

DRAFT
CITY OF WAUSAU – PARK AND RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Date/Time: July 7th, 2014 at 5:15pm Location: City Hall (407 Grant Street) – Board Room
Members Present: Gary Gisselman, Robert Mielke, David Nutting, Tom Neal, David Oberbeck (c),
David Nutting
Others Present: Peter Knotek–Assistant Director, Bill Nagle – Council Person, Mark Dillman – Board of Zoning
Appeals, Mark Macdonald – Wisconsin Woodchucks, Pat Peckham – City Pages, Rose Heaphy
– WAOW Channel 9, David Kuphal, Morgan Kuphal

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 5:15pm.

Approval of Minutes – **Motion** by Mielke, second by Neal to approve the Park and Recreation Committee June 2nd, 2014 draft minutes. Motion **carried** by voice vote. Vote reflected as 5-0.

Baseballs Leaving Athletic Park – Discussion and Possible Action on How to Deal with Foul Balls Entering the Neighborhood Park Portion of the Athletic Park Premises – Knotek said a lot of work has gone into making the park safer. Now only a couple balls are being lost out of the park compared to multiple balls a game in the past. The biggest concern is the playground structure because kids playing there can't be expected to be cognizant of what's going in when they are involved in something else. Staff is looking into a netting system to go over the structure for safety reasons and also for some shade protection. The department has put up signs notifying people to be aware of foul balls. Macdonald said fan safety is very important to them and they have put in more netting which has caught more foul balls. They have a lot of signs telling people to be aware of foul balls. Knotek said people even walking outside the stadium need to be aware of balls being hit out of the park. Macdonald said it works both ways because sometimes the biggest joy a kid can have is catching a foul ball. He again reiterated that fan safety is a major concern to them.

Dog Ordinance – Discussion and Possible Action on Revising Ordinance 9.20.020, Regulation of Persons, to Prohibit Dogs on Cross Country Ski Trails – Knotek said staff grooms and sets track on this relatively small cross-country ski area. It's a wooded area where people often let their dogs run loose. The dogs run on the track and destroy it sometimes even while the groomer is out there. Knotek said staff receives complaints that the ski trails are not being maintained well enough but for that to happen it would have to be groomed constantly. The department has done signage and talked to people about the damage and has gotten no response. The department is also looking at a similar ordinance at Nine Mile because of the same problem. Staff would like to add an article to the ordinance that would say no person shall allow a dog or any other animal on cross-country ski trails during that part of the year when such trails are open to cross country-skiing in City parks. Oberbeck questioned if other walking trails were available. Knotek said people have to make their own in the winter and that is why people like walking their dogs on the groomed trails but it's ruining the trails for the skiers and making department efforts pretty much in vain. Gisselman questioned if in the long term adjacent trails could be made for snowshoeing and hiking. Knotek said there are already some snowshoe trails there that are not impacted by dogs because they are not groomed. Oberbeck said the IMBA mountain bike trails would serve a dual purpose because in the winter they could be used for walking trails. **Motion** by Neal, second by Mielke to enact the ordinance prohibiting dogs on cross-country ski trails in City parks. Motion **carried** by voice vote. Vote reflected as 5-0.

Prospecting in City Parks – Discussion and Possible Action to Strengthen Existing Ordinances to Specifically Prohibit Prospecting on City Park Lands – Knotek said this item arose out of a County issue because people were panning and sluicing in some of the parks. There has not been any developed interest in prospecting in City parks but staff wanted to address this before it became an issue. Prospecting in the streams negatively impacts the stream bottoms and also causes degradation and erosion. Panning is allowed under State law but the DNR does not allow it on State parks and other areas that they manage. Mielke said there were some passionate people at the Park Commission meeting who said they had removed trash from the rivers and weren't out there to hurt anything. His heart went out to them, however he could also understand where staff was coming from. He could see prospecting

more so on County property but not at all in the City. Knotek said the inexperienced people are the ones who are going to do damage. Oberbeck said it is a concern as far as what type of sediments are being stirred up and the stream beds are being disturbed. There is much more of an impact when there are multiple people doing this. Knotek said staff would like to strengthen the existing ordinance by adding prospecting language into it. **Motion** by Mielke, second by Neal to strengthen the existing ordinance to prohibit prospecting in City parks. Motion **carried** by voice vote. Vote reflected as 5-0.

