

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

Date/Time: July 11, 2016 at 4:30p.m. Location: Board Room, City Hall

Members Present: Joe Gehin, Gary Gisselman, Tom Neal, David Nutting, Pat Peckham (c)

Others Present: Bill Duncanson-Director, Blaine Peterson-City Forester, Robert Mielke - Mayor, Dennis Smith – Councilperson, Dan Fiorenza-Park Dept, Andy Sims-Park Dept, Eliza Christopher-UWSP, Steve McKay-UWSP, Tara Alfonso-Asst. Attorney, Matt Barnes-Police Dept, Courtney Terlecki-Channel 9

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 Peckham at 4:30 p.m.

Public comments – none brought forward.

Approval of Minutes – **Motion** by Nutting, second by Gehin to approve the Park and Recreation Committee June 6th, 2016 draft minutes. Motion **carried** by voice vote. Vote reflected as 4-0.

Restrooms in Neighborhood Parks – Discussion and Possible Action on the Current Role of Neighborhood Parks and the Associated Facilities Needed to Fulfill that Role – Duncanson explained there are standards for the different types of parks and the typical facilities and services provided. A neighborhood park serves the neighborhood and is meant to be visited for a shorter period of time so there is not off-street parking or restrooms. The only City parks with restrooms are community parks/special facility parks such as Athletic, Brockmeyer, Oak Island and by the kayak course/farm market area. The only time neighborhood parks have temporary restrooms is if there are sports fields used by youth leagues. Nutting said this has been past practice for a very long time. Smith understood the reasoning but wondered if something could be considered for Reservoir Park which has a shelter and grills. He felt it was a very nice park where people could have a day-long cookout. Duncanson reiterated that there are community parks with more facilities like parking, reservable shelters and restrooms which encourage longer stays. Marathon Park is a short distance away from Reservoir Park. Duncanson said it would cost approximately \$600.00 a month to bring in a single handicapped accessible porta-pottie. Smith said sometimes things change and the porta-pottie wouldn't have to be there year round. He felt it odd that restroom facilities were not provided at Reservoir Park when it has shelter and grills. He was not sure what other parks had for amenities. He wondered if the policy could be looked at as they are going into a new budget year. He did acknowledge that if one was brought there it could snowball to other parks. He hoped it is something that could be considered in the future as the people around the park would really appreciate it. Ryan said a number of the residents take their children to that park and have expressed concerns even just about changing their babies. She has heard that because it is such a quiet park that people with autism or other developmental disabilities use the park. Ryan also said that a lot of neighborhood people watch the fireworks from the park and also Reservoir Park has the water available right there. There are a lot of additions and new parks but they shouldn't forget about the neighborhood parks because those parks should be included with basic services too. Duncanson said that with the addition of restroom and other facilities it will become more attractive to more people outside of the neighborhood. That is something the neighborhood needs to consider. Ryan said the neighbors were asking for it at this point and she said if they do this for a number of parks the \$600.00 price may decrease. Neal questioned if the department would bring in porta-potties for family events. Duncanson recommended against that because it is a level of service not offered to people anywhere else. Peckham said a group he belongs to was renting a porta-pottie themselves for their event. Ryan thought there would be continued interest in having restroom facilities.

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Plan - Discussion and Possible Action on the EAB Background Information and Potential Management Options to be Presented at the Upcoming Public Information Meeting – Duncanson wanted the Committee to keep in mind a couple constraints as they figure out the alternatives to managing the Emerald Ash Borer. One is that there is not any State or Federal grant money that will help out local government or private citizens so whatever is done the City should plan on paying for it themselves. Whatever private homeowners chose to do they should plan on paying for it themselves. Another constraint is that they can look at the alternatives to rapidly remove a lot of trees or rapidly treat a lot of trees but currently there are not private sector resources in the community to do huge amounts of work even just for the City street trees let alone all the park trees trees, private trees, and the surrounding communities. The City may have to do some longer term planning. Internally, the urban

forestry staff is already way understaffed for the population of trees we manage. Staff has come up with a number of good resources from either State or Federal sources that can be distributed to the public. Basic information such as what ash trees and the Emerald Ash Borer look like, if a homeowner's ash tree is worth treating, and how big the ash borer problem is nationally. Duncanson felt information should also be provided about the benefits of trees and what they mean to the City. The benefits include storm water mitigation, helps property values, reduces energy use for heating and cooling which save on costs, helps air quality, etc.

