

DRAFT

CITY OF WAUSAU – PARK AND RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Date/Time: July 12, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. Location: Council Chambers, City Hall

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

Others Present: Jamie Polley-Director, Greg Freix-Asst. Director of Operations, other interested parties

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

2. Public Comment – none brought forward

3. Approval of Minutes – June 7, 2021 – **Motion** by Kilian, second by Neal to approve the Park and Recreation Committee draft June 7, 2021 minutes. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 5-0.

5. Discussion and Possible Action Regarding Alder Use of Park Shelters – Larson explained that during Covid their neighborhood group meetings couldn't be held at the schools and he was wondering about use of the park shelters. Peckham noted that the SE neighborhood group meets in a park but doesn't reserve a space. Polley explained that the policy for the ten or eleven organized neighborhood groups is to allow one annual meeting at a shelter for free. They haven't been allowed to have their monthly meetings at the shelters because that ties up the shelters for rentals that happen regularly in the parks which is a revenue source for the parks. If during the year there is a specific topic of interest that would need to be addressed with the community then there would be no charge to meet in a shelter if it was available. That would typically be an informational meeting to discuss a specific item and not a monthly meeting where business is conducted. Neal thought they could be a little flexible if a group was suffering temporary difficulty but shouldn't earmark regular meeting dates for neighborhood groups. He felt it was beholden on neighborhood groups to organize and take care of themselves apart from the City. Polley thought that once would be fine but it's easier if there is a policy in place because there are many other groups that would like free meeting spaces. Larson thought the item had been clarified and didn't think there was a need for any policy changes.

4. Discussion and Possible Action Recommending Approval of 2022 Staffing Requests – Polley wanted Committee's feedback on 2022 staffing requests. She said staff wanted to let Committee know how much has changed and been added to the Department over the years. Also the County does a culture survey every two years and some comments from staff were about staffing/equipment needs among other things. There have been multiple reorganizations over the years and as full time staffing was reduced many properties, programs and services were added. Freix said efficiencies have been realized and seasonals were added but the Department doesn't feel comfortable in providing the best level of service and care that it can. Freix discussed some of the things that have been added to the park system over the years. One example is Athletic Park which used to be a grandstand with a couple bathrooms and now is an eight million dollar facility and Sylvan Hill Park which now is a tubing hill that the Department staffs and makes snow for, it also has groomed ski trails and a newer bike trail system. He discussed many other County and City properties, programs and services that have been added.

Polley said the first position is a Recreation Supervisor that would mainly cover aquatics programming and the three outdoor aquatic centers. This position would be funded 60% by the City and 40% by the County. The Recreation Superintendent would still be involved but would work on increasing programs both on the City and County side to increase the revenue. The next position is a Maintenance Technician. This position is under the direction of the Operations Manager and is needed based on the added amenities, events and maintenance requirements. This position would be funded 50% by the County and 50% by the City. The last position did not go to the County because it would be funded 90% by the City and 10% by the County. The Department has one City Forester and a four-person urban forestry crew that maintains all of the city's urban canopy. Polley discussed the need for a person because of the demands now that Emerald Ash Borer has been found in the City and the plan over the next twelve to fifteen years to deal with it. **Motion** by Watson, second by Larson to recommend approval of the 2022 staffing requests. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 5-0.

6. Discussion on a "Resolution to Support Environmental Justice" Reviewed by Public Health & Safety on June 29, 2021 Peckham mentioned this item was reviewed and acted on by the Public Health and Safety Committee and it is just being brought to this Committee for discussion.

Terry Kilian, 133 East Thomas Street, Wausau – Co-spokesperson for Citizens for Clean Wausau. CCW strongly reiterates its support for this environmental justice resolution and make clear their commitment to continue its policy of public support of the resolution until it has been accepted and is meaningfully carried out in the City of Wausau.

Tanya Riehle, 223828 Orchid lane, Wausau – was concerned that incorporating environmental justice into City of Wausau ordinance, codes, policies and processes would mean an unlimited number of new fees and regulations would be imposed on residents and businesses and wanted to know who and what the specific changes would affect as a result of the resolution.

Dan Barth, 206540 Hrebik Lane, Mosinee – felt there was a history of people of lesser financial means oftentimes suffering the consequences of where polluting businesses are located and these matters are going to become more important in the future. He felt the City should take on the topic and the responsibility of looking after all of its members.

Bruce Grau, 1115 N 10th Street, Wausau – discussed the history and current numbers of local polluted sites. He felt environmental justice facilitates the active participation of people who are historically impacted the worst but are least likely to engage and he gave reasons why people might not engage. He listed a number of positive effects that the City would be declaring by endorsing the environmental justice resolution.

Neal felt the topic of environmental justice was more of a philosophy and vision than a system of policies, rules, regulations and standards per se. It's a thought process that is applied towards topics and people's input in that process and should be used as a guide when making policy and decisions.

