

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

August 2, 2023

The Merrill Parks and Recreation Commission met on Wednesday, August 2, 2023 at 4:15 p.m., at Merrill City Hall.

Members Present: Kyle Gulke, Chad Krueger, Dan Novitch (arrived at 5:10), Rebecca Rutkowski, Jean Ravn, and Mark Weix

Members Excused Absent: Joan Tabor

Department Staff Present: Dan Wendorf and Dawn Smith

***Motion by Weix, seconded by Ravn to approve the minutes from the June meeting.

***Carried unanimously.

***Motion by Weix, seconded by Gulke, to approve the claims from June 2023.

Ravn questioned why we had to get new gazebo railing. Wendorf stated due to vandalism. Weix questioned on how garbage pickup was. Wendorf stated it was going good.

***Carried unanimously.

***Motion by Weix, seconded by Ravn to approve the claims from July 2023.

Gulke questioned if there was a warranty on the pool. Wendorf stated there was not. Weix questioned the top soil. Wendorf stated it was something that was done every year to fix turf areas.

Public Comment: none

Chad Krueger requested to move agenda number 1 to a little later in the meeting.

The next item on the agenda was request for discussion regarding potential camping at Riverside Park. Weix stated that Greg Hartwig had come to him to have this item placed on the agenda. Weix stated that the County has ARPA money and would be willing to use it for camping. Wendorf stated that he has reviewed some of the sites of interest and he does not feel Riverside Park would be a good location due to flooding at least once or twice a year. After a lengthy discussion the commission requested that Wendorf check into what the cost would be, if we would need to do a property audit to see where the best location for camping would be and to report back to the commission next month.

The next item on the agenda was to discuss potential Lincoln County funding for kayak lift/dock at Ott's Park and or Riverside Park. Lincoln County Administrator Renee Krueger stated that the County does an 85/21 grant. It is a DOA specialized grant for transportation for elderly and disabled. Krueger stated that putting in a kayak lift/dock would qualify for this grant. Krueger stated that the lift would be on the opposite side as where the boats are put in.

***Motion by Weix, seconded by Rutkowski to approve putting in the kayak lift/dock at Ott's Park from Lincoln County as part of a 85/21 grant.

***Motion carried.

The next item on the agenda was discussion on the 2024 Capital Improvements & Equipment. Wendorf stated that there is an enclosed list of Capital Improvements and Equipment enclosed in the packet. Wendorf discussed the items listed and stated that this would be on next month's agenda for more discussion. Wendorf asked that if anyone has other ideas, please share before the next meeting.

The next item on the agenda was continued discussion on park shelter refund policy. Wendorf stated that he has seen an increase on cancellations within the park and feels like there needs to be a better policy in place for cancellations. Wendorf included a list of what other cities do for cancellations. Wendorf stated that he likes what Verona does. They offer a 3 tier cancellation policy.

***Motion by Weix, seconded by Rutkowski to implement a new cancellation policy for park rentals. Cancellation policy will be: Cancel 30 or more days' in advance full refund, 14-29 days in advance equals 50% refund, inside of 14 days is no refund.

***Motion carried.

The next item on the agenda was to discuss Summer Playground Program. Wendorf stated that there have been some behavioral problems at summer playground this year and has been a pretty difficult summer for our leaders. We had one leader who quit and most leaders may not be returning next year. We have been dealing with language, fighting, stealing, name calling and disrespect to our leaders. This year we have asked 15 kids to leave the program. Wendorf stated that he feels like we are in need of making some changes to the program before next summer. This item will be discussed more at a future meeting.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Sept. 6, 2023 at 4:15 p.m. at the Merrill City Hall.

Public Comment: Steve Sabatke: Steve stated that he is in favor of a campground within the city limits. He stated that Tomahawk loves the idea of Merrill putting in a campground. Steve also stated that there should be some more kayak launches. Some ideas for launches would include: Prairie River/Prairie Dells, Little Florida and over by Hwy. C.

Kyle Gulke: Kyle stated that he has done some research on National Park website. He stated that in 2021 1.3 million people visited Marathon County spending approximately \$408.00 per trip. Kyle stated he wanted to bring this to the commission to show that tourism does bring in money to the community.

Chad Krueger: Chad wanted to thank Dan and his crew for doing an amazing job on getting the fields ready for the fastpitch tournament and how nice the grounds looked. He stated that people love coming to this tournament.

***Motion by Ravn, seconded by Krueger to adjourn at 6:10 p.m.

***Carried unanimously.

Dawn Smith
Recording Secretary

