

DRAFT

CITY OF WAUSAU – PARK AND RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Date/Time: October 5, 2020 at 4:30 p.m. Location: Council Chambers, City Hall

Members Present: Tom Kilian, Lou Larson, Tom Neal, Pat Peckham (c), Sarah Watson

Others Present: Jamie Polley-Director, Greg Freix – Assistant Director of Operations, Mayor Katie Rosenberg, Matt Block - CWOCC representative, Anne Jacobson – City Attorney, other interested parties

1. In accordance with Chapter 19, Wisc. Statutes, notice of this meeting was posted and sent to the Daily Herald in the proper manner. A quorum was present and the meeting was called to order by Chairman Peckham at 4:30 p.m.

2. Public Comment – none brought forward

3. Approval of Minutes – September 8, 2020 – **Motion** by Neal, second by Kilian to approve the Park and Recreation Committee draft September 8, 2020 minutes. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 5-0.

6. Discussion and Possible Action Considering Improvements to Sylvan Hill Mountain Biking Trails – Polley said CWOCC has submitted a proposal to make improvements to Sylvan Hill Park mountain biking trails. Improvements include re-routing the climbing return trail to provide an easier route to climb back to the top, enhancing the skills area to allow adults the ability to improve their skills, add a compressed dirt jump zone, and add a flow tech trail utilizing the natural terrain and rock features to provide a new experience. CWOCC funded the construction of the current trails at Sylvan Hill Park in 2017 with the approval of the Parks and Recreation Committee and the City Council and is requesting the same process be utilized again. The estimated cost of improvements is \$51,000 for trail construction only in which CWOCC is proposing to fundraise for. CWOCC is requesting the City fund and build boardwalks needed for the proposed return trail. CWOCC is also requesting that the City plan for and fund a future shelter by the parking area of the mountain bike trails. The estimated cost of a shelter is \$45,500. CWOCC is proposing to complete all enhancements in 2021 however if needed will break the project into two phases to be completed by 2022. Staff has walked the site with CWOCC and supports the proposed enhancements.

Matt Block, CWOCC representative discussed each of the four portions of Phase Two in depth and said their organization would be seeking grant funding. Polley said at this time they need the support of the Park Committee and then will go and fundraise. After that they will figure out which projects will be done and go through the contract process. Neal felt it would be a great amenity and Larson said it was a good thing for the community. Peckham commented on the great partnership between the groups. Kilian wanted some assurance that the organization wouldn't come back for City funding as he felt there was a problem with equity for neighborhood parks. Discussion followed. Polley said CWOCC is just asking for support to allow them to fundraise. For right now they are not coming back to the City and asking for any funding but it might be a possibility in the future. Also, none of this is critical to complete, it's been a plan of CWOCC for some time. She believed there was time for CWOCC to try and raise all the funds. **Motion** by Watson, second by Larson to support the plan for the improvements at Sylvan Hill Bike Park. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 4-1 with Kilian as the dissenting vote.

4. Discussion and Possible Action Regarding the Parks, Recreation & Forestry Department 2021 Budget – Polley explained that staff met with the Finance Director today so a few changes will come to the full Council. In general the submitted budget was 3.14% over last years budget. That percentage will be lower because some funds for Riverlife Park water expense were moved to room tax and the chemical expenses for water treatment are still being determined. The majority of the budget increase is in personnel costs which include a 2.3% full time wage increase, 6.5% increase to health insurance premium rates and seasonal wage rate increases that were approved in February 2020. The majority of the seasonal wage rate increase was seen on the County side. Polley discussed some of the other increases in professional services, contracted services, and materials and supplies. She noted that an addition was put in for contracted services at City Hall Park which could be taken out and added in later. Another change as the result of today's meeting is that funding for landscaping and mowing at Riverlife Park could be removed as some funding is available from the Community Foundation for shore land enhancement which can be used for maintenance of that corridor. The one supplemental budget request is for the update to the 2017-2021 Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. Polley discussed the small project fund which addresses deferred maintenance and smaller projects. Discussion occurred on the landscaping at City Hall Park. Kilian questioned the process for public input for the outdoor recreation plan. Polley discussed the process and mentioned in the future she would like to get the County and City plans either merged or at least on the same timeframe. **Motion** by Neal, second by Watson to approve the budget as is. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 5-0.

