

DRAFT

CITY OF WAUSAU – PARK AND RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Date/Time: June 1, 2020 at 4:30 p.m. Location: Council Chambers, City Hall

Members Present: Tom Kilian, Lou Larson, Tom Neal, Pat Peckham (c), Sarah Watson

Others Present: Marcus Aumann-Assistant Director of Community Services, Katie Rosenberg-Mayor, Dale Grosskurth-Health Department Environmental Health and Safety Director, Anne Jacobson-City Attorney

1. In accordance with Chapter 19, Wisc. Statutes, notice of this meeting was posted and sent to the Daily Herald in the proper manner. It was noted that a quorum was present and the meeting was called to order by Chairman Peckham at 4:30 p.m.

2. **Public Comment**

Isabelle Krolow – 1224 S. 11th Ave – Has worked for the pools and believes staff is ready to implement social distancing rules, cleaning, and safety precautions.

Elaina Heinrichs – 3103 Partridge Ave -Has worked for the pools and believes they are properly trained to deal with children and incidents that arise. She is concerned about drowning hazards if children visit the beaches that are not lifeguarded.

Tim Thurs – 1800 Baneberry Court – Representing Wausau Youth Baseball, believes their organization can make necessary modifications to be safe and effective to meet the social distancing guidelines. They are advising not to do T-ball because that requires more physical contact to help hold bats and it would also allow for more equipment to be available to others so that they don't have to share it. Play would not start until July 6th. He has six-hundred registrations and less than ten people have cancelled.

Paula Meadows – 1302 Madison St. – Is here on the issue of opening pools and thinks to keep limiting children and what they can do in gathering is detrimental to their health. She would like the pools and baseball to go through this year with all the rules and considerations that need to be met for them to open.

Rebecca Dau – 212 S. 5th - Thinks limiting amount that kids are able to play is detrimental to their physical and mental health. She feels that she is a responsible parent and can make responsible choices for her family.

Jim Tipple – 314 Gerald's Court – Commented that Marathon County has 140,000 residents and has 51 Covid cases. He felt that chlorine, ultra-violet rays, high temperatures all work in favor of the pools. He thought some things they could do would be to limit the number of people in the pool, take temperatures, have people sign waivers, ask health questions, take reservations, not sell food, etc. He believes by mitigating some of the health risks that there is a way to solve the problem.

Peckham – mentioned there were also comments via e-mails that had been distributed to Committee.

3. **Introduction of Marcus Aumann – Assistant Director of Community Services** – Aumann started on May 18. He went to the University in Wausau for two years, loved the area and is excited to be back to serve the population that is here. He had a wide variety of experience in parks and recreation programs in his previous job.

4. **Approval of Minutes** – May 4, 2020 and May 18, 2020 - **Motion** by Watson, second by Larson to approve the Park and Recreation Committee draft May 4, 2020 and May 18, 2020 minutes. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 5-0.

5. **Discussion and Possible Action on Opening or Closing the Wausau Pools** – Polley mentioned information had been supplied to Committee with guidelines concerning pools from the State Health Department, Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, and the CDC. Staff also has a tentative plan if it were to open of what new guidelines might be. Staff is not here to say one way or the other, the Park Department loves to have things open but also wants to follow Health Department guidelines.

Polley said the amount of people at each pool would have to be reduced to promote the six foot distancing guidelines. Staff hygiene and health, cleaning and disinfecting guidelines all have to be taken into consideration. Polley believes they could keep features open at the pools with some extra cleaning. Spreading the children out on the stairs of the slide and how they move through the different pieces could be a challenge. There needs to be proper staffing so that the lifeguards can focus on the water. The information provided talks about how to reopen but not when to reopen. After the Badger Bounce Back Plan was overturned there is currently no plan in place with that guidance and the virus isn't gone so how to move forward is a big question. Current State guidelines currently recommend at this time all public pools, splashpads and waterparks remain closed.

Grosskurth – Health Department – commented that the County Health Department is adhering to what the State Department of Health Services is recommending. It is a challenge to make something that fits every place in the State. The State is looking at things from a bigger picture and how to control the spread of the virus which is primarily moving from the southeast and slowly increasing across the State. From the old Badger Bounce Back Plan we are not in Phase One of that plan yet. There are some downward trends and some gatemarkers have been met but not all of them. Marathon County was at 32 cases and is now at 51 which is not a significant number when looking at other communities but represents more than a 50% increase. There is more testing going on. Grosskurth said he would stand by last month's recommendation to not open the pools, that is what the Department of Health Services is advising and that would be their advisement as well.

