

**CITY OF MERRILL
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 2024 MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS 4:15 PM**

- I. **Call to Order** Vice-Chair Krueger called the meeting to order at 4:15 p.m.
- II. **Consider approving minutes from the previous meeting**
 1. **August 2024 Minutes** - Osness motioned to place minutes on file. Alderperson Rutkowski seconded and the motion Passed.
- III. **Approval of Claims**
 1. **August 2024 Claims** - Alderperson Rutkowski motioned to approve claims . Tabor seconded and the motion Passed.
- IV. **General Agenda Items for Consideration**
 1. **Continued discussion and potential action on Wall of Hope initiative**

- Alderperson Rutkowski motioned to approve. Osness seconded and the motion Passed. Krueger introduced the topic and invited guest Pam Lemke Dodge to the podium to speak on behalf of the initiative as she was the individual who brought this to the Commission. Wendorf provided a brief background on the history of this topic and refreshed the Commission on previous discussions. Pam then summarized her idea and discussed what went into her decision and design. She indicated that after meeting with Wendorf and physically looking at a number of sites, she thought the area between the playground and the river at Kitchenette Park offers the best location in her opinion. She felt that its central location, access to the park amenities, and tranquility it would make a great spot for a potential Wall of Hope. She explained that she wishes this to be a place that people can use for whatever they need (hope, peace, positivity, healing, grief, etc.). Her design is intended to be masonry and approximately 7 foot by 7 foot sitting on a footing. There was some discussion on vandalism and additional discussion on potentially a public survey on location. Pam mentioned that there would most likely be a finish on the wall that helps with potential vandalism and the cleaning of it if it does occur.

****Motion Rutkowski to approve the idea of a 7x7 structure contingent upon final design approval, seconded by Osness. . .**

Alderperson Rutkowski motioned to approve. Osness seconded and the motion Passed.
 2. **Begin 2025 Operating Budget discussion** - Wendorf began the discussion by discussing the 2025 budgetary process and that he wanted to help the Commission better understand the Parks & Recreation budget before making any decisions at the October meeting. Wendorf went through a draft 2025 budget in detail with the Commission and explained each of their components

(Parks, Recreation, Smith Center, and Aquatic Center) and fielded any and all questions. Wendorf invited the Commission to reach out at any time over the next month if they have any questions.

3. **Consider a land parcel exchange with Fremarq to facilitate the trail connection and storm water discharge** - Wendorf informed the Commission that City Administrator/Engineer, in working with the new developer and former landowner of the property located along the Spruce St. extension north there was a possibility of swapping land to better suit our needs (for the Prairie River Pathway - Connector Trail) as well as the current owners of Fremarq. Fremarq and the developer are friendly to the initiative and to the swap. Wendorf said it would simplify our ability to connect the trail to Prairie Trails and make for a much better trail than our previous ideas and is all for the land swap. Wendorf stated it was simply a parcel for a parcel with no other strings attached. Wendorf voiced his support for approving this deal. Alderperson Rutkowski motioned to approve. Tabor seconded and the motion Passed.
4. **Begin discussion regarding Special Event Permits** - Wendorf led the discussion by saying that over the winter months he would like to come up with a special event permit for organizers who host events in our parks. Wendorf said that it is simply intended to help with better communication between their department, event organizers, and other departments within the City that may be impacted or needed along the way. Wendorf said he would like the permit to be easy to follow for users and informative. Wendorf stated that he has started doing some homework with other communities and likes the permits that are easy to follow and provide criteria as to who to contact for certain questions, what needs to be done and when it needs to be done, and will involve other departments along the way when they need to be involved. Wendorf stated that he would like to include this on future agendas for discussion to hopefully come up with our own easy to follow permit before next rental season.

V. Monthly Reports

1. **September 2024 Director's Report** - Wendorf began by asking if there were any questions. There were no questions so Wendorf informed the Commission that earlier today Lee Recreation arrived and finished the Gruling Family Playground install at the Agra Pavilion and it will be a great asset to that facility to say the least. He said the park crew will finish the woodchips and border hopefully within the next few days and it will be open to the public after that. Wendorf also informed the Commission that tomorrow (9/5/24) Huffcut is delivering and setting the boat ramp planks in the water at the Ott's Park boat launch. He said that the Street Department helped remove the old ones and will help finish the remainder of the boat ramp when the planks are finished being set in the water. Wendorf also mentioned that there are a few projects they are hoping to start and finish yet this fall including the Normal

Park paths and lights and the Prairie River Pathway as far as they can get before the weather doesn't cooperate.

VI. Date and Time of Next Meeting Wendorf stated that the next meeting would be scheduled for Wednesday October 2nd. He asked the Commission if they would like a "Park Tour" to visit a few parks with either recent improvements and/or capital requests to see what has been done and what needs to be done. The Commission all wanted to have a park tour and suggested potentially starting the October meeting a little earlier than normal so we can approve our 2025 budget and visit a number of parks without it getting too late in the evening. It was suggested to meet at 3:30 p.m. on 10/2 pending Chairperson Novitch's availability. Wendorf said he would reach out to Novitch and see if it works for him when he gets back to town and notify the Commission.

VII. Public Comment There was no public comment.

VIII. Adjournment Adjournment motion occurred at 5:30 p.m. Osness motioned to adjourn. Alderperson Rutkowski seconded and the motion Passed.