

PARKS & RECREATION
ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

September 16, 2024 6 pm
City Arena

Members Present:

Steve Ball (arrived at 6:10p)
Kent Rahn
Whitney Sauer
Amy Leach
Therese Salazar
Wende Taylor
Jason Howland, Ex-Officio

Members Absent:

Tony Segura

Staff in Attendance:

Cathy Malakowsky, Community Engagement and Enrichment Director
Bob Furland, Recreation Manager
Dani Bakken, Recreation Coordinator
Josh Heilman, Arena/Aquatic Center Foreman
Afton Wacholz, Recreation Office Manager

Others in Attendance:

None

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Amy Leach at 6:00pm.

Adopt Agenda:

Therese Salazar made the motion to approve the agenda for tonight's meeting with the addition of a fourth action/discussion item – Review and discussion of Fountain Lake habitat sign and Whitney Sauer seconded the motion. The board voted in favor of said motion 5-0 (Steve Ball was absent). Motion declared passed.

Approval of the Minutes:

Whitney Sauer made the motion to approve the minutes from the July 15, 2024 meeting and Therese Salazar seconded the motion. The board voted in favor of said motion 5-0 (Steve Ball was absent). Motion declared passed.

Public Items:

None

Action/Discussion Items:

- **Review and discussion of Rec facility project estimates**
 - Cathy presented budget information on the projects to date. The good news is that the frost testing discovered no frost under Colstrup so the \$500,000 allotted for frost removal will not be needed. Many other project lines have also come in under budget. The bad news is the refrigeration system for the arena came in 23% over budget, roughly \$1.25 million.
 - Currently the whole project is coming in \$366,000 over budget, which includes \$150,000 for the use of temporary chillers when the refrigeration system is being replaced.
 - Funding that is available includes:
 - Contingency
 - Extra bonding funds
 - \$250,000 from the Albert Lea Hockey Association
 - Reducing areas of the remodeling projects
 - City staff met with the user groups last Wednesday and the overall response and feedback was very good.
- **Review and discussion of Arena remodeling plans**
 - Cathy and Bob presented the board with an overview of the remodeling designs at the Arena and provided a tour of the areas within the plan focusing on the front lobby expansion, Recreation office remodel, Skate office remodel, as well as the addition and of two more spaces for ref locker rooms.
 - Feedback from user groups was to remove the addition of two family bathrooms in the current lobby and create a small conference/break room in it's place, decrease size of ticket booth so it does not take space away from the coaches locker room, and remove the Nystrom Ref room from the design and have City staff budget and do the work themselves.
- **Review and discussion of Aquatic Center remodeling options**
 - Cathy and Bob presented the Aquatic Center design with two concepts provided by Apex. The Aquatic Center remodeling was largely over budget and staff is working to redesign the entrance, ticket booth and concessions. City staff is still working with Apex on a solution to the design to get the budget back on track.

After board discussion, Therese Salazar made the motion to recommend the City Council to proceed with the design amendments to the Investment Tax Credits contract with Apex to implement Arena Projects 5 and 6 – New Colstrup floor and new refrigeration system for both rinks. Wende Taylor seconded the motion. The board voted in favor of said motion 6-0. Motion was declared passed.

Amy Leach made the motion to recommend the City Council remove the remodeling projects, Arena 11 – new front lobby addition and Aquatic Center 5 – building enhancements, from the Non-tax Credit Investment Contract with Apex to allow more time for finalizing plans. Whitney Sauer seconded the motion. The board voted in favor of said motion 6-0. Motion was declared passed.

Amy Leach made the motion to recommend the City Council proceed with design amendments to the Non-Investment tax Credit Contract with Apex to implement the projects for the Arena,

Aquatic Center and Marion Ross Performing Arts Center, except for Arena 11 – new front lobby addition and Aquatic Center 5 – building enhancements. Whitney Sauer seconded the motion. The board noted in favor of said motion 6-0. Motion declared passed.

