

DRAFT

CITY OF WAUSAU – PARK AND RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Date/Time: December 1st, 2014 at 5:15pm Location: Board Room, City Hall

Members Present: Gary Gisselman, Robert Mielke, David Nutting, Tom Neal, David Oberbeck (c),

Others Present: William Duncanson–Director, Pat Peckham – City Pages

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 Oberbeck at 5:15pm. No public comments.

Approval of Minutes – **Motion** by Neal, second by Gisselman to approve the Park and Recreation Committee November 3, 2014 draft minutes. Motion **carried** by voice vote. Vote reflected as 4-0.

2015 Budget – Discussion and Possible Action on Potential Program and Management Changes that Could Impact the Proposed 2015 Budget

Duncanson said some of the following items came from Council and others were items that staff was considering.

A. Change City Ordinance to Allow Grass/Prairie Areas Greater than 12” Tall

Duncanson explained that a few years ago the Park Department had asked the City to modify the mowing ordinance to allow for reduced mowing but at that time the Council did not want to change it. The department would like the opportunity to grow longer grass and convert some areas to more prairie types. There are ecological benefits as well as savings related to the mowing. Duncanson said the department is currently mowing 117 acres in City parks and 17 acres at over 20 locations of non-park areas. Staff has found a maximum of 44 acres in various parks where mowing would be reduced to twice a year. Duncanson discussed the areas with Committee members. He said some are between parking lots, between playing fields, and expansions of current un-mowed areas. By mowing less in these areas seasonal labor hours could be reduced and there would be long term savings on equipment. Duncanson noted that these areas could always be mowed again if they are needed. **Motion** by Neal, second by Mielke to proceed as outlined on the prairie program. Motion **carried** by voice vote. Vote reflected as 5-0.

B. Reconsider Charging 400 Block Rental Fees to all Users

Duncanson said this Committee had voted to charge 400 Block Rental Fees to all users. They had clearly differentiated between the 400 Block rental fees and in-kind service fees. The rental fees are presently waived for groups who receive City room tax dollars plus up to \$5,000 in in-kind services is provided to them at no cost. The action of this Committee was to no longer waive the rental fees. When it got to Finance Committee the impression most people had was that all fees that had been waived in the past was going to be charged. Neal sees this item as problematic. Oberbeck felt that since the anticipated fee revenues didn't come back to the Park Department that was needed to fully fund the events he thought it was appropriate to ask that more rental fees be generated because currently the 400 Block maintenance all comes out of other park funding. Mielke and Gisselman agreed. Duncanson asked that it be revisited at the Finance Committee. Duncanson said in the Mayors budget the 400 Block Fund is \$10,000 from room tax and \$15,000 being removed from the parks budget and put into the 400 Block Fund but the department has the capability as it performs in-kind services to bill that fund. So the potential of \$10,000 to offset event related costs is helpful. Oberbeck questioned if other departments that were expending efforts and funds on the 400 Block would be billing against that also or if it was dedicated to parks. Duncanson said that would have to be clarified. Oberbeck said Council is looking for ways of supplementing the budget and revenue offset would help the Parks Department and The 400 Block over the long term because it has to be maintained. **Motion** by Gisselman, second by Mielke to send his item back to the Finance Committee with the recommendation that the 400 Block rental fees be charged to users in general. Motion **carried** by voice vote. Vote reflected as 4-0. Neal abstained from voting

C. Retain Proposed Overtime Budget

Duncanson explained there was a general suggestion from Council to reduce overtime by 10%. The Parks Department doesn't have a large overtime budget to start with and has already achieved an over 25% reduction of the overtime budget within two years. He asks that the Department be exempt from an additional 10% because it has whittled overtime down considerably. Duncanson gave a rundown of all the overtime hours in 2013 and discussed how they have been brought down post Act 10. Looking at potential levy reductions the Department would be down an additional \$1200 dollars if the additional 10% disappeared. Oberbeck felt that as pools and other older facilities are upgraded that may alleviate some overtime also.

