

PARKS & RECREATION  
ADVISORY BOARD  
MEETING MINUTES

November 18, 2024 6 pm  
Edgewater Bay Pavilion

**Members Present:**

Steve Ball  
Kent Rahn  
Whitney Sauer  
Amy Leach  
Therese Salazar  
Wende Taylor  
Tony Segura (arrived at 6:17 p.m.)  
Jason Howland, Ex-Officio

**Members Absent:**

none

**Staff in Attendance:**

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

**Others in Attendance:**

Phil Wacholz, Bayside Waterski Show Team Representative  
Mike Johnson, Bayside Waterski Show Team President

**Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order by Steve Ball at 6:00pm.

**Adopt Agenda:**

Wende Taylor made the motion to approve the agenda for tonight's meeting with the addition of the Bayside Waterski Show Team community project request and Therese Salazar seconded the motion. The board voted in favor of said motion 6-0 (Tony Seguar was absent). Motion declared passed.

**Approval of the Minutes:**

Amy Leach made the motion to approve the minutes from the September 16, 2024 meeting and Whitney Sauer seconded the motion. The board voted in favor of said motion 6-0 (Tony Segura was absent). Motion declared passed.

**Public Items:**

Wende Taylor contacted staff regarding a community member question on the new rain garden area on the corner of The Fairway and Lake Shore Dr. The community member's backyard adjoins the land where the new garden is located. They had questions regarding how much water will sit in there and if there will be any fencing put up around the area. A member from the Engineering department will be calling the community member to answer their questions on this project.

#### **Action/Discussion Items:**

- **Review and discussion of Bayside Waterski Show Team community project request**
  - Phil Wacholz and Mike Johnson from the Bayside Waterski Show Team presented to the board on their community project requested for their show site in Edgewater Bay on Fountain Lake. This site has been their show site for 54 years and the team currently uses the site 4 days a week for practices and their weekly show on Thursday evenings from June through Labor Day. They also host a 4<sup>th</sup> of July show and perform traveling shows in other communities.
  - The team will be hosting the 2025 Regional Tournament in July and are looking to make some improvements to the shoreline and beach area to accommodate the large teams that will be participating.
  - In 2005 the concrete pillow was placed and in 2010 there was a revision to remove the middle portion of the pillow to accommodate a better beach area. The team is requesting permission to submit a revision to the current permit request to the DNR to remove all of the remaining concrete pillow and replace with beach. The team will fully fund this project, with Dulas Excavating doing the work, which will also include dirt work, restoration of grass and sediment control.
  - Ryan Hajek believes this is a great idea as the pillow is not serving it's original purpose. Amy Leach also agrees that this improvement would benefit the community with an additional beach area. Phil state he has already discussed this with the DNR and they are also excited to remove this as the pillow doesn't serve a purpose in wildlife habitat but the expanded sandy beach area would.
  - There will be a \$1,200 permit fee through the DNR that the team will pay for. Once the permit is submitted there is a 30-day public comment period through the DNR. If the board approves this, Bayside will submit the permit and get going on work as soon as they are able to.
  - Amy Leach motioned to approve the request by Bayside to submit a revised permit to the DNR to remove the concrete pillow and replace with extended sandy beach while preserving the shoreline. Kent Rahn seconded the motion. On a roll call vote, the board voted in favor of said motion 7-0. Motion declared passed.
- **Update on facilities projects and designs**
  - Recreation staff presented a visual walk through of the most current design of the expanded lobby at the City Arena as well as the improvements at the Aquatic Center. There are still some fine tuning to be done however staff feels very good with where things are at in the process. Feedback from the board was positive.
- **Review and discussion of Albert Lea Youth Softball community project request**
  - The Albert Lea Youth Softball Association submitted a community project request to place a 10' x 16' shed with vinyl siding and roll up overhead door at the Snyder Field

complex. The shed is on skids and would be placed on a crushed gravel pad initially with future plans on possibly having a concrete slab. All funding will be provided by the association for the shed and the placement. This shed allows the association to keep their equipment on the site that is used for all their practices and games.

- Steve asked about preventing rodents from damaging items in the shed when stored out of season. There is no opposition from Parks staff. Jason asked if inspections needs to be involved and staff will confirm this prior to final approval.
- Therese Salazar made a motion to approve the project application for placement of the equipment shed as long as it meets City Code. Amy Leach seconded the motion. The board voted in favor of said motion 6-0 (Whitney Sauer was absent). Motion declared passed.
- **Discuss and approve 2025 meeting dates**
  - The board discussed the need for any changes to the time of the meetings for 2025 to ensure everyone can get there. After a short discussion, it was decided to keep meeting times at 6pm on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month for 2025
  - Due to holidays landing on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday in January and February, the board decided to move those meetings to the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of the month to avoid the holiday for City staff.

