

DRAFT

CITY OF WAUSAU - PARK AND RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Date/Time: January 7th, 2013 at 5:30pm Location: City Hall (407 Grant Street) – Maple Room
Members Present: Jim Brezinski, Gary Gisselman, Robert Mielke, David Nutting, David Oberbeck (c)
Others Present: William Duncanson – Director, Peter Knotek – Asst. Director, Dan Fiorenza – Operations Superintendent, Pat Peckham-City Pages, Amanda Seitz-Wausau Daily Herald

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 there was a quorum present and the meeting was called to order by Chairperson Oberbeck at 5:30pm.

Approval of Minutes – **Motion** by Mielke, second by Gisselman to approve the December 3rd, 2012 draft minutes. Motion **carried** by voice vote. Vote reflected as 5-0.

Project Update – East Bridge Street Trail – Knotek explained that this project is at the east end of Bridge Street and southwest of the Woodlands Subdivision. As part of ongoing work with City Planning and Engineering, staff has been trying to help develop a set of transportation ways that tie subdivisions which aren't big enough to have neighborhood parks of their own to get people to an area where there is a park. The trail people have been using is a remnant of an old sewer easement which cuts pretty close to a residents' property. The City does have an easement to build a trail which would take people south and then west onto Bridge Street. It crosses wetlands so a boardwalk and small bridge are needed. The Engineering Department is going to provide a prefabricated bridge and the permits. Park staff will build the boardwalk this coming summer with materials that Engineering acquires and tie in an asphalt trail.

Eau Claire River Conservancy – Report, Discussion and Possible Action on: 1.) Existing City Property, Restrictions, and Designation, 2.) East Kent Street Extension, and 3.) Future Recreation Opportunities to Consider in Park Master Planning Process – Duncanson said the acreage stated for the property is 62 acres and City mapping shows about 40 acres. He explained the City acquired the property to have control over the area south of Holtz-Krause in 1972 in the event it would be necessary to do some remediation work of the landfill. When the property was acquired a deed restriction was put on that the land should be used only for natural park purposes. It has been in the Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan but Duncanson confirmed with the City planner that it was not officially designated by the City as parkland. It needs to go through Plan Commission for this designation. Two issues the City Attorney is working through is that part of it lies in the City of Schofield and she is also looking to see if there is a problem with having Kent Street cross the northwest corner of the property.

Duncanson said when those answers are in place the City can look at development and use. The City cannot have dead end roads without a cul-de-sac so they may double that up for use as a parking area for the Conservancy. There could also be a nature center, kayak launch, and an upgraded looped trail system for foot use and possible mountain bike use. This would have to go through a public master planning process. The Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan could be amended which would make it grant eligible and put in the 2014 budget. The master plan should be done by June so staff knows what to put together for a capital plan for 2014. Duncanson said as part of the County's M.P.O. Bike/Pedestrian Plan it's been identified to pursue railroad corridor sharing to bring the Mountain-Bay Trail into this area. Not knowing if the City would be allowed to do an at-grade crossing they are looking at the opportunity to come up the rail line and follow the rail property going underneath the trestle and into the Eau Claire River Conservancy to be the urban link into the trail. Questions were answered. **Motion** by Mielke, second by Nutting to begin the master planning process with a completion date of June 2013. Motion **carried** by voice vote. Vote reflected as 5-0.

Aquatic Facilities Replacement Capital Project Management – Report, Discussion, and Possible Action on the Action Steps and Timelines of the Aquatic Facilities Replacement Capital Project – Knotek said this design project would need to be completed in 2013 so that the pool could be constructed in 2014. Right now the department doesn't have any money in the project. There is a capital project identified and recommended by the C.I.P. Committee for a 2014 project which is about 2.7 million. If the City wants to build this project in 2014 some design work needs to be done in 2013 so that it can be bid out at a favorable bidding time. Knotek felt about 7% of the 2.7 million dollars was needed to do the total design work. He would not need that total amount in 2013 to get the process started. The Finance Committee would have to find and allocate some funding to go towards design, then City Council would have to approve that they are going to spend this money on that regardless of whether they approve the 2014 C.I.P. If the department is going to get started on it that funding needs to be approved. Selecting a consultant and starting design work takes about six weeks. At some point staff

