

**DRAFT**

**CITY OF WAUSAU – PARK AND RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

Date/Time: March 2, 2015 at 5:15pm

Location: Board Room, City Hall

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

Excused: Robert Mielke

Others Present: William Duncanson–Director, Dan Fiorenza–Operations Superintendent, Pat Peckham – City Pages, Nora Hertel – Wausau Daily Herald, Patrick Hoerter

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.

Public comments – Hoerter said that last month his 2 ½ year old son Josiah passed away. Josiah had a rare genetic disorder and was extremely disabled. In memory of Josiah, Hoerter was interested in building a fully accessible playground in Wausau similar to the KASH Playground in Stevens Point. The KASH Playground was built through donations and a matching DNR grant. Hoerter thought a playground like this would be a good thing for the Wausau area and he is interested in doing whatever he can to help this project. He thought Brockmeyer Park would be a good location.

Accessible Playground Equipment – Report on Developing an Action Plan to Bring City Park Playground Equipment Into Compliance With Recent Revisions to the Federal Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) – Duncanson said staff and CVMIC had done an assessment of the play facilities to see where they are in compliance with the ADA. Over the years the Department has been providing accommodations for disabled individuals in our facilities. The requirements have increased and some facilities need to be improved. They don't have to get into compliance immediately but the City has to put together a plan of how they will be complying with the new ADA standards. Fiorenza said this plan is needed because there no longer is a clause grandfathering the facilities in. Safety surfacing for fall protection is another aspect that needs consideration. Sand used to be rated with a fall height of eight to ten feet. The Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC) guidelines have downgraded sand to a four foot fall height. Every couple years the CPSC makes adjustments and sets new regulations and there are other elements that are no longer compliant. Some things can be retrofitted to make them compliant but others would need replacement. Duncanson said not every playground has to be completely accessible. There does have to be "reasonable accommodation" which means there are enough playgrounds distributed around the City with enough accessible features to provide opportunities to handicapped individuals. Fiorenza said staff will bring information and provide an action plan of how this will be addressed in the next couple years.

Gisselman questioned what something like the KASH playground would cost. Hoerter said it took four years to construct it and both construction and maintenance funds were raised. It was built in 2007 with donations of \$272,000 and a matching DNR grant. Duncanson said the KASH playground is a phenomenal facility that is popular for everyone. The group that took on the fundraising effort is equivalent to Leadership Wausau. There is an endowment set up for the maintenance costs of the KASH playground. Gisselman thought the Park Foundation could be involved or help manage the funding for a project like this. Duncanson said this is beyond what the City needs to do. It would be a very unique feature and a destination playground. Something like the KASH playground would have to go into a community park like Brockmeyer because support facilities like parking, restrooms and a shelter would be needed. Hoerter said he would volunteer any time he could, he had intended to spearhead it and has a lot of vested interest in seeing it happen. He also had thoughts about Marathon Park but it closes to the public for a week in summer every year.

Oberbeck said the Committee could direct staff to look into possibilities. Duncanson did not want this as a staff project as he did not think it was appropriate for staff to raise the money when it is well beyond the City's current significant needs in providing safe and accessible playground facilities. However, the City should be wide open to working in collaboration with people that want to make this happen. Neal agreed that it should be a community project and sponsorship based. Oberbeck questioned what the difference was in building playground equipment, pools, or other infrastructure in the City. The City could take this on and welcome sponsorships but he didn't think a need should be ignored within that area. He believed it would be welcomed in that district to have something in Brockmeyer Park that could be utilized by the general public. Nutting felt this project would grow if it was done in a manner like the one in Stevens Point. The greatest need is to incrementally bring a variety of parks into compliance and then Hoerter and others could spearhead a project. Gisselman thought the Park Foundation could act as a funnel for a capital drive and didn't think it should all be on the Park Department. Oberbeck said this playground could be outsourced and designed the way the pools were. It is with

half a mile of a TIF district so there is alternative funding that could be looked at. Since it would be a larger development there would probably be a greater number of individuals that would want to be a part of this. It could even be used for therapies by organizations on the west side of town.

Duncanson said the department is already doing an assessment City wide and is already discussing updating the master plan for Brockmeyer Park. If it appears there is a serious effort to do a fully accessible playground at Brockmeyer Park, that will impact what the overall City-wide assessment is. They need to remember that in order for the City to become ADA compliant this doesn't have to be built. However, what is designed and installed in other locations may not need to be at as high of a level if a KASH type playground is built. Duncanson said it would be wonderful to have something like the KASH playground but he is not interested unless there is a maintenance fund attached to it.

