

PARKS & RECREATION
ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

May 18, 2020 5:45 pm
Via Zoom

Members Present:

Steve Ball, Chair
Jodi Hartman
Jennifer Vogt-Erickson (arrived at 5:54pm)
Rich Yost
Whitney Sauer
Jason Howland (Ex-officio)

Members Absent:

Wah Paw
Cody Brownlee

Staff in Attendance:

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

Others in Attendance:

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 5:48 p.m. by Chairman Steve Ball.

Approval to Adopt Agenda:

Jodi Hartman made the motion to approve the agenda for tonight's meeting and Rich Yost seconded the motion. All in favor by roll call. Motion approved 4-0. (Jennifer Vogt-Erickson was absent for the vote.)

Approval of the Minutes:

Jodi Hartman made the motion to approve the minutes from the February 18, 2020 meeting. Whitney Sauer seconded the motion. All in favor by roll call. Motion approved 4-0. (Jennifer Vogt-Erickson was absent for the vote.)

Public Items:

Jennifer Vogt-Erickson shared concerns/requests from a community member regarding speed control at Edgewater Park. There is concern that there is too much speeding happening specifically on the west end of the park. A request for the parks department to consider vegetative bumps out was made. There is thought that taller grasses along the roadside would deter those faster speeds.

There was also a request to consider less mowing along the retention pond to support more wildlife as well as plant growth. This would save the city time and money as well.

Phil Wacholz stated that there are a few factors that currently do deter speeding such as the curves of the roadway as well as an unintentional speed bump that has come up on the roadway near the Parks Department garage near the Edgewater bay Pavilion. He does not feel that the requested vegetation would have a significant bearing on reducing speed. Based on his knowledge from being with the City the past several years, he is unaware of any accident or injuries due to speeding along the roadway of

Edgewater Park. He states that he does not mean that they wait until something does happen to address concerns however.

Action/Discussion Items:

1.

Holly Karsjens and Shane Koepke presented the Advisory Board with a proposal to create a community mural on the Lakeview Park warming house over the existing mural that is 20 years old. This project comes from them attending Blandin together and both having a passion for the arts. They would like to create this project to bring more art to our community and hopefully expand murals to other warming houses or appropriate areas in Albert Lea.

They acknowledge the art that is currently there and do not want to disrespect those artists by creating an updated art focal point for that neighborhood. It is believed the original art was created by Mary Sparks along with student staffers at the time. Joe Grossman questions the design and if it accurately reflects the area. Shane feels the duck is a great representation of the wetland areas to the north of the warming house as well as the lake just across Lakeview Blvd.

The mural will be done with a "paint by numbers" approach. This allows families to schedule a time to come and paint safely without needing a project volunteer to be there to lead them through the design. They hope to have the project complete in one to two weeks once things get started.

There was further discussion on other warming houses without a mural, such as Hawthorne, however the view from the road as well as the material of the building walls may not be as suitable. The board did discuss the idea of creating a quicker turn around for the painting of new murals on the building for the future.

Jodi Hartman made the motion to approve the proposal to create a community mural on Lakeview Park warming house. Jennifer Vogt-Erickson seconded the motion. All in favor by roll call, with a request from Rich Yost that an updated design be presented to the board to reflect how the mural will be worked around the mechanical structures already on the wall. All in favor by roll call. Motion approved 5-0.

2.

Steve Ball spoke to the board and staff regarding his concerns at the Brookside Community Gardens. Steve has rented the same two gardens for 11 years. The first 7 years his gardens were great, however the last 4 years he has reported flooding in the east end. He states that he has made this problem aware to staff every year and there still is no improvement. He feels that he is not asking too much as no other garden has flooding issues. He feels it isn't too much to ask to bring in a large load of fill to level out his area. He states staff has said that there is nothing more that can be done.

Staff requested that this issue be brought to them directly in the future so they can remedy the situation. They reported that more dirt was brought in this season, however Steve states that it wasn't enough. Steve also requests that more attention is brought to the mowing around the gardens and in the walk ways. He feels that the length of the grass continues to about foot long before it gets mowed. Staff will continue to work on fixing this situation.

3.

Bob Furland gave an update on the Aquatic Center Building and Structures. WSB visited the facility and provided an overall assessment on the conditions of the structure. The result was listed in fair condition which was overall good news. They assessed a 3-5 year life expectancy if the recommended work is not completed in the very near future. If the work is completed the life expectancy of the building and structures would be 15-20 years. Staff recommends going ahead with these recommended improvements.