would bring this back to Committee for discussion, modification, and comments. Heavy mechanical and structural design of the pool would then start. Swimming pools require a State review which will take some time. The project would be bid in February and construction would start in spring and finish in the fall. **Motion** by Brezinski, second by Mielke to forward the request to finance that they authorize the expenditure of approximately \$140,000 for initial design work. Brezinski wanted to make sure everyone understood it's the first commitment and that there will be larger request attached to the bond. Motion **carried** by voice vote. Vote reflected as 5-0.

Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Budget Review – Report and Discussion on the Parks, Recreation and Forestry 2008 – 2011 Budgets – Duncanson wanted to review what the department budgets, expends, and what the trends are. He explained the department has a category for Personnel Services which includes salaries, wages, social security, etc. The rest of the allocation is for Non-Personnel Services which include 1) contracted services like water, electric, telephone, sewer service, 2) materials and supplies which are what the department buys to take care of facilities and for the recreation programs, 3) fixed charges which are mostly insurances like auto liability, professional liability, boiler insurance, fees, permits, and licensing, and 4) capital outlay.

Duncanson discussed a summary report from 2008 – 2011. He said it showed the actual expenditures for each year and what was underspent or overspent. Duncanson said the department is able to do some reallocation of funds within the appropriation units under Non-Personnel Services but needs to stay within the total expenditure amount. Within Personnel Services the department doesn't have the ability to take monies from there and go anywhere else with it. If it's not all spent it goes to the Finance Committee and is the fund balance money which is the beginning of next year's City budget. Duncanson distributed the detailed budget showing all the expense objects broken down for each of the four years. The columns displayed budgeted amount, actual expenditure, year to date actual expenditures, year to date obligations, prior year actual expenditure, unencumbered balance and the percentage encumbered. Duncanson said the report is given to all the managers quarterly so they know what they have expended year to date. He said he looks at the percentages to track what the expenditure trends are through the year. He wanted to note that there are fluctuations in areas of the budget that the department does not have a lot of control over. Some that are hard to control are energy, electricity, natural gas, diesel, and propane. The department also doesn't control insurance premiums and wage increases. Something else the department can't control is weather which plays a big role in expenditures from year to year. He gave an example of this in 2008 under wages. Permanent overtime was budgeted at \$9,433.00 and \$22,897.76 was spent. Fiorenza said that was weather related, it was for extra snow removal and having to make extra snow for the tubing hill as we experienced dramatic winter weather fluctuations. If personnel were lost that year the only way to get work done was to have overtime for the current staff. Frequent snows, which days snowfalls occur and even the time of day that the snow falls can affect this budget line.

Duncanson gave an example that in 2010 under contracted services the department only spent 65% of what was budgeted. He said there were a lot of storms that year that did tree damage. This kept the City forester so busy working on the tree damage he didn't have time or ability to contract private firms to do stump grindings or takedowns. Further, those firms were all doing private work from the storms.

Duncanson gave an example that staff looked at what regulators were proposing charging for natural gas in 2008 and bumped the budget from \$30,000 to \$39,000 based on the previous year's use and what the regulators were proposing. The prices went up but then they dropped. The department used the same amount of natural gas but it didn't cost as much. It was then budgeted back down because natural gas prices stayed down.

Duncanson gave an example that in 2010 the City Electrical Inspection Department in reviewing their ever increasing costs for street lighting determined the lights on the Rivers Edge Trail were park related. The Park Department had to pick up that \$16,000 cost with no funding assistance.

Duncanson gave an example for diesel fuel. He said the actual utilization is relatively even. In 2007 diesel was \$2.60, in 2008 diesel was \$3.47 so the department bumped up the budget. In 2009 it went down to \$2.03, in 2010 it went up to \$2.54 and in 2011 it was \$3.39. In adjusting the budgets staff tries not to overreact yet not run out of money to buy the fuel to keep the trucks and equipment on the road to do the maintenance they need to do.

