some research as to what other cities experiences are. DNR rules say they cannot exceed 20 miles per hour.

The city's ordinance addresses skate boards specifically and states that they are allowed on trails but the ordinance does not address e-bikes. There is someone interested in opening an e-bike business in Bemidji.

PARK AND RECREATION MONTH

Larson shared a recap of the summer recreation programs describing the program, date and number in attendance. There were four poems shared that were entered into the poem challenge. The Parks & Recreation Commissioners unanimously selected Katie's poem as the winner.

COMMISSIONERS UPDATE

Faver shared about a woman who is writing about the trails history on Lake Boulevard. There are some benches on the trail and there is someone who wants to restore the rock benches off the road. Faver would like to add an agenda item for next month's meeting to form a work group to review all of Lake Boulevard and make some recommendations to the City of what should be done.

DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

The City Council approved the MOU with the BCAC for the next three years. Jake Pederson will remain a city employee, Larson will continue to supervise him and continue on the BCAC board. The open skate and open hockey programs will be offered for free. Closing Neilson Reise and selling some of the inventory will help finance Jake's position and some of the inventory or assets may go to the Sanford. Larson will need to hire a parks maintenance staff to take over the job duties that Jake did in the winter such as snow plowing.

Next month the Commissioners will take a tour of the Neilson Reise Arena to assist in discussions of future planning. It will be important to address the curling club because it will also be affected by whatever happens to the building.

The Tourist Information Center has been very busy with visitors and bike rentals with over \$2000.00 for just one month with only 10 bikes. Staff has made over 8000 contacts with visitors to the information center. The TIC Committee will be discussing potential ideas for the fall and winter.

#Bemidji sign located in Paul Bunyan Park is scheduled to be moved end of August beginning of September discussed the possibility of leaving it there permanently.

Cameron Park Plan from 2016 is included in the packet. There will need to be some updates made to this plan specifically because the lift station is failing and the building needs to be replaced.

Before replacing the lift station, the size of the building needs to be determined so that the lift station size is sufficient.

Discussed looking at doing a new park plan or at least have the Commissioners discuss what parks need to be addressed and what specific projects in that park need to be done and prioritize them.

The water ban has been revised which will help with the grass at the waterfront and the ball fields.

Natural Playground at North Country park completed the walk through and it 99% complete. A tentative date of September 11th for the ribbon cutting is scheduled.

The car club gave a donation for Paul and Babe.

Aaron Weeks, Park Superintendent, is working with BSU on the buckthorn issue on Lake Blvd. and other areas in the city.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Wesley, seconded by Faver, to adjourn the meeting at 5:45 p.m. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Lolly Randall
Administrative Assistant