Athletic Park Concession Fund – Discussion and Possible Action to Confirm that Funds in the Athletic Park Concession Fund as of 12/31/2013 Remain in the Funds Under the Terms of the New Contract – Knotek said in the original contract the Woodchucks paid the City an annual flat fee for the use of concession facilities. The money was put into a non-lapsing account so it could be built up and used for bigger projects. In the original contract any monies that were not expended within three years were returned to the City’s general fund. Right now the department will turn over around two hundred and sixty dollars into the City’s general fund this year. The City recently entered into a new contract with the Woodchucks which eliminates the requirement that the money be used within three years. The question is with the new contract in place there are some fees that were accumulated in the past. Can the department assume the monies are now under the new contract and do not have to be disposed of within that three years or does Committee feel those funds would have to be disposed of within the three year period? This item will have to go to City Council because it is a financial issue. Oberbeck said the advantage is with the new construction that it’s going to be awhile before a project is needed so it makes sense to build up some funds to do a larger project with relation to Athletic Park. Knotek said the money has to be spent for maintenance or improvements at Athletic Park. **Motion** by Nutting, second by Mielke to let the money build for the future. Motion **carried** by voice vote. Vote reflected as 5-0.

River Edge Trail – Discussion and Possible Action to Consider Revising the River Edge Trail Master Plan to Include a Trail Segment Along the Wisconsin River Between Thomas Street and Sturgeon Eddy Road – Knotek said there has been some ongoing interest in developing a segment of River Edge Trail that would connect the existing trail at Oak Island Park with Sturgeon Eddy Road fairly close to Memorial Park. Originally in the River Edge Trail Master Plan the constraints of this site were deemed to be rather severe. It is a difficult site to work on with steep slopes. Also pointed out in the plan was that it was a goal not to work in residential areas. A lot of the interest in developing this has to do with Grand Avenue not being pedestrian friendly. Knotek said if Committee wanted to look at what it would take to design something then the River Edge Trail Master Plan would have to be modified. If Committee goes that route, the first step is to have some engineering studies done. This is a difficult slope and there other issues like crossings with outflows from large culverts that would have to be addressed. Oberbeck thought it would make for a very good network if it is feasible. Knotek said if Committee wants to start the process of modifying the master plan they can also start the process of notifying the landowners to find out about interest. Nagle said looking at a way to get pedestrians, bicyclists, and everyone from the Sturgeon Eddy area to Oak Island and the downtown area has been a priority of his for a long time. It would be a huge quality of life amenity for the southeast side. It would not only be scenic it would also be safer because Grand Avenue is not safe for bikers or walkers. He believes an engineering study should be done and thought there may be some State and Federal grant monies available for studies like this. They could then look into paying for the trail through sponsorships, foundations, and advertising as has been done in other cities. Neal felt this amenity was very marketable and attractive to businesses. Gisselman and Nutting raised concerns about the private property owners. Nutting hoped the City would do things that minimized any negative impact for them. Dillman felt this trail would be a positive amenity. He said making a left turn in and out of the apartment buildings is a problem for leasing the units. An amenity like this would make all the difference in the world for the undervalued units. **Motion** by Mielke, second by Neal to move ahead with updating the Rivers Edge Master Plan and investigating an engineering study for costs and property issues. Motion **carried** by voice vote.