Duncanson discussed management considerations that have been developed by UWSP to help communities such as Wausau. Formulations of how to consider cost and benefits can be developed for different scenarios. He discussed the variables taken into consideration which include for Wausau the starting average ash diameter of 11.28", the starting population of trees which is 5200, the removal cost of \$8.00/diameter inch (low – closer average is \$13.00/diameter inch), treatment cost which is \$7.50/diameter inch, replacement tree size of 1.25", replacement cost of \$60, and installation cost of \$50. The findings show the different results considering a variety of alternatives that include doing nothing, treatment, preemptive removal, preemptive removal and replant, and no EAB. Duncanson compared and discussed some of the findings for the management alternatives including if nothing is done, if they are chemically treated, if there is no Emerald Ash Borer, if there is preemptive removal and replanting, or if there is preemptive removal without replanting. The findings show the number of trees surviving, trees lost, and the net values for the different management options. Duncanson discussed the treatment options for various percentages of trees including 100%, 70%, or 50% over a seven year span. Seven years may be good number to look at because the community doesn't have private or internal resources to address this in a real rapid manner, it knows costs will change, and there may be much more successful chemical treatments in the future. Sims said the current treatment lasts for two years so for a constant budget item we would treat half the population annually. Duncanson said this also helps because he questions if they can get to everything in one year. He also said the costs don't vary hugely with the different percentages. With removal and replacement depending on how aggressive they are, at some point the ash runs out and then they aren't being treated anymore and that's where the decision ends. The City is going to have to pick what it can afford over time and figure out how long that is. Duncanson discussed another scenario where over seven years all 5200 City street trees are removed and replaced. His sense is that is more aggressive than we can afford. Gehin questioned why ash was initially selected for City street trees. Peterson said that ash were selected because they are fast growing, very tolerant, and have strong wood. They take dry and wet sites and are transplantable in the spring and fall. Accordingly, it was heavily used as a replacement for elm. He believes cost was a big factor years ago. He noted that Eau Claire has 60% of their street trees in ash while Wausau has 20 to 25%. Peterson spoke about other species that are planted including honey-locust, maple, some pears, hackberry, swamp white oak, lindens. He noted that bottomland trees do better as street trees because they are tougher. Peckham said Committee needs to decide what they would like to do and Finance Committee will figure out if the City can afford it. Neal felt the information was laid out well and they need to send forward a recommendation. Peterson felt because the City's tree inventory show that 20% to 25% of the ash are not in real good condition and some are in poor sites so he believes 70% is what they should be looking at. He felt 50% would be really aggressive. Duncanson agreed with the 70% and said if nothing improves in treatment alternatives then continue taking out 30% of the trees every seven years. Neal asked about the treatment types of boring into the ground or the soil drenching. Sims said the injection goes directly into the tree, is effective for two years and can be done for a good part of the growing season. The soil drench is one year and has a narrower window for application of early spring and fall. Nutting hoped staff could display pictures of the cities that have lost their ash canopy at the public meeting. Peterson noted that the City has not planted any ash since 2004. **Motion** by Neal, second by Nutting to go to the public meeting with a 70% treatment scenario with a clear indication of associated costs over the years and the financial impacts of the value lost or gained. **Motion carried** by voice vote. Vote reflected as 5-0.