D. Retain Current PRF Department Staffing to Ensure Appropriate Service Levels of Existing and Recently Expanded Facilities

Duncanson explained that since 1990 the Department has cut its City full time work force by 22%. There have been a lot of facilities, boulevards and street trees added on since then so the Department is run pretty lean. It is not getting its basic maintenance done so Duncanson would rather look for other ways with efficiencies and revenues to help the budget. If the City is looking for a \$200,000 cut and the Parks Department is already laying out \$30,000 to \$40,000 between efficiencies and revenues it is doing well over its percentage share on a City wide basis.

E. Assessment of New Pool Fees Revenue Potential

The Committee had previously agreed to increase daily fees at Kaiser and add an annual non-residential pass option. Staff reassessed the swim pass revenues and feels it can anticipate an extra \$4,000. There should be increased public interest in Kaiser but staff is unsure if there will be a lot of new customers or if it will be people coming from the other pools. There also may be some current users dropping out because of the increased fee. Discussion followed.

Neal wanted to discuss overtime hours and asked how many ice rinks there were. Duncanson said ice rinks are at five locations. Neal felt the ice rinks have low usage and wondered if one were discontinued if that use would just go to the remaining ones. Nutting said there is an attractive nature to skating at the 400 Block compared to John Marshall School. Most people drive to the ice rinks and people are able to rent skates near the 400 Block. Duncanson did not think there would be a significant savings and said they have tried to walk away in the past but the schools like them. Mielke said there isn't money to support everything. Neal said if the school determines that they want them then they should pay. Duncanson said that Riverview School gets good usage and has active neighborhood hockey. He said participation is down at John Marshall but none of the rinks are staffed except for The 400 Block. Gisselman felt the hockey rinks were a feeder for youth hockey and they should think about the larger aspects of the youth hockey program. Discussion followed on maintenance of the rinks. Neal said Council is being asked to find ways even if it's a handful of little things and this could show savings in overtime. Duncanson wondered if the City would be better off with one phenomenal ice rink. It is the same question as neighborhood pools and would be a policy decision if they want to walk away from neighborhood ice rinks. Neal felt pools were actual facilities and rinks could be moved to different locations. Oberbeck and Nutting agreed that one location could be a more exciting environment and would be concentrating efforts to save on overtime. Ice rinks will be placed on as a future agenda item. Staff should report back on ice rink usage.

F. Professional Services Contract for Generating Park and Recreation Facility Sponsorships

Duncanson said the City has a limited number of high volume sites where it could sell advertising as true advertising. He said there are opportunities to get sponsorships that are based on philanthropy or support of particular activities even if there is not an economic return. He guesses a \$40,000 amount might be considered and \$20,000 as a cost to get a program developed and administered. He said that the Parks Department does not have the skills in-house to develop and administer the program. Neal believes they have the skills in City Hall and doesn't believe the program has to be contracted out. He said it is not an on-going sales effort but he envisions a short list of the most high profile opportunities which are taken to businesses and philanthropic organizations to garner sponsorships. He offered his help. He explained that a list of opportunities are developed and then how the sponsorship is viewed or managed. Depending on the venue a dollar value is attached and the package is put out in the community. He suggested someone in City Hall be involved like the Economic Development or Community Development Departments. Duncanson agreed the City should go into this but wasn't sure what a reasonable amount would be. Neal said this isn't a big money making venture but a maintenance cost offsetting venture. Oberbeck said they could set a first year goal and it could go to the Coordinating Committee to develop a methodology to start doing this internally. To see if it can or can't be done or if a one-time consultant is needed. Neal would like to take out the reference to the \$20,000 expense because that was hinged upon contracting an external business to run an ongoing program and this can be done internally. He again offered his help. He believes there are some potential high profile opportunities for community leading business or philanthropic organizations to take a look at. Help is needed to maintain, expand and improve these facilities and activities and are looking for help from the business and philanthropic community to make that happen. Oberbeck said as businesses grow it's nice if they can give back to the community and help maintain the quality of life they are looking for for their employees. Neal said the best thing the Park Department can provide is a list of physical assets, the hours of their operation, what it takes to maintain them, their history, covenants, etc. This can be taken within Economic Development and the Parks and Recreation