On the lines of the Aquatic Center Jason Howland requested that discussion be had by the Advisory Board regarding opening the aquatic center this summer. Jerry Gabrielatos started off the discussion discussing staff recommendations. The main concerns with opening the facility would be the ability to follow the guidelines for cleaning, staffing, etc. There was also discussion as to the cost savings for the City by not opening the facility. The aquatic center is not a money maker for the City. Staff feels like a decision is needed so that staff can be informed. Discussion was also extended to the Splash Pad but the majority felt that that the splash pad was different than the Aquatic Center due to the lack of locker room facility and a concession stand. There is still concern about social distancing with the young

attendees. There would not be the ability to staff the splash pad to enforce the guidelines. Steve Ball, Jennifer Vogt-Erickson and Rich Yost all agreed the aquatic center should be closed. Jodi Hartman felt that the Aquatic Center should be closed but a decision on the splash pad should come later when we know more, as this facility takes less staff and man hours to get up and operating.

Rich Yost made the motion to close the Aquatic Center for the 2020 season and revisit the opening of the splash pad at a later time. Jennifer Vogt-Erickson seconded the motion. All in favor by roll call. Motion approved 5-0.

Old Business:

Phil Wacholz gave an update on the Bancroft Bay Overlook Structure. This structure was brought to the board at our last official meeting for further discussions as to keep it and perform updates, tear it down completely and not replace or tear it down and build new. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the parks department has put this project on hold. The structure will remain as is and will be brought back to the board when the timing is right.

Recreation: Report given by Bob Furland/Jerry Gabrielatos/Jenny Davis/Afton Wacholz as follows;

- No seasonal staff have been hired on for the summer 2020 at this point. Bob, Afton and Jenny are mostly working remotely from home. Bob has been in the office more recently as well as doing building checks. Afton is in the office on Mondays to complete payroll, accounts payable, etc.
- Afton spoke about the Albert Lea's Got Talent – Virtual Talent Show that recreation will be hosting the end of May. Jenny also spoke on the new Virtual Activities Website that has been linked to the City of Albert Lea's website under the Parks and Recreation department. There has also been work started on a Community Hub in partnership with the CVB to provide a one stop shop for anyone to find information on community events, activities, adult and youth sports, arts/culture activities, etc.
- Jerry spoke about the continued partnership with the State Park and how we can maximize this asset in our community. Bob stated the Farmers Market is set to begin June 3rd. City staff met with this group to devise a plan for guidelines and safety measures for the opening.
- Plans are being made to host a Thursday At The Arena drive-in music concert on June 18th featuring the bad Rip Doozer from 5:30-7:30. All attendees must remain in their vehicles while listening to the performance. There is still planning taking place on how to have food vendors present but follow safety guidelines.
- A community bike ride is in the works that would include a 50 and 100 mile route. This event would maintain proper safety measures while providing an active activity for the community. There is also a virtual race being planned in partnership with Abbey Leach. More details to come on this.
- Other ideas that are being researched are drive-in movies and a drive-up music on the island event. Community members could attend by boat or while social distancing in the park or around the lake shore at Katherine Island.
- There is still discussion on how recreation could provide Rec On The Go activities and are hoping to partner with the school district's free lunch program.

Parks: Report given by Joe Grossman and Phil Wacholz as follows;

- Staff has been busy working on docks, pier repairs, sneeze guards at City Hall, tree trimming and inspections, installing sound panels at the Edgewater Bay Pavilion, mowing and trimming grass, garbage routes and bathrooms. Park bathrooms were opened as of today except for Bancroft Bay. Staff will now disinfect the bathrooms every morning. Garbage has been extremely difficult to keep on top of at New Denmark Park as people are gathering more for picnics and also the ice cream shop across the street.
- No spring tree planting took place due to the circumstances and shortage of staff.

- Two bench donations were made for Edgewater Park and Blazing Star Trail. One tree donation was also made for Edgewater Park.
- Pavilions and ball fields are still currently closed however once they are open they will require additional staff in order to keep them operating. Staff will make this request when appropriate.

City Arena: Report given by Bob Furland as follows;

- All part-time staff were laid off. Lon and Jim are now working with the Parks department to keep on top of mowing and other duties.
- All spring/summer ice has been cancelled. The hope is to get one sheet of ice in by September 1st for the fall.

Senior Center: Report given by Bob Furland as follows;

- All staff were laid off. The center is currently closed until further notice.

Board Member Items:

- Jason Howland –
 - Informed the Advisory board that all events at the Marion Ross Theater have been cancelled.
- Rich Yost –
 - Rich gave a report on youth baseball. The youth baseball tournament scheduled for May 29, 30 and 31 at Snyder Field has been postponed to June 26, 27 and 28. There is also a tournament on the schedule for June 12, 13, and 14 that they are waiting to see if it will be held. Albert Lea was chosen to host the 11 year old State Tournament on July 24, 25 and 26. At this time the tournament is still scheduled to take place.

Adjournment: Jennifer Vogt-Erickson made a motion to adjourn the Park Board meeting at 7:14pm, and Rich Yost seconded the motion. All in favor by roll call. Adjournment was approved 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Afton Wacholz
Acting Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Secretary

Approved:

Steve Ball
Park & Recreation Advisory Board Chairman