400 Block Regulations - Discussion and Possible Action on the Role of the Park and Recreation Committee in Regulating the use of Park and Recreation Lands and Facilities Including Alcohol –Duncanson said that the parks offer opportunities for all residents and the use of parks involves rules. The 400 Block is a specialty type park and part of the reason it was made a park and not general public lands is that it is not legal to drink on general public lands and alcohol is allowed in parks. The downtown area is focal point of the community and is part of the daily television news so what happens there reflects directly on the community. He also believes that consideration needs to be taken with other broad use specialized areas downtown and they should not just think about alcohol, but also about pets, smoking, and language because these areas will be intensively used. Neal felt there were already statutes on the books that were enforceable for certain behaviors associated with intoxication and this would be creating something going beyond what is already in place in an effort to solve something that is exhibited by a small number

of people. If enforcement occurred on existing ordinances to a greater degree perhaps there could be a better impact on the perceived problem. So is it a question of restricting peoples privileges in the parks because of having a hard time enforcing against a few a few people abusing the privilege. Peckham felt the problem is that these types of actions have to be witnessed and the police don't have enough hours to witness everything there. Barnes said they are talking about ordinances that are enforced with citations and that to the individuals exhibiting these behaviors citations aren't worth the paper they are written on. The average citizen offended by the behaviors doesn't want to have to get involved as a witness and everything that involves. The Police Department doesn't have the staff to be at the 400 Block all hours of the day which he is not even sure is the message the City wants to send. He said they also have to very careful with the ordinances for public intoxication because if they are just looking for signs of impairment in intoxicated individuals he would also have to write citations on Wednesday concert nights also. Neal felt there were people there that were not drinking but still exhibited poor behavior. Barnes agreed and said there also may be some individuals that may suffer from mental illness and that was a component of the overall problem. Discussion followed regarding intoxication, incapacitation and public nuisance concepts. Barnes said he understands some people will be disenfranchised but he felt that would be the case no matter what the decision is. He felt they will be back to talk about these issues regarding other downtown area parks and trails along the riverfront. That is a component for any decisions made because of the image necessary for the downtown to keep growing and be vibrant. Neal felt this issued deserved some time and creative thinking maybe partnering with downtown businesses before decisions were made. Peckham also wondered if a subcommittee should look at the issue. Nutting disagreed and felt it was necessary to take action. He is a representative of the 400 Block and the residents that live in and around there are asking for a change to be made. He has witnessed these behaviors himself and feels it is a front and center location that is far different from a gazebo that is hidden away. The 400 Block is a premiere park and to see areas of it disgraced and abused is an affront to all the people who have visited, encouraged and invested in its development. Committee members felt this was good discussion in advance of tomorrow night's Council meeting.

Park and Recreation Fees – Discussion and Possible Action on the Philosophy and Process for Establishing Park and Recreation Fees – tabled

JoJo's Jungle Adaptive Playground – Report and Discussion on Project Progress – no report

Storm Damage – Report and Discussion on the Impacts and Future Ramifications of the June 5, 2016 Storm – Peterson explained that the initial cleanup was quick but it will take into the fall to get to all of the stumps that remain from the storm. There are still a lot trees that need to be inspected for damage including park trees. It is a slow process and he is also spending time on Emerald Ash borer along with the routine tree work so the June 6<sup>th</sup> storm has set things back.

Recreation Program Update – report on swimming, playgrounds, tennis and soccer camp, attendance had previously been distributed.

Project Update

Schulenburg Pool – Demolishing of the existing pool and bath house is underway and will be followed by excavation for the new bath house and pool.

Sylvan Hill Bike Park – A draft of the design/build request for proposals has been sent to representatives from CWOCC for review. Park staff will issue the RFP once comments have been received.

Future Agenda Items – none brought forward

Next Regular Meeting – Monday, August 1, 2016 at 4:30 p.m. in the Board Room, City Hall

Adjourn - **Motion** by Neal, second by Nutting to adjourn at 4:35 p.m. Motion **carried** by voice vote. Vote reflected as 5-0.