Oberbeck said the west side has a lot of tax base and the City has an obligation to take care of all the taxpayers. People have been waiting many years for something to happen in Brockmeyer Park. Neal sees it as either doing what they must do or doing what they could do. They must pick and choose certain parts of town and upgrade the equipment as the budget allows. The KASH type of playground is a community development project spearheaded by donors and foundations with the cooperation of the City. Oberbeck said it could be a totally City funded project because the City has an obligation to maintain facilities in parks. Just like the City puts pools, shelters, and play equipment in parks, why are they saying they aren't going to do anything for Brockmeyer Park. It is a large expansive space with expensive infrastructure and he is hearing they can't do a fully accessible playground for \$500,000 yet they are spending \$3 million on pools in other smaller parks. They are obligated as a City to make sure all the parks are usable and are an asset to those areas. They didn't say pools should have been funded from the outside. Instead they said they were going to invest in that infrastructure and possibly build a pool on a different site. He questions the philosophy that this can't be done with City funds. He liked the idea of where the community becomes involved and takes it from a 30% that meets standards to a 100%. Duncanson said that Brockmeyer Park was cut into phases but only the first phase was accomplished. The accessibility of the playground has to be improved. If the KASH playground idea had not come up, that is what staff would be recommending. Neal said the City can say it will improve Brockmeyer playground to a certain level and give a cost and a timeline. It can also say there is another option out there, a larger community project that would require something beyond just the City financing of it. Then the determination of which way to go will have to be made and it's not their decision to make. Oberbeck said the decision could and should be brought back on a future agenda for action. Gisselman said this is great step in seeing the opportunities and they have seriously to think about the financing and how it will be balanced. Nutting said that staff knows what it needs to do with the current infrastructure in how many years to stay within compliance.

Duncanson said it is a huge amount of work to outline a phased project and to get it ready for submittal in the CIP process which starts next month to have it ready for the 2016 budget. Fiorenza said they have requested funds for several years from CIP and haven't been successful and he seriously hopes this moves to the top. Oberbeck felt the community's input is needed because if those parks are just going to have a few accessible items to meet the minimums. Will they be used and are the community's needs going to be met? Maybe they should look at a destination facility rather than trying to break it up to serve everyone and then it really doesn't serve anyone to any great extent. Duncanson felt the expectation in various neighborhoods is for there to be play equipment if they are not near a school. One of the requirements of ADA is that they aren't going to be able to leave any large area of the community without some accessible play facility. On the other hand he doesn't think it's appropriate to put high level facilities everywhere. The population being served is not that large overall and the City has to balance what they can afford and how many people can be accommodated. Oberbeck said additional park developments in the City have to be scrutinized because they need to take care of what they already have first. For the next meeting Neal would like some sort of an idea of what is needed in terms of budget requirements to meet the minimally accessible requirements. They could keep the KASH playground idea on the radar but from a maintenance standpoint need to get a handle on the required ones. Oberbeck would like to see an organized group in the community bring a proposal of doing something in Brockmeyer Park such as IMBA is doing for bike trails in Sylvan Hill Park. Oberbeck thought it would help to have an indication of support from this Committee. Then it can be brought back here for a resolution of support to bring to City Council and move it forward that way. There is no commitment for funding but that there is support for the idea. Duncanson said that the City of Stevens Point did not get involved until there was a firmly organized group that had a proposal and a strategy. Nutting said that no one from this City would stop a grassroots organization from putting something together with their potential commitment and asking if there was a place for it.

Hoerter left the meeting at 6:30pm

Approval of Minutes – Motion by Neal, second by Gisselman to approve the Park and Recreation Committee February 2, 2015 draft minutes. Motion **carried** by voice vote. Vote reflected as 4-0.