#### **Staff Updates:**

**Recreation:** Report provided by Bob Furland and Dani Bakken;

- The first session of Learn to Skate ended on Sunday, November 10
- Fall Candle Light Walk will be held at the State Park on Friday, November 15 from 6-8p
- We are working on the winter guide and that will be sent to mail boxes the week of December 9
- We will host our Turkey Trot on Ice on November 24 from 4:30-6p
- Oktoberween was held October 18-20 and 25-27 with approximately 1,500 paid admissions
- Working on special event dates with CVB

**Parks:** Report provided by Ryan Hajek and Mike Westney;

- Winterizing buildings & gardens is done.
- Fall tree planting is done.
- Working on grinding & picking up leaves.
- Rough mowing & spraying.
- Started setting up hockey rinks.
- Started changing out banners.
- Start putting up Christmas decorations.
- Equipment & building maintenance.
- Tree work.

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

- Facility updates –
  - Met with Apex and LFG Architects for an in person building walk through for the facility projects.
  - Apex has finished the building envelope upgrade to the arena and theater.

- **Events -**
  - Youth Hockey
    - B Bantams home tournament was held Nov 8-10 with 8 total teams
    - A Bantams home tournament will be Nov 15-17 with 8 total teams
    - A Squirt home tournament will be Dec 6-8 and A Peewee Dec 13-15
    - First youth tournament November 8-10
  - Waldorf
    - Intersquad scrimmage Nov 22
    - D1 home series:
      - University of Mary Dec 6 at 7:30pm and Dec 7 at 2pm
    - D2 home series vs UW La Crosse Nov 16-17
  - High School
    - First home girls game was Nov 7, with several more this week and next week
    - Boys started practice on Nov 11 and have a home scrimmage on Nov 23
  - Figure Skating
    - No new updates.
- **Other events –**
  - None

**Aquatic Center:** Report provided by Bob Furland/Josh Heilman;

- Walk through with Apex to finalize design plans

**Senior Center:** Report provided by Bob Furland;

- **Trips -**
  - Side Kick Theatre December 10<sup>th</sup> “Bells will be Ringing”
- **Programs/Events –**
  - The 80s brunch was held on October 25<sup>th</sup>
  - Christmas party will be held on December 6 at the Edgewater Bay Pavilion

**Marion Ross Theater:** Report provided by Bob Furland;

- **Facility Updates –**
  - Apex has measured the windows and doors for the remodel.
- **Upcoming events -**
  - White Christmas will run December 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13 and 14

**Other:** Report provided by Cathy Malakowsky;

**Bicycle shelter at Frank Hall Park:**

The Freeborn County Trail Association has secured \$60,000 for the project with additional \$13,000 needed. The association continues to seeking grant and donations for the remainder.

**Trail along the former UP railroad corridor:** Excerpt from update from County Engineer Phil Wacholz

1. HDR has successfully been added as a subconsultant to perform design alternatives for the Highway 13 crossing. Our concern was that the difficulty in crossing Highway 13 would eat up

substantial design budget. Therefore, HDR contacted MnDOT and a MnDOT Consultant who was already working on similar work. HDR was able to be added as a subconsultant to this project and now a portion of the fees for work on our project will actually be paid by MnDOT. This will avoid us overrunning due to the design effort we are needing on the Highway 13 crossing.

- a. There will be three options evaluated for the crossing of Highway 13.
  - i. At grade crossing at the same location as the old RR crossing at Highway 13, and
  - ii. Grade separated crossing with the trail going under Highway 13 via a tunnel, and
  - iii. At grade crossing of Highway 13 at the location of a new roundabout at Sunset Street.
2. As part of the Winter Avenue reconstruction, the City of Albert Lea installed the trail crossing ramps for Winter based on the preliminary design so that new curbing, sidewalk, and street wouldn't be disturbed in the future for the trail construction.
3. Environmental Memo is underway to describe the foreseeable environmental challenges the project will face.
  - a. Application for funding: County is moving ahead with an application for MnDOT's Active Transportation Infrastructure grant. The grant awards up to \$1 million in state funding per project and our trail is a great fit. This funding would be for 2025 or 2026 construction and if we were awarded the full amount it would fund approximately 30% of the project.
  - b. There are a few other funding opportunities with applications open in the spring. They are Regional Trail Grant from the MnDNR, Legislative Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR), and MnDNR Federal Recreation Trails grant. As we have discussed, our project is going to require funding from a variety of sources and will also include the need for local inputs. For this phase of trail construction, the preliminary estimate was \$3.5 million. If we can get the project funded to about 75-80%, that would leave approximately \$875,000 in local money required. This could be split with the City of Albert Lea. Grant funding for 100% of the project is unlikely in my opinion. We currently have approximately \$600,000 in committed funds for trail design, construction, and maintenance.

**\*\* Top 5 Project Updates:**

Restrooms by Splash Pad –

- No new updates

Develop the Union Pacific rail to trail –

- See staff update from Cathy

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:**

- Wende Taylor –
  - Asked what the construction cones and lanes were detouring around near the north McDonald's on Bridge Ave. Staff responded that this was not a City project and assumed it was utility work by a contractor through the County.

**Adjournment:** Amy Leach made a motion to adjourn the Park Board meeting and Kent Rahn seconded the motion. The board voted in favor of said motion 6-0 (Whitney Sauer was absent). Motion declared passed. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

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Afton Wacholz  
Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Secretary

Approved:

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Steve Ball  
Park & Recreation Advisory Board Chairman