

DRAFT

CITY OF WAUSAU – PARK AND RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Date/Time: August 1, 2016 at 4:30p.m. Location: Board Room, City Hall

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

Excused: David Nutting

Others Present: Bill Duncanson-Director, Blaine Peterson-City Forester, Andy Sims-Park Dept, Patrick Hoerter-JoJo's Jungle, Shawn Osterbrink-Weston, News Media

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 Gisselman, second by Neal to approve the Park and Recreation Committee July 11th, 2016 draft minutes with the correction under the item of the Emerald Ash Borer Plan that *the removal cost of \$8.00 (low – closer average is \$13.00)* be changed to read *the removal cost of \$8.00/diameter inch (low – closer average is \$13.00/diameter inch)*. **Motion carried** by voice vote. Vote reflected as 3-0.

Gehin arrived at 4:35 p.m.

2017+ Fee Directive – Discussion and Possible Action on Setting Fees for 2017+ – The City Comprehensive fee schedule was previously distributed. The 2018 fees are for park shelters which can be reserved a year in advance. It seems to work best for the larger fees to have incremental increases over time rather than waiting for a long period of time and then have a large increase. The only new fee is for sports fields where there was not an organized or commercial youth rate. These fees fall in line with what the County has at the East Bay Sports Complex. Questions were answered. **Motion** by Neal, second by Gehin to approve the 2017+ Fee Directive as presented. **Motion carried** by voice vote. Vote reflected as 4-0.

Lower Eau Claire River Water Trail – Presentation by the Village of Weston on the Lower Eau Claire River Water Trail and Possible Action – Osterbrink, the Director of the Parks for the Village of Weston discussed the Lower Eau Claire River Water Trail which covers multiple municipalities from Ringle to Wausau. Osterbrink said they have improved the launch at the Ross Lane and Babl Street intersection. He discussed the improvements they will be making next at Yellow Banks Park. Osterbrink described the others sites from Wausau to Ringle. Their vision is to expand opportunities for safe and fun use of paddling and floating; grow recreational-based tourism development in the Wausau-Weston-Ringle area; include safe and well-marked put-in and take-out spots along the river; advise people on how to get to these spots and navigate once there; connect to and enhance destinations along the river including parks and conservancies, campgrounds, school forests, and neighborhoods; advance opportunities for land-based trails, picnic spots, and other activities along the river; provide a consistent and appealing image through signage and informational materials. They will be meeting with the Marathon County Park Commission and also Schofield and Ringle. Eventually they would like to form a Friends of River group. They would like to have the plan incorporated into the County Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. Duncanson discussed the sample resolution. He said this plan should be considered for the City's Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan which is being updated. He said staff could incorporate this in both Wausau's and Marathon County's comprehensive plans and work with the City Attorney to bring a resolution forward to the Common Council supporting the river trail through those documents. This doesn't commit the City to build the launch but to continue on the path that the Eau Claire River Conservancy is on. Osterbrink said it is not a commitment for anyone to do or build anything but the more people that support a project the more likely it is to get funding and if it is in the County Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan it allows them to get State and Federal funding for projects. Osterbrink said they are open to any ideas. Neal said the entire area touts the access to outdoor recreation and waterways for companies that try to hire and retain people. It is great water but access, user friendliness, and visibility is an issue so he believes it is important to express the Committee's support for this. Osterbrink said the plan is just in the urban areas for now but it is something that could be expanded. Discussion followed. **Motion** by Neal, second by Gehin directing staff to prepare a resolution based on the draft resolution supporting the water trail and forward it to the City Council. **Motion carried** by voice vote. Vote reflected as 4-0.

JoJo's Jungle Adaptive Playground – Report and Discussion on Project Progress – Hoerter displayed a 3D flythrough video which gave a better idea of playground layout and features. He said the land surveying and the wetland delineations have been completed. The other recommended course of action is doing some borings because they don't know how close the bedrock is to the surface. Hoerter is trying to expand the team to include people with grant writing and fundraising skills. They have applied for more grants and will the Committee updated if any are received. Duncanson said the Capital Improvement project that deals with the infrastructure on this site at Brockmeyer Park has been submitted.

Project Update

Schulenburg Pool – Demolition is complete, foundation work for the bath house and equipment room is underway.
Sylvan Hill Bike Park – A request for proposals for a design/build firm was issued July 17. Proposals are due August 16. Currently 16 proposal packets have been sent out.