Sponsorships – Discussion and Possible Action on the Scope of Potential Financial Sponsorships for Parks and Recreation Facilities and Programs to Offset Annual Operating Costs – Neal said that park staff had given their reaction to his original list. A question was raised if a park already has a name or was donated or built by somebody would that preclude that facility from being sponsored in some way. Neal felt those parks still could have some kind of maintenance or adjunct sponsorship. It would be a secondary acknowledgement. He looked at some things that could be considered for maintenance sponsorships. He will continue to work on the list possibly considering upper and lower tiers for amounts and put together a plan to market it. Oberbeck brought up the concept of having a “Friends” group where people belong to an organization that helps maintain the park system and are recognized that way. Neal said there was such a group in Milwaukee that does park cleanup and holds fundraisers. He said the City didn’t start that, the people saw a need and it grew. This sponsorship type thing is something the City can proactively market and sell to get some money to help the City. He will continue to work on it. He still hasn’t spoken with anyone on the staff through the Mayor of who he would work with here in outreach, answering phone calls, getting photos of facilities, etc. Duncanson said if this Committee has anything they could say to Neal to narrow the scope they should do so because the Committee will have to be comfortable with the outcome. Neal said he would take anyone’s input. The main thing he sees is some opportunities for outright sponsorship where a business or neighborhood group might take it on. With the maintenance sponsorships he is trying to have some kind of visibility attached and how that is managed. They will have to determine what signs or physical visibility options are out there.

River Edge Trail – Report on the Likely Location and Features of the River Edge Trail in the East River Redevelopment Area – Duncanson said that currently the River Edge Trail follows the former rail grade that the City owns from Third Street over to Barker Stewart Island. There will be pathways on either side of the stream so it was decided to take the walkway and connect it to the River Edge Trail and not have the former rail line be used as the trail or in the way of any other development. Duncanson discussed the connection crossing the railroad track by Bridge Street. He said if Fulton Street is put through to the edge of the river that will be another connection to the trail. They will keep the trail back from the edge a little bit in case there is a determination to do stairs or terraces down to the edge of the water. Duncanson discussed the entire layout of the trail and the river bank treatments. In some areas the bank will be laid back at a lesser slope than what it is right now and in other areas it will be left at the existing slope. He discussed bank areas where there will be rip-rap, trees, landscaping, placed stones, etc. Duncanson discussed how the trail would abut the WOW building. He said the trail would be at a lower level than the deck area. Accessibility to the trail was discussed. Duncanson discussed the wharf area. He said it was designed so that people can bring a boat there and come up on shore and also so that it can be expanded in the future. Duncanson summarized the trail in the entire area saying that near the Eye Clinic it will be curvilinear trail at the top of the bank. There will be areas of grass vegetation and areas of rip-rap. In the rip-rap areas some of the better trees will be saved. If Fulton Street goes to the river there will likely be a terraced plaza area where people can gather on the river. As the trail goes north, there will be walkways that go down to edge of water and sitting areas on both sides of the bridge. Once the trail crosses the bridge it will slope downhill toward the wharf area. It will continue past the WOW building at a level slightly below and will then come back to top of bank where it will meander. There may be some public park space near the Bridge Street Bridge. There will be opportunity to get onto Bridge Street and go to the other side of the river or go onto Bridge and connect with existing trail. Gisselman is concerned because right now there are two 1<sup>st</sup> Streets. Duncanson said when this 1<sup>st</sup> Street goes past the Water Works building it becomes River Drive and maybe it should all be River Drive.

Bird City Wisconsin – Report and Possible Action on the 2015 Application For Bird City Wisconsin Designation – Duncanson said that it was time for the annual proclamation by the Mayor for the City’s celebration of International Bird Day. The proclamation is needed for the 2016 application. **Motion** by Gisselman, second by Nutting to forward the Mayors proclamation of the celebration of International Bird Day to City Council. Motion **carried** by voice vote. Vote reflected as 4-0. Oberbeck commented that information should be passed on to the Public Health and Safety Committee regarding the cat trap, neuter, release program and impacts to the Wausau Bird City designation.

Project Update

Kaiser Pool – Duncanson reported that the pool shell is complete and pool decks will be installed in spring. Exterior masonry is complete of the bath house and roof trusses are being set. The project is on schedule.

Memorial Pool – Duncanson reported that pool and bath house final designs are being completed. Tentative bid in late March.

Future Agenda Items – sponsorship update, possibility of ADA improvements to the equipment, possibly endorsing the larger accessible type facility

Next Regular Meeting – Monday, April 6, 2015 at 5:15pm at Board Room, City Hall.

Adjourn - **Motion** by Nutting, second by Gisselman to adjourn at 7:30 p.m. Motion **carried** by voice vote. Vote reflected as 4-0.