

MINUTES
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING
FEBRUARY 1, 2022

MEMBERS PRESENT: Tom Anderson, Kristine Bommersbach, Tim Faver, Gwenia Fiskevold Gould, Don Heinonen, Tonya Prim, and Bethany Wesley

MEMBERS ABSENT:

COUNCIL & BOARD REPRESENTATIVE: Dan Jourdain

CITY STAFF & OTHERS: Marcia Larson, Aaron Weeks, and Lolly Randall

CALL TO ORDER:

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

AMENDMENTS TO AGENDA:

No changes were made.

APPROVAL OF JANUARY 11, 2022 AND JANUARY 19, 2022 MEETING MINUTES:

Motion by Wesley, seconded by Faver, to approve the January 11, 2022 Meeting Minutes as written. Motion carried.

Motion by Faver, seconded by Wesley, to approve the January 19, 2022 Meeting Minutes as written. Motion carried.

COMMISSION TO ELECT (BY NOMINATIONS)

Nomination by Faver, seconded by Prim, to nominate Bethany Wesley as the Chair for 2022. Motion carried

Nomination by Faver, seconded by Prim, to nominate Gwenia Fiskevold Gould as Vice-Chair for 2022. Motion carried.

DNR OUTDOOR RECREATION GRANT - CAMERON PARK

Director Larson reviewed the DNR's Outdoor Recreation Grant with the Commissioners and explained that its intended use is to increase and enhance outdoor recreation facilities in a community's parks. Director Larson stated that they received the grant a few years ago for North Country Park's outdoor classroom. The maximum grant award is \$300,000 and requires a match by the city and the American Recovery Act Funding would be a great source for the matching funds.

The lift station at Cameron Park is failing and if it's not fixed, the restrooms most likely will not be open this season. The lift station could be moved away from the lake and down sized to fit the needs of the building/restrooms. It would also present the opportunity to move the building which would open up the green space within the park.

Discussed how to get people into the park without having to walk down the roadway. Director Larson has been working with Karvakko Engineering since 2016 to design a plan that addresses this issue as well as relocating the restrooms and making the building a year round building that could act as a warming house in the winter. There could be an additional outdoor hockey rink added in the future if that is what the neighborhood would like. Reviewed the desired plan but the cost is more than there are funds available, so Karvakko reduced the plan which is more affordable and includes some of the important features such as installing a new lift station, install stairway coming down into the park, moving the building/restrooms, moving the playground and add some accessible walkways. This plan is dependent upon \$400,000 to \$500,000 of the American Recovery Funds and also getting the DNR grant. It will be important to include the infrastructure for future plans in the park.

Discussed if this project should be put on hold until after the completion of the strategic park plan to be sure it fits into the plan. Discussed the history of this project and this plan was in the 2016 Master Plan. Now there is some urgency because of the failing lift station and need for a safe walkway into the park has been an ongoing issue. Director Larson explained that Cameron Park neighborhood will still be included in the outreach for the Strategic Park Plan to capture what amenities they would like to see in the park. Construction could start as soon as 2023.

Motion by Faver, seconded by Anderson, to approve Director Larson to apply for the DNR grant to help fund Phase 1 of the Master Plan for Cameron. Motion carried.

There is a public process to get input from the surrounding neighbors of Cameron Park. Director Larson will ask the City Council for at least \$400,000 from the American Recovery Act Funding as a match for the DNR grant. Discussed how to get the information to the neighbors/public.

FACILITIES UPDATES

Tourist Information Center – the MOU between the City and Visit Bemidji was recently signed by both parties and provides a funding partnership. A full-time position has been posted for the TIC. This position will help with the operations and revenue generation through marketing and rentals at the TIC. There has also been some work done on a possible remodel at the TIC and will be scaled down due to timing and costs. Visit Bemidji did make some changes in their area and are pretty happy with the space. Discussed the scaled down version of a remodel that is more reasonable in costs. This includes installing a roll up door and create storage for rental equipment and design two work stations. This would cost around \$30,000 and there is \$90,000 in funds that was gained by rent paid for this building in the past. Recreation Department has moved pick-ups of programming material to the TIC and a full-time recreation staff has been working at the TIC which has been a good short term solution.

Carnegie Library – The tenant renting the north side in the lower level of the Carnegie Library, has notified Director Larson that they will be moving out at the end of April. Jaycees did sign a lease for the year 2022; their offices are on the south side of the lower level. Recreation staff are working on a transition plan to relocate their offices to the Carnegie. Rentals of the Lakeview Room are increasing and there are more recreation programs held there. Recreation programs are also held at the TIC so it makes sense to be located near the TIC. It is a more accessible location than the Public Works Building for the public. Discussed that Superintendent Weeks will remain

at the Public Works Building with the maintenance staff and Director Larson has not decided if she will move or not.

DIRECTOR UPDATES

Sponsorships that have been sent out and some have been returned.

Parks is in the process of hiring a full-time Parks Maintenance II.

The Visitor Experience Lead Representative position has been posted.

The seasonal positions will be posted soon.

Discussed the strategic plan and the definition of “user”.

Suggested to reach out to Chat About to get on their schedule.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Faver, seconded by Fiskevold Gould, to adjourn the meeting at 5:40 p.m. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Lolly Randall
Administrative Assistant