- Review and discussion of Fountain Lake habitat sign
 - Cathy presented the request from the Shell Rock River Watershed District to place an interpretive sign on lakeview Blvd between Dress Island and the fishing pier. The sign would be 8ft by 4ft. It would be a polyboard sign with wooden posts and on display through spring of 2025. This sign would have a map and description of Phase 1 of the restoration project.
 - The board discussed that this sign might be better suitable at the Brookside boat landing as more people utilizing the lake may see it better there. Either way they felt that providing this information to the public was important and as long as it was not a distraction the Lakeview Blvd location would probably not be an issue.
 - Therese Salazar made a motion to recommend the installation as presented with the specific end date through the second weekend of May. Wende Taylor seconded the motion. The board voted in favor 6-0 of said motion. Motion declared passed.

Staff Updates:

Recreation: Report provided by Bob Furland and Dani Bakken;

- Participated in the Mexican Independence Day event on September 15 at the North Lot
- Preparing for Safety Day on September 17 at Morin Park from 4-6p
- Participating in the Hawthorne Elementary Resource Fair on September 18
- Fall adult women's and co-ed volleyball leagues start the week of September 16

Parks: Report provided by Mike Westney;

- Still a lot of mowing & rough mowing.
- Tree trimming & take downs.
- Going to start mowing & spraying ponds & right of ways.
- Working on Troy Hammer playground.
- Painting free throw lines & 3 point arcs on our basketball courts.
- Equipment maintenance.
- Start work on Grizzly field.
- Building maintenance.
- The electronic locks have been installed at Pioneer Park.
- Park rental maintenance & cleanup.

City Arena: Report provided by Bob Furland/Josh Heilman;

- Facility updates –
 - Nystrom rink opening was delayed one week due to warm weather and some compressor issues
 - Colstrup cooling system has been started up with hopes of getting ice on by early October

- Staff has been working with APEX on the designs for the Arena lobby and Rec/Skate office areas. Further discussion on the budget and designs is on the agenda for this month's board meeting.
- **Events -**
 - Youth Hockey
 - Fall camp begins Sept 14
 - Mites Hockey registration is open and will begin late October through the Albert Lea Hockey Association
 - Waldorf
 - D1 and D2 teams started practice on September 3
 - D1 had an exhibition game against Steele County on September 6
 - D2 has their first game on September 20
 - High School
 - Captains practices began this week for both the boys and girls' teams
 - Figure Skating
 - Fall season practices began Monday, Sept 9
- **Events –**
 - None

Aquatic Center: Report provided by Bob Furland/Dani Bakken;

- Recreation staff has been working with APEX on designing a new admission access and concession area. Further discussion on the budget and designs is on the agenda for this month's board meeting.

Senior Center: Report provided by Bob Furland;

- **Trips -**
 - December 10 – Bells Will Be Ringin' at Sidekick Theatre
- **Programs/Events –**
 - Crafters Group - Tuesdays at 12 p.m.
 - Bingo - Mondays and Wednesdays at 1:00 p.m.

Marion Ross Theater: Report provided by Bob Furland;

- **Facility Updates –**
 - Dressing room floor was refinished by Granicrete
- **Upcoming events -**
 - Drinking Habits performance dates will be Oct 3, 4, 5 ,6M, 9, 10, 11 and 12
 - September 26: Peter Antoniou – Psychic Comedian
 - October 18: The Super Tramps: Super Tramp Tribute

Other: Report provided by Cathy Malakowsky;

- **City Council action**

At its Sept. 9 meeting, the Albert Lea City Council approved the preliminary property tax levy for 2025. It would be \$8.9 million, an increase of \$1.2 million from this year:

- 4.98% increase in the general fund levy, mostly due to higher wages for City staff
- 9.6% increase in the debt levy for rec facility improvements
- 1.17% increase in the debt levy for street projects

What is the impact to homeowners? On a \$100,000 home, the city portion of property taxes would increase by \$69.01 from \$540.25 to \$609.26 per year. The annual breakdown for the increase: \$50.50 for rec facilities; \$15.85 for general expenses; and \$2.65 for street projects and other debt.

