

PARKS & RECREATION  
ADVISORY BOARD  
MEETING MINUTES

January 19, 2021 5:45 pm  
Via Zoom

**Members Present:**

Steve Ball, Chair  
Jodi Hartman  
Rich Yost  
Amy Leach  
Tony Segura  
Jason Howland (Ex-officio)

**Members Absent:**

Jennifer Vogt-Erickson  
Whitney Sauer

**Staff in Attendance:**

Bob Furland, Recreation Manager  
Joe Grossman, Superintendent of Parks  
Steve Jahnke, City Engineer and Director of Public Works  
Jennifer Davis, Recreation Program Supervisor  
Afton Wacholz, Recreation Administrative Assistant

**Others in Attendance:**

None

**Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order at 5:45p.m. by Chair Steve Ball.

**Approval of the Minutes:**

There were no official minutes to approve.

**Approval of Agenda:**

Rich Yost made the motion to approve the agenda for tonight's meeting and Jodi Hartman seconded the motion. On roll call vote, the board voted in favor of said motion 5-0. Motion declared passed.

**Public Items:**

Chair Steve Ball discussed two phone calls that he received over the past weekend in regards to the outdoor skating rinks not having nets and benches out. Steve called the Recreation Office on Tuesday (due to Monday being a holiday). Staff informed Steve that due to the high temperatures and rapidly deteriorating condition of the ice, staff needed to remove the nets and benches to prevent damage to the ice should they sink in and then freeze again. Steve asked if it could be considered to leave the nets and benches out there and put them off to the side in the snow until they are used. Staff reiterated concerns with damaging the ice and the inability to repair the ice in a timely fashion for continued skating. Staff added that this winter it is extremely difficult to monitor the outdoor rinks due to the warming houses being closed and not having staff out to assist with the moving of nets and benches as necessary.

**Action/Discussion Items:**

Two new board members were in attendance for their first meeting with the board tonight. We welcomed Amy Leach and Tony Segura.

Amy introduced herself as a native of Albert Lea. After some time in Fargo, ND Amy returned to her hometown to be back closer to family. Amy's interests revolve mainly around Fountain Lake and enjoying all that it has to offer. Amy lives close to Lakeview Park and enjoys seeing the action at the outdoor ice rinks. She is a former high school and college hockey player. She is looking forward to serving on the board.

Tony is also a native of Albert Lea and after spending four years working in the Wisconsin Dells, Tony returned to Albert Lea three years ago to be closer to family. Tony serves as the co-president of the Albert Lea Community Theater and looks forward to bringing his experience at the Marion Ross Theater to the board.

**Old Business:**

Steve Jahnke provided the board with a brief update on the Snyder Complex project. There has not been anything new since the presentation to the council last July. At that time the options were narrowed down to two locations: land near Dave Syverson/Home Depot and the existing site with the addition of land just east of the mall. WSB presented layout options for both locations. This project is projected to be \$6-11 million dollars. Currently the step back from the project has been due to the funding and what sources can be used. Steve stated that this will go back to council this spring for further discussion.

Rich Yost discussed that since this project will still be in the future several years if there would be options to work on repairs that are needed now to make the fields safer and user friendly for the community user groups. Steve stated there is still the concerns of the City not owning the current property and what challenges that would bring to put money into repairs however agreed that repairs do need to be made. Rich suggested that the repairs could be financially shared by the user groups and could also be done in a manner for which items could be moved to the new facility down the road to avoid lost expenses.

Rich shared the following safety concerns at the current facility:

- Field #5 currently has 3-foot fences in front of the dugouts raising concerns for the safety of players during games. He recommends raising the fences to 6-8 feet to avoid this concern and allow this field to be used more for all levels of users.
- Currently none of the dugouts have any type of covering. Top coverings would be valuable to protect against foul balls as well as provide a sun shade.
- The backstop fencing on all five fields are currently only two sections high. To protect against foul balls reaching the fans in the bleachers as well as the cars in the parking areas, one additional section would prevent foul balls from exiting the field of play.

Steve stated that staff can start looking into costs for those stated repairs. Jason Howland added that the smaller upgrades would be best but anything more the council would need to decide on a future location. Steve believes that more decisions will be made in 2021.

**Recreation:** Report given by Bob Furland as follows;

- Recreation staff is working with Holly from the CVB on planning the Big Freeze event.
- Bob and Holly have been meeting to start plans for spring and summer events such as Thursdays On Fountain.
- Staff continues to plan for a National Night Out event in Albert Lea the week after the fair.
- Bob has been meeting with both the YMCA and Community Education to discuss collaboration on future programming and events.
- Jenny sent out staff letters to previous year seasonal staff for recreation and the aquatic center. There is some concern that there may be limited lifeguards returning due to the closure of the aquatic center last year. Jenny will be working with staff at the YMCA and also reaching out to local contacts with the high school swim team in an effort to recruit more interest.

- Recreation is exploring options for advertising summer programming in place of the usual mailed brochure. There are concerns with last minute changes in programming due to COVID and feel that a smaller flyer or an electronic brochure may be the safest option.

**Parks:** Report given by Joe Grossman as follows;

- Continued work on the outdoor skating rinks.
- Staff is currently working on maintenance of equipment.
- Snow removal has picked up due to the recent increase in snow fall amounts.
- Staff is working on quotes for replacement of several pieces of equipment.
- Time is being spent on staff training.
- Building maintenance is being performed including the replacement of a heater at the Lakeview warming house.
- Parks staff is working with the DNR in regards to Fountain Lake aeration. They have not been turned on yet due to the warmer weather and conditions, however they are working on plans to start them up due to the predicted weather in the near future.
- Tree inspections and tree trimming continue.
- Downtown Christmas decorations have been taken down. Joe pointed out the new medal snowflakes in the downtown pots that were made possible through Riverland Community College and Mainstreet.
- Parks will begin interviews to fill a couple of vacant positions.

**City Arena:** Report given by Bob Furland as follows;

- Engineering bids have been received for the reroofing project and have entered into an agreement with WSB.
- High school hockey games are underway as well as youth hockey games and tournaments.
- Key rules for user groups: masks 100% of the time, limited to two spectators per player for games and one parent for players 8 or under for practices, enter only 10 minutes prior to scheduled ice time and exit within 10 minutes of end of ice time.
- A Mighty Ducks Grant has been submitted to assist with the financing of half of the HVAC project currently planned for 2022. This project is currently in the CIP for 2022.
- Public Skate has restarted with a limited schedule. Current offerings are Mondays and Wednesdays at 11am and 1pm, Fridays at 1pm and limited availability on weekends throughout February.

**Senior Center:** Report given by Bob Furland as follows;

- Discussions are currently taking place with the Albert Lea YMCA to explore areas of collaboration for programming, trips, etc.
- An opening date has not yet been set, but an April/May date could be a possibility.

**Board Member Items:**

None

**Adjournment:** Tony Segura made a motion to adjourn the Park Board meeting, and Rich Yost seconded the motion. On roll call vote, the board voted in favor of said motion 5-0. Motion declared passed. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

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Afton Wacholz  
Acting Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Secretary

Approved:

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Steve Ball  
Park & Recreation Advisory Board Chairman