



Parks & Recreation Commission Minutes

Wednesday, July 13th, 2022

The Parks & Recreation Commission met on Wednesday, July 13th, 2022 at 4:15 p.m. at the Merrill City Hall.

Members Present: Dan Novitch, Brian Artac, Jean Ravn, Kyle Gulke, Mark Weix Jr.

Members Excused Absent: Joan Tabor, Chad Krueger

Department Staff: Dan Wendorf

Others: City Clerk Lori Anderson-Malm, MP3

Chairperson Novitch called the meeting to order at 4:15 p.m.

Minutes from previous meeting:

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

***Carried unanimously.

Claims:

***Motion Weix, seconded by Artac to approve the June claims.

Artac asked about the bill from RTL regarding lights on the River Bend Trail. Wendorf stated that bill was for the new lights that were recently installed along the new segment of the River Bend Trail. The lights were required in the land usage agreement. Gulke mentioned that the funding was provided by the River District Development Foundation.

***Carried unanimously.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

The next item on the agenda was to discuss the 2023 Capital Projects and Equipment request. Wendorf began the discussion by giving the Commission an overview of the process and stated that with the number of new City Council members and a new Mayor they wanted to begin the process earlier this year. Wendorf went through the list item by item and explained what each item requested was and the reason for including them for potential funding. The list included the following items: Replace dock at

Riverside Park Boat Landing, Replace dock and boat launch at Ott's Park, Security Camera's at Normal, Kitchenette, and Stange Parks, Replace John Deere 1445 Front Deck mower (and most attachments), Construct Pickleball Courts (at a location to be determined later), Re-pave Streeter Square basketball courts, and Construct a small playground area near the Agra Pavilion. Wendorf went on to explain that the docks at both locations were damaged beyond repair several years ago after repeated high water events and are very popular put in areas for our citizens. These have been on our capital request for the past few years. Security cameras are needed to start to combat the increasing vandalism we have been experiencing at these three locations especially. The replacement of the JD 1445 is due to the fact that this piece of equipment is vital year round for us and its versatility during the winter is irreplaceable. It is getting up there in age/hours and we can't wait for it to quit on us. Pickleball courts have been discussed for a number of years now internally and we have had many requests from the public (and a lot of feedback on our recent Outdoor Recreation public survey). Pickleball is a sport that is growing exponentially in popularity and our citizens would like us to provide them some courts. I am going to meet with some of our local enthusiasts to discuss potential locations to bring back to the Commission for consideration. The Streeter Square basketball court surface is over 50 years old and in great need of replacement. We would like to remove the old asphalt and repave with new and make the court regulation size. Finally, with the heavy usage of the Agra Pavilion and River Bend Trailhead area there is nothing for young children to do in that area and it would be nice to install a small playground there. The River District Development Foundation has some funding to contribute to the project and we would like to partner with them to provide a small playground on the grass area immediately east of the pavilion.

***Motion Weix, seconded by Ravn to approve the 2023 Capital Request list as presented.

***Carried unanimously.

The next item on the agenda was to continue discussion on seasonal and hourly wages. Wendorf stated that this needs to continue to be discussed in conjunction with City Council and Personnel and Finance discussions to try and be proactive and competitive with our wages. Wendorf noted the recent struggles we experienced with recruitment of guards and other seasonals and pointed out the recent wage increases that MAPS enacted (up to \$15/hr starting). If we do not at least match what others are offering in our market, we will continue to struggle to recruit employees. Novitch also mentioned the discussion we had at the June meeting regarding compression. If we do not address hourly full time wages along with seasonal wages it can become a problem. Everyone is very well aware of the number of job openings that others cannot fill. We have tremendous employees within our department, both seasonal and full time, and we really need to do all that we can to keep them. This will include compensating them at market value or we can risk the possibility of them leaving. Gulke mentioned that we should probably revisit our fees that we charge to help offset any wage increases. Wendorf mentioned that ultimately it is all up to City Council to approve but at least the discussion is happening at our Commission level. Novitch requested that Wendorf keep the Commission informed on future Common Council information regarding wage rates.

Novitch suggested combining the next two agenda items for discussion as they were related. Wendorf began by providing the Commission with a summary of pool operations to date. He said it was great to see a few more guards join the team and it has helped be open every weekend in July thus far and helped with scheduling flexibility. He mentioned that pool attendance has been good, but with any outdoor pool it fluctuates depending on the weather. Hopefully we finish with some sunny 90 degree days to help fill it up as much as possible. He also mentioned that the young crew that we have out

there has been learning as the summer goes on. Wendorf also mentioned that they have noticed early on this year that there were many parents trying to send younger kids to the pool by themselves (under 10) and we had to nip that in the bud early as we are not a daycare out there. All in all things were going good at the Aquatic Center. Wendorf also fielded any questions related to his board report.

The next meeting will be on August 3rd, 2022 at 4:15 p.m. in the Council Chambers at City Hall.

*Novitch mentioned that a few years ago the Commission did a park tour and would like to possibly consider that in the near future.

***Motion Weix, seconded by Artac to adjourn at 5:30 p.m.

***Carried unanimously.

Dan Wendorf
Recording Secretary