Also Sept. 9, the Council approved the zoning changes for new cannabis, off-sale liquor, tobacco and sexually-oriented businesses, including the setbacks from parks, rec facilities and other places frequented by children and families.

**** Top 5 Project Updates:**

Restrooms by Splash Pad –

- No new updates

Develop the Union Pacific rail to trail –

- No new updates

Develop an off-season field house –

- Status of the non-city group working on this idea?

Upgrade Snyder Fields –

- No new updates

Update aging facilities, including the City Arena and Aquatic Center –

- See staff reports

Board Member Items:

- Whitney Sauer –
 - Requested pamphlets/handouts regarding Recreation events and activities to provide to Mrs. Gerry's for new staff that will be coming to the community. Dani will provide her with Fall Fun Guides in English and Spanish.
- Amy Leach –
 - Discussed concerns with the safety of crossing Lakeview Boulevard at the east entrance of Edgewater Park near Lakeview Park. Staff will check with the Engineering department about a possible review of this concern.
- Jason Howland –
 - Expressed a sincere thank you to the advisory board for their efforts and recommendations specifically in regards to the Rec Facility Project. He stressed that their

voices mattered and their recommendations are very much taken into consideration when the council makes decisions.

- Follow up to questions asked from the board during the meeting:
 1. There are concerns regarding the safety of crossing Lakeview Blvd at the east entrance of Edgewater Park to get to a sidewalk. Has the City ever done a review of that area at all or would they be will willing to?
A board member voiced there is a lot of pedestrian traffic leaving the park to continue around the lake however there is nothing connecting to the existing sidewalk on the east side of the road along Lakeview Park.

The Park Entrance at Edgewater Drive has the following which are pieces which do not typically have a crosswalk.

- 1) The entrance is not at an intersection. You cross from the entrance to a mid-block. Putting a crossing at mid-block is typically not recommended.
- 2) The entrance has two entrances and exits around the island. This has been that way forever and we have not looked at redoing it into one entrance. I am not aware of crashes occurring due to this but can look. The two entrances makes it more difficult to put a crossing.
- 3) There is no sidewalk going into the park to channel pedestrians on to. We had looked at trying to get a sidewalk at this location when we repaved the entrance but it is a very narrow right of way with not enough room to add a sidewalk without removing all the trees.

In scenarios such as this, it is safer to not mark a crossing and have pedestrians cross “at their own risk”.

2. A board member inquired about the sidewalk that runs east and west along Hammer Rd by the stadium and high school. The side walk ends at the high school and they are wondering if there are any plans to extend that further to the east, to even possibly connect to the new path on Main St.

Hammer Road east of the high school was formerly a County Road and built as a rural roadway with ditches. It would be very costly to try to place a trail or sidewalk in this roadway as it is currently constructed. Very long term as Albert Lea grows and this agricultural area develops into residential or commercial, It may make sense to reconstruct the roadway as a urban section, fill in the ditches and install sidewalks or trails, but due to the cost it is not planned in the near term.

3. A board member rode her bike to the Kite Festival at Edgewater and could not find a bike rack at the Edgewater Bay Pavilion. Due to the park at the pavilion with the public bathrooms and the traffic of bikers through the park, would this be something the City would look into?

There is currently no bike rack at the Edgewater Bay Pavilion. This is the first this inquiry has come to City staff. Staff did look at the exterior of the facility to see if there would be an appropriate place to put a rack. Further discussion will be had on this with City staff and a report will be provided to the board at a later date.

Adjournment: Wende Taylor made a motion to adjourn the Park Board meeting and Amy Leach seconded the motion. The board voted in favor of said motion 6-0. Motion declared passed. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Afton Wacholz
Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Secretary

Approved:

Steve Ball
Park & Recreation Advisory Board Chairman