5. Discussion and Possible Action Considering the Placement of an Angel Sculpture in a City Park – Polley said a project has been submitted to install an Angel of Hope Memorial Garden in either Stewart Park or Forest Park. The memorial garden is for those who have lost children. The proposal includes the statue, bench, plantings and paver bricks. At Stewart Park the location requested is near the existing stage and the location at Forest Park is on the corner of 8th Street and Parcher Street. Funding is not being requested from the City however if funding were available it would be welcome. The proposal requests that the Parks Department construct the garden and place the statue and then maintain the garden including snow removal. Volunteers may be available to assist with maintaining the plantings. The City has approved other statues within City Parks through a signed agreement however at this time none of the statutes include landscaping and are little to no maintenance. The City does have paver bricks in a few parks which require a higher degree of maintenance. At this time snow removal is not conducted at other City statues unless the statue is along a transportation or school route. At this time consideration and approval of a location is being requested and if approved a more detailed plan would be submitted and fundraising would start.

Neal did not believe that near the stage at Stewart Park should be considered and thought neighborhood engagement was needed if Forest Park was considered. He also had concerns about the religious aspect of the statue being in a public park and thought it was more appropriate at a hospital or church. Jacobson mentioned that State statues require that the placing of statues has to go through Plan Commission before it goes to Council. Kilian felt angels were benevolent celestial bodies that didn't pertain to any particular religion but to many and wondered if the questions would be the same if there wasn't an association with any particular ideology. Jacobson said what the statue looks like is just one fact. She didn't know that there was anything illegal about approving it, it's just the closer they get to it appearing to be tied to religion, the larger the risk is that they are exposing themselves to getting sued or challenged on its placement there. Polley will relay the concerns to the applicant and will research Planning's criteria for statue placement if the applicant wants to pursue it further. Peckham thought there was an area in Pine Grove Cemetery that was for something similar to this and wondered why the applicant preferred a park. Larson did not think it was appropriate in a City park and regardless if they considered it non-religious or not they would still be opening themselves up to people who think it is. **Motion** by Larson, second by Watson to table the item until further information is received. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 5-0.

7. Educational Items

A. Dog Park Special Committee Update – The Dog Park Special Committee met on September 14. The parking lot is complete, water lines are plumbed for the meter within the box and the water fountain has been installed. Fencing is scheduled for the week of October 6th. The committee discussed possible events, fundraising ideas and the grand opening of the park. There is still turf that needs to be better established and therefore the committee is planning for a spring grand opening. There is a potential that a winter event could be held at the park if there is enough snow cover.

B. Project Update – Athletic Park: Phase IV/First Base Line Renovation project is underway. Staff continues to work with the individual contractors to provide information and support services as requested. Forest Park: New playground installation has started. Pathway from the street to the playground is marked and ready for construction. Meter base is installed for power and lighting. Oak Island Park: Path/trail reconstruction is underway. Existing asphalt will be removed; new base material will be added and path will be repaved. Barker Stewart Island: Invasive species removal and site remediation work is still in progress. (Temporary hold for equipment). City Pools: Pools have all been run for maintenance checks and will be winterized by end of next week. Tennis Courts: Staff is pressure washing courts for bi-annual maintenance. Water Systems: Winterization of various systems and facilities will be started next week. Routine Operations/Programs: Mowing Operations-all three mowing crews are in routine mode; Urban forestry program-tree trimming, removals, stump grinding, fall planting coming up; building and structure maintenance; shelter reservations and special events; equipment maintenance and repair; restroom maintenance.

C. Riverside Park Testing Update and Next Steps – Additional testing has been completed. The City is now waiting for the results and remediation recommendations.

8. Future Agenda Items – Riverside Park Soil Remediation

9. Next Meeting Date – Monday, November 2, 2020 at 4:30pm

10. Adjourn - **Motion** by Watson, second by Neal to adjourn at 5:45 p.m. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 5-0.