2014-15 Budgets – Report and Discussion on Recent Personnel Utilization and Ramifications on Current and Future Budgets – Knotek referred to a report showing parks personnel utilization to date. In 2012, 98.8% of budgeted personnel costs for all allocated (full-time) employees was expended on the City side. In 2013, 97.6% of the allocated personnel costs were expended. There was a slight difference in the seasonal personnel costs expended because their work is often weather related. In 2014 staff have utilized 42% of their budgeted City hours through

June 7th which puts them at a pace to spend 100% of budgeted personnel costs by year-end. Because of swimming pool and Athletic Park work, Knotek's time has been very heavy on the City side. His time is budgeted for half City and half County which gives him 20 hours a week for City work. The department is pushing 100% of its utilization and does not have additional hours. Oberbeck said he looked at the different departments percentage of utilization as far as budget expenditures. He said the Parks Department usually kept their expenses below the budget for the majority of the time. The expenditure rate has been inching upward because of the 400 Block and the additional expenses there that are not added to the budget. That's a concern as more spaces are being added for the Park Department to maintain such as the River Edge Trail and the 400 Block but the City park budget is not being increased. They need to evaluate that as far as where those numbers are. This year is going to be very difficult for 2015 as far as the overall budget for the City. As this process goes forward they are going to have to prioritize the things that are most important.

Sylvan Hill Community Park – Report and Discussion on Wood Chip Storage and Mountain Bike Facility Planning

Knotek said concerns had been raised about the wood chips and also the possible mountain bike facility. He said there has been a wood chip pile at Sylvan Hill for a very long time. The chips were used on the ski hill and are used now on the tubing hill to build the berms. Several years ago there were some complaints from the neighbors located to the west so in response to that the department moved the wood chips out of public view and up to the northeast side of the park. At the same time this was occurring, staff started addressing the Emerald Ash Borer and began taking down more trees. To keep up with the department's ability to take down trees the equipment has gotten larger which has caused a huge growth in the size of the wood chip pile. There was also a time when no one was interested in taking the wood chips but that has changed and now someone is taking the wood chips and hauling them off. Knotek said recently the department dumped some cardboard and tarps out there that they shouldn't have. He said that has been cleaned up. The department is looking for a permanent place to dump its wood chips and is checking with the Department of Public Works to see if it possible to use the yard waste site.

There was also some concern about the potential for mountain biking at Sylvan Hill Park. The Committee has supported this and he would like to make the case that Sylvan Hill Park is not a wildlife area; it's a community park, not a neighborhood park. It was originally proposed as a winter recreation area and now it's growing into more. Kuphal said he did not mean to refer to it as a preserve as such; it just has so many qualities that could be preserved by the City. He is not opposed to having mountain bike trails but would just like to make sure they are done right and don't interfere with people who frequent the woods for other purposes. Oberbeck said the trails would be professionally built and are made to minimize erosion. He said it makes sense to have a central location for the wood chips. Knotek said they may temporarily dump some wood chips there but they will be hauled off on a regular basis until the department finds a permanent location. Kuphal questioned if the wood chips can be used to bed down some of the current walking trails. Knotek said he goes back to utilization, its very labor intensive and is one of those lower priorities. Some volunteers could do work under the direction of staff. Oberbeck would like to see if there are people who might be interested in improving the trail. He suggested Committee walk the trails and possibly schedule a meeting at Sylvan Hill Park chalet.

Project Update

Stinchfield Creek Boardwalk – Park staff will clear the easement and start construction on the boardwalk this month. It's located on the east side of Thom Field where Bridge Street ends.

Kaiser Swimming Pool – The project re-bid is tentatively set to go to bid July 16th and open bids August 6th.

Future Agenda Items – none brought forward

Next Regular Meeting – Monday, August 4th, 2014 at 5:15pm at Sylvan Hill Park – tour cross-country ski trails prior to the meeting.

Adjourn - Motion by Gisselman, second by Neal to adjourn the meeting at 6:40pm. Motion **carried** by voice vote. Vote reflected as 5-0.