

PARKS & RECREATION
ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

December 19, 2022 5:45 pm
City Hall – Council Chambers

Members Present:

Steve Ball
Jodi Hartman
Rich Yost
Whitney Sauer
Jen Vogt-Erickson (arrived at 5:47pm)
Tony Segura (arrived at 6:10p)
Jason Howland, Ex-Officio (arrived at 5:50pm)

Members Absent:

Amy Leach

Staff in Attendance:

Bob Furland, Recreation Manager
Cathy Malakowsky, Community Engagement and Enrichment Director
Ryan Hajek, Assistant Director of Public Works
Mike Westney, Parks Superintendent
Dani Bakken, Recreation Coordinator
Afton Wacholz, Recreation Administrative Assistant

Others in Attendance:

Marilyn Danielsen
Karen Sundal Bartz
Gerri Berg
Karen Brand

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Steve Ball at 5:45pm.

Adopt Agenda:

Rich Yost made the motion to approve the agenda for tonight's meeting and Whitney Sauer seconded the motion. The board voted in favor of said motion 4-0 (Jen Vogt-Erickson and Tony Segura were not present for the vote). Motion declared passed.

Approval of the Minutes:

Jodi Hartman made the motion to approve the minutes from the November 15, 2022 meeting and Rich Yost seconded the motion. The board voted in favor of said motion 4-0 (Jen Vogt-Erickson and Tony Segura were not present for the vote). Motion declared passed.

Public Items:

Action/Discussion Items:

Community Garden Fencing – Survey Results and Discussion

Ryan Hajek stated that City staff is aware and in agreement that there is an over abundant deer population in the area of Brookside gardens that has affected the harvest of our renters. A survey was recently conducted of our garden renters at all three gardens, however discussion was primarily focused on Brookside gardens.

Results of the survey included 31 renters at Brookside answered YES to having crop damage from wildlife. The majority of the renters who returned their survey were in support of fencing even if it required them to pay up to an additional \$20 per plot to rent each season for the next 15 years.

Staff received a fencing estimate of approximately \$43,400 to put up a regular chain link 8 foot high fence with 6 walk through gates and one 10 foot equipment gate.

Concerns of fencing were discussed as follows:

- Staff and members discussed the aesthetics from Richway Dr of a regular chain link fence. There was also mention of the proximity of the fence to the west walking path and the boathouse which could cause issues with access to the boathouse for loading equipment, etc.
- Due to the current location of the gardens as they relate to the west walking path and the boat house, there may be a need to shift the location of the gardens. In order to avoid the gardens being moved over the current water lines and risking possible water line leaks, those lines may need to be moved to accommodate.
- Staff mentioned concerns the fence would have on the ease of access for the renters to their gardens. Right now, they are able to walk right up to their plots, however with a fence there would only be 6 gates to walk in through which would require renters to bring all of their gardening needs a longer distance to their plot depending on their location.

There were questions from the community members in attendance in regards to a public hunt to help reduce the deer population in the area. Staff discussed that this has been done in the past with little success of managing the issues at hand. Many hunters are wanting to hunt for trophy deer and this hunt would not be attractive to them. The cost of processing has increased and has also led to less interest. Cathy Malakowsky discussed the possibility of Blue Zones subsidizing the cost of fencing or the cost of the garden rentals as a cost preventative option. Staff did inform the community renters in attendance that, like other projects that are driven by community members, they could start seeking donations or grants to help with this. The Seed House was brought up as an option to partner with.

Rich Yost stated that the only way he would agree to the fencing would be if it was black vinyl so that it would be more aesthetically pleasing. Jason added that he felt anything under 8 feet would not be successful in keeping deer out

Steve Ball stated that fencing was the way to go and motioned to move forward with recommending to Council for further approval. There was no second. Jodi Hartman stated her hesitations of recommending this project to go forward at this time. She stated that right now deer are the problem but the “problem” could change in a couple of years and become something else. Jodi feels this concern is valid and does care however at this point looking at the overall picture, she does not feel the City should hold responsibility to try to correct. Whitney Sauer agreed with Jodi.

Jodi Hartman motioned to hold on any decision until staff and the board have finalized a formal application for project requests. At that time the concerned community members could complete a formal request form and begin the process of proposing a project on City property. Whitney Sauer seconded this motion. The board voted in favor of said motion 6-0.

Board Retreat Review and Project Priority Discussion

Staff and the board feel the retreat was a step in the right direction to help with processes and planning for the coming year. The goal is to further discuss our large project list and prioritize based on established criteria from the board retreat.

Staff will be looking for help from the board to gather CIP items for the years to come.

Staff will have a rough draft of the Project Proposal Process and Request Form for the board to review and approve at the January meeting.

Staff Reports:

Recreation: Report provided by Dani Bakken;

- Mites hockey has started; 106 kids registered between the 3 levels
- Registration has started for the learn to skate program; as of 12/13 we have 36 people registered
- Starting interviews for warming house attendants
- Hours of warming houses will be:
 - Monday-Friday 5:00pm-8:00pm- Hayek, Lakeview and Hawthorne Park
 - Saturday and Sunday- 1:00pm-8:00pm- Hayek, Academy and Lakeview Park
- We are partnering with Community Education to offer winter break programming; registrations will be open until the 20th; dates of the events are December 27, 28 and 29
- Ugly Sweater Skate on Sunday Dec 18th 4:30-6p
- Rock on Ice – New Year’s Bash Dec 30th 7-9p
- Working with Rink Systems to buy skates that can be used at the outdoor rinks.

