

PARKS & RECREATION  
ADVISORY BOARD  
MEETING MINUTES

August 18, 2017 5:30 pm  
City Arena  
701 Lake Chapeau Dr.

**Members Present:**

Mark Calderon  
Dan Borland  
Chris Utz, Chairman  
Vern Rasmussen, Sr.  
Brian Hensley  
Jason Howland (Ex-officio)

**Members Absent:**

Anne Sterhagen  
Jane Grund

**Staff in Attendance:**

Jerry Gabrielatos, Assistant City Manager  
Steve Jahnke, City Engineer  
Joe Grossman, Parks Interim Director  
Bob Furland, Recreation Manager  
Jennifer Nelson, Administrative Assistant

**Others in Attendance:**

Gary Hagen, 501 Albert Lea St., Albert Lea  
George & Jill Marin, representing Grace Christian Church, 501 West College St, Albert Lea  
James Cheesman, Alden

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Chairman Chris Utz.

**Approval of Agenda:**

The Agenda was approved on a 5-0 voice vote.

**Approval of Minutes:**

The minutes from July 18, 2017 meeting were approved on a 5-0 voice vote.

**Public Items:** Pastor George Marin addressed the board regarding the need for a shelter at Morin Park. He advised October 4, 2017 he and his wife Jill will celebrate 25 years of service in Albert Lea. He moved from Lafayette, Indiana to Albert Lea. His wife Jill is in her 3<sup>rd</sup> term of serving on the school board. He just retired after from serving 12 years on the City Council. Marin advised he has pastored in the 5<sup>th</sup> ward for the past 25 years where Morin Park is located. He works with at risk families and children. Marin advised Morin Park is very near and dear to their hearts and this park is one of the oldest and poorest neighborhoods in the community. It has been a dedicated park land since 1880, 137 years. He advised Morin Park serves a safe haven for the families that live in the neighborhood. These families do not have any resources and this park allows for them to play basketball, baseball and run around on the green space. Two things they cannot do at this park is get a drink of water or be sheltered from the elements.

Marin stated when he was on the council city management created a "listening session" where a citizen could come in and speak to the council regarding concerns or proposing ideas. He recalled a private

citizen requesting for three blocks of sidewalk on Margaretha. Marin as a council member at the time questioned this essentiality of this request as he felt it was a sidewalk to nowhere. His concern was it wouldn't service a lot of people. Some of the reasons given for this request included it would give people in this area access to healthy eating, grocery shopping and healthcare benefits including quality of life because there were droves of kids dodging semis to cross Hwy 65 to go to Halverson School. He questioned whether all these reasons were true. He was assured by city staff all were true. Marin advised there are no grocery stores at that end of town, besides a Cenex gas station which does not allow for many healthy eating options. He suggested the Blue Zones Committee to approach the station to see if they could provide healthy options. Give it a year and see how they do, then revisit the request before approving a \$90,000 investment. Marin also called the bus barn to see if kids were having a hard time crossing the highway. He was advised by the bus company it is against state law to allow children to cross a highway. Zero kids are walking to school from this area. This occurred to him if one private citizen could request such a significant infrastructure investment then this would be a good time to request a picnic shelter at Morin Park.

There are other things in the CIP that are being proposed at significant cost such as a marina that would cost \$53,000. The marina would only service eight people. The city manager at that time was proposing a \$300.00 a year rental fee. This would allow the city to recoup \$2,400 a year on a \$53,000 investment. If you looked at this in terms of subsidy those special eight people would be receiving about a \$6,300 subsidy per person from the tax payers. Whereas the proposed shelter (example of the Thofson Park shelter was given) would cost \$17,000. If the city paid the entire cost of the project it would cost each tax payer less than \$1.00 per person. This option would much less of a burden.