Committee and working with staff at City Hall to put together a package and get it out there. Neal discussed how to reach a reasonable number by assigning a percentage on what they would like to recoup and prioritizing assets. He said they will have to discuss what constitutes philanthropy or advertising. Neal felt they could look at approximately fifteen opportunities for \$60,000 in revenue. Oberbeck agreed and said they should look at businesses that are actively involved in this community and want to be part of this initiative. **Motion** by Nutting, second by Neal to have the Coordinating Committee form an ad-hoc Sponsorship Committee to flesh out a program with the Parks and Recreation Committee having approval of the packages before they are offered. The Park and Recreation Committee believes that approximately 15 potential sponsorship opportunities for \$60,000 based on setting priorities and a range of amounts within the city tied to fiscal assets could be established and requests the Park Department give a preliminary list of opportunities. Motion **carried** by voice vote. Vote reflected as 5-0.

G. Determine Eligibility of Forestry, Mowing and Horticulture Program Work in Street Right-Of-Ways for State Transportation Aids

Duncanson said that about 30% of its budget is non-park work. In 2013 it spent \$588,000 or 29% of its budget between street trees, boulevards and non-park grounds. Duncanson became aware that some of this might be eligible for state aids. He looked at the program and said it appears that \$42,000 in boulevard mowing may be an eligible expense. Neal wondered if federal monies were also available.

Duncanson asked that another item be considered within the seasonal expenditures where there have been wages leftover at the end of the year. There is potentially \$20,000 in seasonal wages. Duncanson explained that there is a partial offset on the County side. The County did a reclassification study and market ranges were put on all the positions. The department ended up with three positions that were being paid below market. The County set aside money to bring up positions. The City share to bring up the three positions in the department would be \$11,276. He would like to apply \$11,276 from the seasonal wages and turn back the rest which would be \$9,000. **Motion** by Gisselman, second by Mielke to set aside the \$11,276 from seasonal wages to bring up three positions in the department to market value. Motion **carried** by voice vote. Vote reflected as 5-0.

Winter Program Update

The Sylvan Tubing Hill and the ice rinks are still on schedule to open before the winter school breaks.

Project Update

Kaiser Pool – The majority of work this past month has focused on the pool structure. The zero entry pool foundations are in place, the pool floor slabs and reinforcing have been installed and the footings for the pool slides are being installed. Pool slides installation is scheduled for late January early February. Construction on the concession/bath house building will resume as the pool comes closer to completion and site access improves.

Memorial Pool – Design activities have switched from Schulenburg Pool to Memorial Pool. Soil borings and site survey have been completed.

Rivers Edge Trail – Duncanson said this recent project involves some land that McGivern owns at the end of Adrian Street which is identified in the Rivers Edge Masterplan. Various departments will soon be discussing if the City has any interest in the property. The Department of Public Works and the Wastewater Treatment plant possibly could have future needs. From the parks perspective this is an opportunity with the Rivers Edge Trail. If the City has interest Duncanson feels it would be appropriate for the Department to participate in acquisition. Committee directed staff to find out more information and bring the item back to them.

Future Agenda Items – ice rinks, east riverfront redevelopment update, upcoming 2015 priorities initiatives

Next Regular Meeting – Monday, January 5, 2015 at 5:15pm at Board Room, City Hall.

Adjourn - **Motion** by Mielke, second by Neal to adjourn at 7:45pm. Motion **carried** by voice vote. Vote reflected as 5-0.