Duncanson gave a few more examples like budgeting \$18,000 in 2008 and \$40,000 in 2011 for pool chemicals because of increased use and cost, spending more on electrical supplies one year because it will payback in electricity savings in future years, and carrying over a tennis court project one year to the next because of poor construction weather.

Duncanson said the final column shows the expenditures and what was underspent or overspent from 2008 to 2011. In Non-Personnel Services the department came out with \$103,338 which is 4.4%. He felt pretty good that over that term and dealing with those scenarios that it came in that good. The expenses and additional work have grown beyond the departments control and it has absorbed a lot. The department is not doing the level of maintenance overall on its facilities that it used to and it also has fewer people.

Duncanson said he has heard about the concept about budgeting less than full for Personnel Services. He said it is true there is money left at the end of every year. There are vacancies due to retirement, if someone quits, if someone is terminated, if someone is injured and are on workers compensation, and there also can be seasonal wages left at the end of the year depending on weather closings. There is money available to be captured but it's only available the one year that one time. The budget strategy changes if the levy is reduced. He suggested if that type of move is considered that instead of taking out five percent that only two or three percent are taken out and put in contingency. He felt the Council should protect themselves from having to increase the levy again the next year if they run short due to lack of turnover, weather or emergencies. Oberbeck said it seemed to him that parks was shorting themselves in other numbers and constantly struggling. The Council says overall the budget is a certain amount and it's continually moving upward but it's not proportionate to where the department needs the expenditures in maintaining the parks. It goes into the general fund on a yearly basis and is not devoted to come back to the Parks Department. The Park Department constantly has to take on more and their budget isn't being adjusted accordingly. Brezinski agreed that the needs of the Park Department have to be identified and all of the projects that have been added on like the miles of median that they are now responsible for. There have been over expenditures every year with the lowest year of \$80,000. He suggested they put in a special project contingency fund for \$40,000 and give the director more latitude of what to do with that. Oberbeck thought parks should list the specific items that have been added over the last years that have increased costs and some of the contingencies such as gas and oil and start building lower categories of funding so they are sufficient to maintain and start moving forwards rather than backwards. He thought it was logical to start reallocating back into other areas to accommodate those goals for the parks. Gisselman wondered if there could be more flexibility on the policy that Personnel Services stands alone. He said that discussion was either for Finance or City Council.

Duncanson said part of what they deal with is the way government finance works. Their annual budgets are limited to a single year. It is difficult to do effective long range planning without the assurance of stable funding for more than one year. This also takes the impetus away from doing staged projects. He is concerned that even if we were given extra money at the end of the year for projects he won't have the available manpower to do the work. Oberbeck questioned how predictable the Personnel Services were and what percentage would be workable. Duncanson thought two percent possibly three. Oberbeck said that would be about \$35,000 allotment shifted as needed if that would be a policy change the City Council would consider to allow departmental discrepancy. Oberbeck said the importance is that it's not raising the budget it's staying within the budget with the allocated money; it's just not returning it as year end fund balance. Brezinski said it would impact the whole budget because if it isn't returned to the general fund then they would have to increase the next year's budget for the whole thing. Duncanson proposed looking at the 4.4% leftover in Non Personnel Services from 2008 – 2011. He suggested Finance Committee look at how effective the various departments are at expending the money they are given.

Nutting wondered if the department could get help from other City departments if they don't have enough manpower at certain times of the year. Knotek said some of that happens now. Committee members would like to bring this item back as part of the visioning process at next month's meeting. They would then like to have some sort of proposal developed to bring forth to the Finance Committee.

Future Agenda Items – visioning session

Next Meeting – Discussion about moving the time of future meetings. **Motion** by Brezinski, second by Nutting to start future meetings at 5:00pm. Next meeting will be Monday, February 4th at **5:00pm**.

Adjourn – **Motion** by Brezinski, second by Mielke to adjourn at 7:35pm. Motion **carried** by voice vote. Vote reflected as 5-0.