Marin proposed this project and it fell on deaf ears at the council and the council shifted it to the Park Board. Brian Hensley reached out to Marin and was advised the board was elated of the idea of a shelter at Morin Park although it always comes down to dollars. Marin advised serving on the council he believes dollars are never the issue, what is an issue is priorities. He knows there is money in the budget and in the Capital Improvement Plan. He used an example of the marina with the price tag of \$53,000 yet the City Manager has allotted \$100,000 towards this project. Marin feels this leaves \$47,000 extra for other possible projects. He gave another example of New Denmark park is slated to get a new fountain at the cost of \$35,000 with only a \$5,000 private contribution. Marin's contention is that the money is available and there is a need for a shelter at Morin Park. Marin advised he has proven by the ministries own expense by setting up two tents (40 x 30 & 20 x 30) for drug and alcohol free family events. The ministry donates the cost of renting a jumpy and all the food for the events. The City has allowed him to set up his tents a week early as Sentence to Serve assists him in setting up the tents. Marin as a security measure would check on the tents every night. He advised many people prior to these events spent time every night under the tents picnicking with their families. Marin advised one of the children helps to spread and get people to attend these events. She encounters billows of pot smoke rolling out the door, Marin advised this shelter would provide a place for these kids who don't have the best living conditions to escape to. He feels this is a necessity and would be a benefit to the community. He feels it should be a priority for the community and this is the central park of Albert Lea.

Having served three terms on the council Pastor Marin realizes the Parks and Recreation Board is an advisory board. Marin also pointed out the reorganization of the Parks and Recreation Department is now in place. Marin advised the public did not support the reorganization. Marin advised two things the public was concerned about are happening. First was the diminishing or deterioration of city parks and second public wanted a designated leader of the Parks and Recreation Department. Hayek park play equipment is now gone, Morin Park was recently on the chopping block as the Mayor and City Manager proposed this park as a new location the fire station. Marin advised this proposal was out of the blue. Marin questioned Chairman Utz if the City asked for specific direction from the board regarding the proposal to use Morin Park property for a new fire station. Utz responded no. Marin questioned why he was advised to approach the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board for his proposal for a \$17,000 much

smaller expense park shelter at Morin Park. He was told the council would like direction from the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board. Marin had had a conversation with Chairman Utz and was planning on presenting his proposal this evening at the Park Board meeting. Marin advised he was called by staff to appear before the council last minute and he did attend and the council was unaware he would be presenting. Marin is very frustrated and questioned what the process is for proposals. He would like to know what the rules are.

Marin advised the “save Morin Park rally” turned into the “save Morin Park celebration”. He said it was a wonderful event with over 200 people in attendance which raised \$1,162.00. He offered the \$1,116.00 and hopes the city would be willing to cover the \$15,800 for the park shelter. Thanked the board for listening to his proposal and everyone is doing a great job. Marin advised when there is investment in our parks it always pays off. People enjoy and use the amenities, “if you build it they will come”. Marin advised this is a poor neighborhood and it would be very difficult to raise this kind of money. The church is willing to make a donation of in ground barbeque grills if the shelter is built. Jill Marin spoke and advised a water fountain is a necessity. Many people play basketball at the park and would be nice for them to access water. There is not a lot of shade at this park and the shelter would help during the very warm times of the day. Would be nice for the community at large also during tee-ball games and parties to have access to water. This would be a benefit for the entire community.

Utz questioned the cost of a water fountain. Marin was unsure. Brian Hensley asked if Marin was done raising money. Marin advised he will continue to raise money as they can. Dan Borland commented this type of project should be built for the long term and this is a minimum request for a shelter.

Jerry Gabrielatos addressed Marin’s confusion regarding being invited to the council meeting. Gabrielatos advised he notified Joe Grossman to call Marin to let him know there is an upcoming council meeting, although it was quick he wanted to make sure he was aware and invited so he wouldn’t have to wait until the next meeting.

Brian Hensley advised if a group comes in with a request, it could be a collaborated effort. Gabrielatos also stated the city staff continues to work through how to handle requests. Gabrielatos brought up an example of what the community of Chicago does is to have a community group come up with one third of the costs, an alderman one third, and the parks district one third. This process helped to gain community support for projects. Joe Grossman advised approval for proposed projects by community groups have been funded by raising a little under half of the project costs or a full donation such as Memorial Park shelter through collaborative effort by Alamco, Pro Manufacturing and Shine Fest who donated labor and materials to complete the park shelter. Other projects costs have come from the general fund.

Jill Marin asked the board to look through an equity lens. It is difficult for certain areas to raise funds and is it the government bodies responsibility to fill these gaps where families are not affluent and don’t want to be in the public eye for various reasons. Jill Marin believes when we help raise these children we help raise the city.