Neal mentioned the three dozen emails with the majority supporting opening the pools. He felt recent news was encouraging in that it seemed surface contact was a lesser concern but that social distancing was the main concern. He said they have to make sure that staff can manage the social distancing so he would like to open two pools instead of three to spread the staff around to help with managing that. He would also like this item to go to the Public Health and Safety Committee. Larson said he was elected to represent the people of his district and the majority want the pools to open this year. If staff has to take extra precautions they should do it. Kilian said while he sympathizes with people, he cannot support opening the pools currently because of the recommendations coming down from the health organizations. **Motion** by Kilian to close the pools for this summer season. Motion died for lack of a second. **Motion** by Larson, second by Neal to open the three pools this season. Polley discussed the revenues and expenses associated with opening pools under new guidelines. She mentioned if pools are opened and operate as proposed with additional staff and loss of revenue they would have to make a determination in the City budget of allocate an additional \$15,000. Also if pools stayed open longer than additional funds would be needed. Neal felt that even though children don't have a lot of trouble with the virus there still is the emergence of a Kawaski like disease that is dangerous for them and also the fact that even if they don't get sick themselves, they can still spread the disease to others. He did not believe the mindset that parents will be in charge of what's good for their kids should be Committee's number one concern. The Committee has to look at the safety of the City. Neal did not think it would be easy for staff to manage a lot of children to be socially distant and wanted to feel good about that element of control being maintained. **Motion** by Neal, second by Watson to amend the proposal to open two of the three pools on a rotational basis so staffing is divided up to the two pools to ensure social distancing and cleaning. Polley felt from an operating standpoint it would be better to open two and not have one sit idle. She wanted to be clear that staff will not be able at all times to keep everyone six feet apart, they will try as hard as they can but it's going to be hard. Neal agreed to the opening of two pools. Kilian said he did not like closing pools to children and if they were to open they should spend whatever it takes to make them safe. He wanted to make sure whatever they do that it is right and equal. Polley discussed the scholarship program the Department has offered in the past. Peckham clarified they were voting on the motion to amend to two pools. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 3-2 with Peckham, Watson and Neal voting yes and Kilian and Larson voting no. Polley discussed how the two pools would operate. The Mayor was concerned about opening pools at this time when even the schools are not sure if they will open. She also thought it would be hard to keep children apart from each other. Vote was taken on the motion as amended to open two of the three pools with staff to decide which two and a request for Public Health and Safety to hold a special meeting this week to also weigh in with a recommendation to City Council Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 4-1 with Kilian voting no.

6. Discussion and Possible Action Regarding the Operations of Playgrounds and Sports Fields – Polley said the Department has been following CDC and Health Department guidelines for its parks. That was including playgrounds which were originally closed. The County park playgrounds remain closed with signage and no barriers. There was a lot of pushback about the City playgrounds being closed and the Director's authority. Polley said parks are open for general use. All sports fields are open for general use except for those that are scheduled which includes Sunnyvale, the Sports Complex and Athletic Park. If a parent wanted to play with a child on a sports field they could, but the Department is not scheduling, lining, grooming or taking fees from any organized sports. Neal felt it would be a lot easier for a coach to manage social distancing at a ball field than something like managing it at the pools. He felt playgrounds were kind of moot because they aren't enforcing anything. Polley said she needed direction from this Committee and Council if she should follow Health Department and CDC guidelines when it comes to park facilities. She said the guidelines are being followed at everything like boat launches, camping, tennis/pickelball, etc. The Department has been following and showing that the City and County were following the recommendations of the County Health Director as she put forward and as she would like all businesses to follow. Everything park related is currently following those recommendations except for City playgrounds. None of this is enforceable, it's all recommendations. From a City perspective does Committee want to set the guidance that as a Department they should continue to follow the guidance of the

Health Department and the CDC or are they giving her direction that because it's not enforceable to just open everything up. Signage can be put up at the playgrounds that says they are closed. It is not enforceable but at least it shows that the City is following those guidelines in a best effort. Kilian thought it made sense to recognize the CDC recommendations. **Motion** by Neal, second by Larson to open sports fields and direct staff to work with the sports teams that use them. Motion **carried** by voice vote with Peckham, Neal, Larson voting yes and Kilian and Watson voting no. **Motion** by Watson, second by Kilian to follow CDC guidelines with regards to the playgrounds and sign them closed. (The playgrounds will have signage but no barriers). Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 5-0.

7. Discussion and Possible Action Requesting Funds for an Environmental Consultant to Prepare Recommendations to Test the Waters of the Wisconsin River – tabled

8. Discussion and Possible Action Recommending 2021 Capital Improvement Projects – Polley discussed the projects. Projects include playground equipment, operations building hoist replacement, Sylvan Hill parking lot reconstruction, tennis court replacement program, Barker-Stewart Island Bridge decking replacement, Memorial Park Seawall Replacement, River Edge Trail-Thomas St. to Wastewater Treatment Plant, Stewart Park Masonry Repairs. **Motion** by Neal, second by Kilian to forwarding the CIP requests on as presented. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 5-0.

9. Educational Items

A. Dog Park Special Committee Update – Committee Appointment

Chair Peckham has appointed Alder Watson to the Dog Park Special Committee as the second representative of the Parks and Recreation Committee. The Dog Park Special Committee has not met recently. The Committee will be working on signage and will plan additional fundraising events for the future. Work on the dog park has not yet begun due to a wet site. Grading and over seeding will take place first followed by work on the parking lot, water line installation and fencing installation. Engineering has completed the design work of the parking lot and staff is coordinating the work to be performed and the schedule for completion.

B. Project Update

Water Systems: All major systems are operational with the exception of Athletic Park and River life irrigation systems which are schedule for the week of May 25. Swimming Pools: Pool systems and Plumbing are being assembled for either operation or testing. Flower Program: Greenhouse plants are ready for planting in designated areas. Planting will begin based on the forecast predictions of May 26. Park Office: Staff is working on Park Office remodeling project. Barker Stewart Island: Staff is preparing for vegetation management activities per work plan. Isle of Ferns: 6 wooden pole lights are being replaced with 11 decorative and energy efficient (LED) pole lights along the existing path. Routine Operations / Programs: Mowing Operations; all three mowing crews are in routing mode with limited staff. Urban forestry program; Tree planting is in progress; tree trimming, removals, stump grinding, Building and structure maintenance. Shelter reservations and Special Events; Equipment maintenance and repair Restroom Maintenance; increased maintenance (daily) and staffing due to COVID 19 recommendations. JoJo's Jungle Playground is nearing completion. Poured in place surfacing has begun and will take approximately 3 weeks to complete. The playground will remain closed at this time.

10. Future Agenda Items – Riverside Park boundary line, Riverside Park testing, beaver control, Wisconsin River testing

11. Next Meeting Date – July 6, 2020 at 4:30pm

12. Adjourn - **Motion** by Neal, second by Watson to adjourn at 7:00pm. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 5-0.