Future Agenda Items – budget, Bluegill Bay project, another venue in the park system for musical gatherings

Emerald Ash Borer Street Tree Management Plan – Public Meeting in the City Council Chambers at 5:30 p.m. - Discussion and Possible Action on an Emerald Ash Borer Street Tree Management Plan – Duncanson highlighted information from the power point presentation. He described ash trees, the ash borer, and the appearance of infected ash trees. The Emerald Ash Borer is currently in 27 states and the closest it has been found to Wausau is in Stevens Point. Twenty percent of Wausau's street trees are composed of ash. Of these 5200 trees approximately seventy percent of them are in good or better condition. Duncanson discussed the value and benefits of trees. The average size street ash tree in Wausau is valued at \$98 per year. Duncanson discussed the values which include property value, aesthetic value, the environmental modifications which include slowing wind, reducing both cooling and heating costs, the carbon dioxide trees take out and the oxygen added in, the wildlife benefits, trees slow incoming rain and helps manage storm water and runoff, how they help the life of asphalt and pavement surfaces, they help remove dust, smoke, pollen from the air, etc. Duncanson discussed the evolution of EAB management strategies in the U.S. which started with removing all ash and has moved to treating more ash trees as treatments have become available. Due to the proximity of the borer to Wausau, staff is suggesting over the next seven years to remove thirty percent of the lower value ash and treat the remaining seventy percent that are in good or better condition and replace ash with different varieties of trees. After this time staff will re-evaluate and determine the next course of action. This process will keep annual costs more affordable, retain more of the benefits provided by street trees, and give more time for the rapidly evolving science of battling the emerald ash borer time to provide more effective, less costly options. Duncanson discussed the benefits versus costs for various alternatives including treatment, non-treatment, preemptive removal, and removal and replant options. Duncanson said the City has to ask themselves how much they can do in a given year. What they want to balance is not trying to lose too much of the value of the urban forest. The treatment cost would be around \$150,000 per year and the removal and replacement cost would be around \$50,000 per year. If no better treatment option comes along staff will go into the next seven years and take out another thirty percent and so on. Eventually the City would move away from the ash tree. There may be some historic trees in the community that the City would want to treat forever. From a landowners perspective there is bad news because there are no programs or grant funds to help with the Emerald Ash Borer. Peckham said retaining seventy percent makes sense also because in the same time period the cost of total removal is so much higher. It's cheaper to save the trees for a period of time then it is to cut them down if they are looking at a five to seven year time span. Neal said the value of trees is an acknowledged fact in terms of what they are really worth to a community.

Community members asked about treating their own private trees or treating the boulevard trees. Duncanson said the City wouldn't endorse any company and the advice he would give is to hire a firm that has certified arborists, certified pesticide applicators and carries liability insurance. There is not a good model for homeowners to treat boulevard trees and would be difficult to track administratively. Sims discussed the trunk inject treatment the City would use for the boulevard trees. Sims discussed the annual soil drench which homeowners could apply themselves. A citizen raised concerns about the injection killing the food that birds and squirrels eat. Sims clarified that the injection kills the larvae and not the beetle. Blaine clarified for a citizen that purple ash is a type of white ash.

Gisselman left the meeting at 6:30 pm.

Citizen was concerned about the heavy population of boulevard ash in his subdivision and he would also like to be able to give more input about replacement trees. Blaine said a subdivision like that would probably be where they would treat the ash because there are more ash there. Also most homeowners would chose maple as a replacement tree and the City feels it's important to diversify. Neal said that is one of the key goals of the whole program is to minimize the impact where it would be most noticed. A citizen said that the Golden Sands Resource Center is the resource for information on the green ash borer for this region. They refer people to the National Association of Certified Arborists. She also wanted to know how the City will determine which ash are considered high value and the plan for the park ash trees. He understands how important an ash tree can be to a person but as a professional what they look for is if it is growing under an overhead high voltage power line that would make it a lower value tree, a tree in poor condition has a lower value, or a tree in a narrow boulevard. Peterson said they are still working on a plan for the park trees. A citizen questioned if the city workers could do some of the treating and removal. Duncanson said they are really understaffed right now and the regular work would not get done. He thought there could be a potential of hiring forestry students to do the work. Citizen said another option is to look at Mid-State Tech College at urban forestry technician program. Citizen asked about State or Federal grants for Wausau to apply. Duncanson said there was nothing significant only maybe a couple small ones and that is only for municipalities. For homeowners there is nothing.

Committee members thought the public portion of the meeting went well and that citizens thought the City was taking a good direction. Members thought it important that information from credible sources be given to the public through newsletters, media, and the website. Duncanson said staff will put the amount into its budget which will go through the regular budgeting process. He would talk to the Finance Director to see if there is a better place like contingency for the \$150,000 treatment amount but the \$50,000 removal cost should be in the park budget. **Motion** by Neal, second by Gehin to endorse treating seventy percent of the City street ash trees that are in good or better condition and remove and replace the remaining thirty percent of ash trees over the next seven years. Motion **carried** by voice vote. Vote reflected as 3-0.

Next Regular Meeting – Tentative - Monday, August 29, 2016 at 4:30 p.m. in the Board Room, City Hall

Adjourn - **Motion** by Gehin, second by Neal to adjourn at 7:00 p.m. Moti on **carried** by voice vote. Vote reflected as 3-0.