Kilian said the EPA views environmental justice as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policy and this goal will be achieved when everyone enjoys the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards and equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn and work. They have to make sure to the fullest extent that they have public participation processes that allow the people whose lives are going to be impacted the most by government decisions to be as involved as possible. Kilian gave some history on how environmental justice started and some of the agencies and entities that recognize it. He said it's not just that there's equal protection from environmental hazards but there's also equal access to environmental assets like parks, green spaces, and outdoor recreation opportunities. The City is in quite a good situation with environmental assets but unfortunately doesn't have a standing committee that deals with the other side. They do have an advisory committee which is the Sustainability, Energy and Environment Committee but it cannot act and send things directly to Council without going through a standing committee. He mentioned that social equity and environmental justice were very important to the National Recreation and Park Association and they have an equity action plan available online. Kilian wanted Committee to know that the Wausau Metropolitan Planning Organization has used some existing data and already mapped out identified environmental justice areas in the Wausau area by census block group. He felt it was important to understand and acknowledge the historical and current disproportionate environmental burdens. He mentioned that this will not involve a slew of fees or penalties to citizens and he has the most fiscally conservative voting record on the Council.

Lindman had thought if they wanted to start somewhere they could look at how the public hearings are set up or how information is provided to the citizens. He just needs more direction from Council on where they want to begin and how to proceed. Larson thanked Kilian for all his work and said he didn't understand the opposition for this because he felt it was good for the City. The policies the City has had in the past are not working and something like this would move the City forward. Watson wondered if creating the Sustainability, Energy and Environment Committee as a standing committee could be worked into the resolution and she questioned who would review the existing codes. Kilian was open to her suggestion and felt staff and committees could review the codes. Watson asked what the timeline was for reviewing the public engagement policy because she would like to see more direction so that it doesn't fall by the side. Kilian thought that having the data definitions was key and that maybe they could add some time components. Watson questioned where the maps would be and who would create the inventory in the system. Lindman said they already have a lot of the census data and can break down and highlight the needed information. Kilian felt that more public participation could often lead to very positive outcomes and thought a good example of that was the Cleveland Avenue site that is being worked on. Peckham said the Council could give some guidance on the extent to which they want existing ordinances reviewed and if there is to be a review he thought the Mayor's Office could develop the review process.

7. Discussion and Possible Action of Interest in a City Parks Tour – Peckham questioned if Committee would like to hold another meeting at a different park or if they would like to tour a number of parks all in one day. Members were interested in holding the August Park and Recreation Committee meeting at Brockmeyer Park.

8. Educational Items

B. Riverside Park Testing Update – Lindman reported that the DNR will review the latest information and make a determination if more sampling is needed or not. If no more sampling is required then the next step would be if the DNR is going to require any sort of remediation. He anticipated having an update for the August meeting.

A. Park Update - Urban Forestry/Horticulture: Storm damage cleanup: Another significant windstorm moved through Wausau on Monday, July 5. Goats on Barker Stewart Island -The goats arrived on July 7th and will be on the island for 2-3 weeks. A special event will be held late next week with more information to come. Bike Share: The City Attorney is still working on the contract with Tandem Mobility. Once that is finalized we will have about of month of set up and rebranding before the bikes will be redeployed. Swimming Pool: In early June we were able to offer a free lifeguarding class to increase our lifeguard staff and open the pools more. We are able to gain 15 more lifeguards from that class however since the opening of the pools we have lost three lifeguards for a total of 12 new staff. This has allowed us to reduce the closures down to one day per week for each pool. Memorial is closed Mondays, Schulenburg is closed Tuesdays and Kaiser is closed Wednesdays. Our swimming lesson program has been extremely successful this summer and having one pool closed on these three days has allowed us to expand swimming lessons. Playgrounds: Several small completion items are in progress on the three playgrounds recently installed: Scholfield Park: path work; asphalt Forest Park: PIP surfacing in progress; light installation, Pleasant View Park: path work; asphalt Riverside Park Shelter: Shelter exterior has been painted. Final trim work will be completed this week. ADA Study Barrier Corrections: Staff continues on corrections for ADA guidelines. Small correction levels include small plumbing fixes, fixture and grab bar relocations in restrooms, tree path obstructions, adding ADA approved picnic tables, etc. Routine Operations/Programs: Mowing Operations, Urban forestry program; Ash tree injections (EAB), stump grinding, tree trimming, removals. Building and structure maintenance. Shelter reservations and Special Events; Equipment maintenance and repair; Restroom Maintenance; Swimming Pools

C. Trees In Reservoir Park

Wausau Water Works requested permission for the removal of the trees surrounding the water reservoir at 1130 Elm St. These trees, probably placed as screening in the 1950's are now becoming a detriment to the tank. The shading and restricted airflow have caused excessive moisture and mold on the tank which has contributed to the diminishment of the tank coating. Coating failure has causing spalling of the concrete on the tank. The department anticipates cleaning and recoating the tank but know the life of the coating maintenance project will be considerably extended if the trees are removed. The City Forester and the Water Operations Superintendent met to look at the trees surrounding the Reservoir. It was determined that the trees have reached close to their maximum life and failure will begin to happen. All of the spruce around the reservoir will be removed and the two departments will work together to remove the trees. Once the work on the reservoir is complete staff will determine location and species for new plants that will not hinder the reservoir as they mature.

D. 2nd Dog Park Location

Staff has contacted the Wisconsin DOT to determine if the old Menards site would still be a possible option for a second dog park. The DOT requested a drawing and additional information about our vision for improvements and access to the area. They have received this information and are now reviewing the idea.

9. Future Agenda Items – none brought forward

10. Next Meeting Date – Monday, August 2nd, 2021 at 4:30pm at Brockmeyer Park.

11. Adjournment – **Motion** by Watson, second by Kilian to adjourn at 7:10pm. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 5-0.