Parks: Report provided by Mike Westney;

- Staff are clearing snow when necessary
- Performing maintenance at Edgewater Bay Pavilion for weekly rentals
 - For those that don’t know, we had one of the light chandeliers fall. It was held up by the electrical cord. We had an electrician repair and hang the fixture. We have now added a safety chain to the fixture so if something breaks it will not fall to the ground
- Staff are finishing maintenance on equipment used to flood rinks and will do some cleaning in the warming houses with the hope of starting to flood in the next couple of weeks
- Continued work on trimming and taking down trees
- Staff will be putting out signs on the lake & starting the aerators in the near future
- Lakeview Park year-round heated bathroom anticipated to be completed summer of 2023; bathroom will have an outside access from the play park building
- 2nd report for the EAB DNR grant is due December 30th; this report details the current status of tree removal and planting in order to receive the incremental funding from the grant
- Mike Westney has transitioned to the Parks Superintendent position and his previous position of Parks Foreperson will be filled in the near future
- Staff started flooding outdoor skating rinks on December 19th.

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

- The roof at the arena is complete. We are still waiting for a ladder to be installed.
- The sound system is complete in the Nystrom Arena. What a big difference!

- The month of December has been very busy; Dec 9th -11th Girls U10 tournament/U12 tournament (16 teams); December 16th-18th A Peewee/B Peewee tournament (14 teams)
- High School hockey is in full swing for the season, with five varsity games complete and daily practice.
- Afton has our new arena scheduling monitors working in the lobby.

Aquatic Center: Report provided by Bob Furland;

- New sound system is completed

Senior Center: Report provided by Cathy Malakowsky;

- The City and Albert Lea Family Y have signed a new contract for operating the Senior Center at Skyline Mall. Under the 2-year contract, the Y will be responsible for operating the Senior Center, including setting fees, marketing and maintaining the facility.

Marion Ross Theater: Report provided by Bob Furland;

- ACT just finished the play “Elf” – Sold over 2,100 tickets for nine shows
- The theatre had events 192 days in 2022
- The City is updating a sprinkler valve for the fire suppression system
- New cabinets and countertop will be installed in January

Other:

Rail to trail:

A core planning team made up of City and County officials, plus members of the Freeborn Trails Assoc., continue to work with MnDOT and a consultant on a trail plan for the former UP rail corridor from Front Street to Hartland. Please take this 12-question survey to help with planning: [Albert Lea Survey Questions | Let's Talk Transportation - MnDOT \(state.mn.us\)](#). Learn more about the project here: [Albert Lea Community Trail Action Plan | Let's Talk Transportation - MnDOT \(state.mn.us\)](#).

City Council action:

At its Dec. 12 meeting, the Albert Lea City Council approved:

- A property tax levy of \$7.3 million for 2023, an increase of 5.75%. Property taxes make up 30% of the city’s total budget of \$18.1 million with the rest coming from state aid, fees and other sources. This means the city will be able to maintain its current staffing and program levels.
- Fees for 2023. Two highlights for Parks and Rec include dock permits increasing from \$150 to \$175 for residents, and ice rental at the arena increasing from \$175 to \$180 during prime months. (2023 fee schedule included)
- Capital Improvement Plan for 2023-'27. Projects for Parks and Rec next include the Inclusive Playground; an emergency shelter at Sondergaard Park; paving the parking lots at Bancroft Bay Park; improvements at Snyder Fields; bleachers for the Nystrom rink; and repaving the Aquatic Center parking lot. (2023-2027 CIP included)

Board Member Items:

- Jen Vogt-Erickson –
 - Promoted the Trails Survey and urged the board to send it to family and friends
 - Cathy added that only 8 had completed the survey and they are hoping to get to 200 responses.
- Rich Yost –
 - Rich was asked by a community member to speak in regards to their dock space 211. The renter has concerns that their space is being over utilized by the companies that put docks and lifts in and take them out due to the ideal shoreline for ease of access. The renter states their equipment is put out last and taken out first so the companies have an open space. Staff will address this situation with the companies.
 - Requested confirmation that a new sign would be put up at Snyder Field once they construction is completed. Rich just wanted to be sure the facility name was replaced.
- Steve Ball –
 - Discussed the reasoning for the Lakeview soccer goals to be left out all year. Staff responded that the association is responsible for this equipment.
 - Steve spoke in regards to the importance of board member attendance and their commitment to the board for the upcoming year.
- Jason Howland –
 - Jason asked staff if the walking trails were plowed at Edgewater. Mike Westney shared that the walking trails are plowed however there is not drive through access in the park during the winter due to security reasons but they do make walking paths available.
 - Jason wanted to point out the \$25 increase in the dock rental fee for 2023. The last time the fee was increased there was concern so he just wanted the board to be aware that the council voted to approve the increase.

Adjournment: Rich Yost made a motion to adjourn the Park Board meeting, and Jen Vogt-Erickson seconded the motion. The board voted in favor of said motion 6-0. Motion declared passed. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Afton Wacholz
Acting Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Secretary

Approved:

Steve Ball
Park & Recreation Advisory Board Chairman