

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

September 6, 2023

The Merrill Parks and Recreation Commission met on Wednesday, September 6, 2023 at 4:15 p.m., at Merrill City Hall.

Members Present: Kyle Gulke, Chad Krueger, Dan Novitch, 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 Krueger to approve the minutes from the August meeting.

***Carried unanimously.

***Motion by Weix, seconded by Rutkowski, to approve the claims from August.

Weix questioned if the high school helps pay for infield mix or for any diamond usage. Wendorf stated they do not because we also use their facilities without a charge. Wendorf also stated that the Optimist Club paid for all the damages done at Normal Park playground. Weix questioned if any money has been recouped from the vandalism since the cameras have been installed. Wendorf stated that not yet, some has from gazebo damage but vandalism is down.

***Carried unanimously.

Public Comment: none

The next item on the agenda was to review and approve 2024 fees. Wendorf stated that every year the cost is going up and we need to start adjusting some of our fees accordingly. Novitch stated that every year we should be reviewing our fees.

***Motion by Gulke, seconded by Weix to approve the new 2024 fees as presented.

***Carried unanimously.

The next item on the agenda was to review and approve 2024 capital requests. Wendorf stated there was an addition. Wendorf stated that the purchase of tables and chairs for Smith Center and Agra Pavilion have been added to capital requests. Wendorf stated that the chairs at the Smith Center are close to 20 years old and some tables have also seen their better days. Wendorf stated that the number one project on the list would be Ott's Park dock/boat landing. Wendorf stated that this would be the priority order: 1. Ott's boat ramp, 2. Riverside dock, 3. Nicklaus Bridge, 4. Streeter basketball courts, 5. Tables/chairs at Smith Center and Agra, 6. Refurbish decking and rails at Prairie Trails bridge, 7. Replace park entrance signs and 8. Finish concrete surrounds on shelters. Gulke stated that the Ott's dock will have to be done so that the kayak launch can go in. Wendorf is really hoping that all eight projects the Park and Recreation have for capital improvements can be done this year, the longer they are put off the more cost it will be. Weix questioned if the county has been approached regarding the funding for possible money through ARPA. Wendorf stated that not at this time. This item will be discussed more when we get to that agenda item.

***Motion by Weix, seconded by Rutkowski to approve the 2024 capital requests and priority.

***Carried unanimously.

The next item on the agenda was to review and approve 2024 operating budget. Wendorf requested two changes in the operating budget. Wendorf would like to add \$1,000.00 to the education and conference account and request another \$500.00 into the advertisement account. Wendorf stated that it would be nice to have some of the employees attend the educational conferences that are offered. Wendorf stated the aquatic center is not on the operational budget yet. Wendorf stated that Finance Director Kathy Unertl will have aquatic center information ready for the October meeting.

***Motion by Gulke, seconded by Rutkowski to approve the 2024 operating budget with the change of \$1,000.00 to the education and conference account and another \$500.00 to the advertisement account.

***Carried unanimously.

The next item on the agenda was continued discussion on potential camping at a park location. Wendorf stated that he has collected some information from Festival Grounds Manager Bjorklund and also from Dean Bowe from the county. Novitch questioned if there was a deadline on the ARPA money. Rutkowski stated that there is but she was not sure what the date was. Weix stated that the Festival Grounds has a great camping location and there were 20 new sites that have been put in with electricity and he thought a great addition to that would to request money for a shower house for the campers. Other ideas that were considered are adding a primitive campground at the City Forest. One thing that could be added would be a water supply for the campers. It would have to be on a first come first serve basis. It was discussed that Riverside would not be a good location due to flooding every year, Ott's Park would be very hard due to park rentals, pickle ball courts and tennis courts being there and not enough bathrooms. Another location to consider would be the Jackson Street location. After some more discussion the commission requested that Wendorf brings back some amounts on what starting a campground would cost. This item will be brought back to the October meeting.

The next item on the agenda was monthly reports. Wendorf asked if anyone had questions. Ravn questioned if the aquatic center is busy during the fair. Wendorf stated that it is pretty steady with people. Wendorf wanted to thank his full time and year round employees for a great job this summer.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Oct. 11, 2023 at 4:15 p.m. at the Merrill City Hall.

Public Comment: none

***Motion by Ravn, seconded by Rutkowski to adjourn at 5:30 p.m.

***Carried unanimously.

Dawn Smith
Recording Secretary