Vern Rasmussen advised staff has been very easy to work with and feels after the reorganization processes have improved and commends staff and feels they work very hard. Rasmussen has worked with staff on several community projects and has been pleased.

Mark Calderon advised Pastor Marin the board would take his proposal under advisement and thanked him for his work in the community and for his presentation this evening.

James Cheeseman lives in Alden and travels to Albert Lea to enjoy the lake, dock access and the parks. He feels this shelter would be an asset to Morin Park and the community.

Pastor Marin was also advised another avenue or option would be reach out to service groups to assist raising funds for this project.

**Action/Discussion Items:** None

**Old Business:** None

**Update Items:** None

**Senior Center:** Offering the drivers over 55 improvement class and a trip is planned to Plymouth Playhouse for an event.

**Parks:** Joe Grossman provided updates. Splash Pad project is nearing completion, working on Hayek Park maintenance building and turf. Baseball, softball and general grounds maintenance, removal of trees at the airport. Items on the “unapproved” Capital Improvement Plan include; replacement of Valley Park basketball court, roof and skylights at Hayek baseball field, replacement of fountain at New Denmark Park (this line item has been on the list for years for \$35,000), items for pick-ups, mowers and equipment replacements to name a few.

**Arena:** Bob Furland has been busy working on the winter ice scheduling with different user groups. Waldorf’s first game is scheduled for September 6<sup>th</sup>. Compressors are on and will soon have ice on in the Colstrup arena. Staff has been busy the last three weeks installing the new dasher boards, the dasher boards in the Nystrom Arena are new and the old dasher boards are were installed in the Colstrup arena. Last weekend the arena hosted the annual Freeborn County Kennel Club dog show. Chapel Con had attendance of approximately 2,200 people. This was a fantastic and well attended family event. Dates are being scheduled for next year. Furland advised staff is working on improving internet access and will discuss how to expand parking to allow for larger events.

**Recreation:** Bob Furland advised a focus group has been assembled and will be meeting with recreation staff on September 6<sup>th</sup> to discuss programming and what people would like to see in the community. Discussion items will include; what’s working and what is not working, how much the city charges for programming and to get feedback from people who actively participate in recreation programs. H2O was held at Wedgewood Park a couple weeks ago and was attended by over 490 people. Kids Campout was attended by 14 kids who camped out at Edgewater Park overnight. Movies in the park held August 11<sup>th</sup> had 43 kids in attendance and the Mud Run had 117 participants which doubled from last year. The beach luau held July 26<sup>th</sup>, had 225 people attend. Fall softball has started and Jennifer Davis is currently working on fall programming.

**Work Plan Items:** Jerry Gabrielatos brought up some thoughts on charging extra fees for county residents for programs, maybe we should be encouraging people in by not charging extra fees. Gabrielatos also discussed offering a recreation card/season pass to people for use of facilities such as the swimming pool or public skate or programming. Gabrielatos also checked for grants for playparks and play equipment. Not a lot of grants for parks exist besides corporate grants who serve the area they are in. Gabrielatos brought up the idea of utilizing the Northbridge Mall as space for an indoor park or location for programming my partnering with ownership of the mall. He is looking for feedback on ideas mentioned. Brian Hensley brought up the Blue Earth carnival where they used several bouncy houses, maybe this could possibly work at the mall. Furland advised the recreation department is looking at a new software program for programming, pavilion rentals and ice scheduling. This will help with providing more information and online access for the public.

**Board Member Items:** Brian Hensley questioned Steve Jahnke if there is access to water lines at Morin Park for a water/drinking fountain. Jahnke wasn’t sure and would have to do some further checking. Hensley brought up the idea of a time limit for public items. May be good to have a process or policy.

Gabrielatos advised staff could assist with this. Jason Howland advised the community picnics are coming up if anyone would like to attend. Howland will be attending the Wedgewood Park picnic as this is in his ward.

**Adjournment:** Meeting was adjourned at 6:46pm pm on a 5-0 voice vote. Next meeting will be held September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017 at 5:30 at the City Arena.

Respectfully submitted,

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Jennifer Nelson  
Acting Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Secretary

Approved:

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Chris Utz  
Park & Recreation Advisory Board Chairman