

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

MAY 5, 2021

The Merrill Parks and Recreation Commission met on Wednesday, May 5, 2021 at 4:15 p.m., at Merrill City Hall.

Members Present: Dan Novitch, Kyle Gulke, Jean Ravn, Joan Tabor, and John Van Lieshout (Phoned in)

Members Excused Absent: Brian Artac

Department Staff Present: Dan Wendorf and Dawn Smith

***Motion by Ravn, seconded by Tabor to approve the minutes from the April meeting.

***Carried unanimously.

***Motion by Van Lieshout, seconded by Gulke, to approve the claims from April.

***Carried unanimously.

Public Comment:

Jim Wedemeyer, 204 Van Renesselaer, Merrill. This is regarding location of the Scott Tower. At the Friends of the River Bend Trail meeting we could not decide on a location but we all agreed that the tower would be a great place for pictures or graduation pictures. I think location #2 would be the best location, but I do think we should move it to the east a little bit so that there would be excellent view of where the tower used to sit.

Greg Hartwig, W7729 Rose Len Court, Merrill. I do not like #3 because I feel it is too far away from public view. I feel #1 is not in the site of the security cameras and more security cameras would need to be purchased in order to see the tower. I feel #2, if moved to the east a little bit would be a good spot for the tower; it would be covered by the security cameras and great public view.

Steve Sabatke, 2801 Thielman St., Merrill. Steve stated that he was granted permission to take a look at the tower and in his opinion the tower is in better shape than he thought. Steve stated that it can be repaired and he was willing to draw up the specs to help refurbish it. Steve stated that he believes site #1 would be the best place to put the tower. #2 is flat ground and it would need some ventilation under it and #3 is on a slope. Steve stated that he is willing to help with the project.

The next item on the agenda was to re-visit T.B. Scott Tower location decision. Wendorf stated that at the March meeting a decision was made where to place the tower but since then there has been some concerns over tower placement. Wendorf stated that Ascension is paying to refurbish and move the tower, but they would like a decision made at tonight's meeting as to where the tower will be going so they can start the process. Wendorf stated 3 main themes have been historical context, visibility and accessibility and originality and in his opinion site #2 would be the most logical location. Van Lieshout stated that he like location #2 but would also like to see it moved to the east a little. Mayor Woellner stated that he thought placing the tower down the hill, by the trail head at Riverside Park would be a good location and people could see the tower coming into town or leaving but admitted it had its limitations with accessibility. Tabor

questioned what the purpose of the tower was? Historical or for pictures and use. Wendorf stated that the tower really wasn't that big and it's not like an entire wedding party would fit in it nor was it intended to be a gazebo. Mayor Woellner said the only way to make that happen was to cut one of the railing off and put steps on it and that would take away from it being original. Novitch stated he felt it should stay as is to preserve the structure. Ravn and Groth also stated that it should stay in its original historical value. Gulke preferred location #2 and sliding east.

***Motion made by Ravn, seconded by Tabor to place the tower at site location #2, but move it to the east so that you will be able to see the view of the hill where the tower used to sit.

***Carried unanimously.

The next item on the agenda was continued discussion on Prairie Trails to River Bend connector trail. Wendorf stated that he needed the Park and Recreation Commission to approve the bike route designation request so that the information could be sent to the Board of Public Works for approval of the routes.

***Motion by Gulke, seconded by Ravn to refer the designated bike route to the Board of Public Works for approval of the recommended bike route.

**Carried unanimously.

The next item on the agenda was discussing designs from recent partnership with MHS Graphic Design class for potential park merchandise sale. Wendorf stated that Kyle came up with the idea of having some park merchandise available for purchase to help promote the Park and Recreation Department. Tabor stated that it was really neat to see how the high school kids see the parks and came up with some really nice logos. Novitch questioned who would do the production of the shirts. Wendorf stated that the department would be responsible for the production. Mayor Woellner thought it would be nice to see different shirts made every year. Gulke stated that he would like to thank the high school kids for their creations.

The next item on the agenda was monthly reports. Wendorf asked if anyone had any questions. Novitch questioned if Jim Yates and Joe Weckwerth keep track every year of the first time they mow grass for the season and plow snow for the season. Wendorf stated that yes, unofficially. Wendorf stated that it has been very nice to see the parks being used and ball diamonds are getting a lot of use. Wendorf stated that he was in Rhinelander last week and was able to see the dome that they just recently put up and it was large enough for 2 ball diamonds, a football field, tennis courts and pickle ball courts. Wendorf stated that he would like to see the school and the city work together and possibly in the future build one in the community. It would really bring in a lot of people.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 2 at 4:15 p.m. at the Merrill City Hall.

Public Comment: Kyle Gulke, 1504 Jackson Street, Merrill, WI. stated he was reading the packet that was sent out and really liked this particular paragraph because there is so much truth in it: Policymakers and elected officials at all levels of government should take notice and support greater and more stable taxpayer funding of parks and recreation. Local park and recreation agencies not only help raise the standard of living in our neighborhoods, towns and cities, they also spark economic activity that can have ripple effects well beyond any initial expenditure in creating jobs and prosperity throughout our nation.

***Motion by Tabor, seconded by Ravn to adjourn at 5:07 p.m.

***Carried unanimously.

Dawn Smith
Recording Secretary