

PARKS & RECREATION
ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

February 26, 2023 6 pm
City Arena Conference Room

Members Present:

Steve Ball
Jodi Hartman
Therese Salazar
Tony Segura
Kent Rahn
Whitney Sauer (arrived 6:02p)

Members Absent:

Amy Leach
Jason Howland, Ex-Officio

Staff in Attendance:

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

Others in Attendance:

none

Call to Order:

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

Adopt Agenda:

Jodi Hartman made the motion to approve the agenda for tonight's meeting and Tony Segura seconded the motion. The board voted in favor of said motion 5-0 (Whitney absent). Motion declared passed.

Approval of the Minutes:

Jodi Hartman made the motion to approve the minutes from the January 29, 2024 meeting and Whitney Sauer seconded the motion. The board voted in favor of said motion 6-0. Motion declared passed.

Public Items:

The board chair welcomed new member, Kent Rahn. The board and staff introduced themselves and provided a warm welcome to Kent.

The Recreation office has received inquiries as to when the park gates will open, specifically at Edgewater Park and Bancroft Park. Mike Westney indicated that they hesitate to open the gates too

early as they do not have staff around the parks during the day yet and would prefer to keep them closed until there are staff around to avoid any issues. They also want to be sure the ground is firm so that once through traffic is allowed, cars aren't leaving ruts when parking on the side of the road, etc.

There have also been inquiries regarding the opening of the skate park. As of last week, there were still some snowy/icy patches in the areas that don't get direct sunlight. Staff will monitor weather and the conditions and open it as soon as all hazards are gone.

Action/Discussion Items:

- **UP Rail to Trail: Recommendations for a trail name**
 - The City Council will vote tonight (2/26) to fund a consultant contract. There is a need to name the trail for purposes of moving forward with the project. The DNR has not guidelines for naming. Ultimately Freeborn County will have the final decision on the naming but staff feel that it is important to provide input. The board felt that they needed until next meeting to start thinking about ideas and plan to discuss options to recommend to the council for names of the trail at the March meeting.
- **Emerald Ash Borer Management: How to provide disposal of trees from private properties**
 - It's here! And full bore! Ryan Hajek is feeling very good about where the city is sitting with their plan. There will be a press release soon to inform the public on the status of the emerald ash borer in our community and to provide information regarding retreatment vs removal of affected trees.
 - The tree value is so important. If a tree is still capable of surviving with treatment that is the preferred plan. The cost to treat an affected tree is roughly \$6 per inch at hug height, approximately \$90-200 per tree for most in our community.
 - In less then 10 years all ash trees will be dead if nothing is done. The recommendation to the City is to treat roughly 300 trees per year for 3 years at a cost of around \$35,000.
- **Recommendations to City Council on free disposal at the Transfer Station from private properties within Albert Lea. Contractors would need to dispose on their own at other facilities**
 - City staff would like to provide a disposal plan for trees beyond saving and include that in the press release. Staff would like the board to consider recommending to the city council to offer free disposal at the transfer station to Albert Lea residents. Removal could be done by private citizens or contractors; however, the disposal would only be fore private citizens.
 - Therese suggested a Lunch and Learn as an option to provide the needed information to the public. Steve suggested that the city provide a list of tree contractors that are certified arborists that can help with removal and/or treatment. Staff confirmed that this list is currently on the city's website already. Jodi felt it was important to provide the facts on what would happen if the city and private citizens did NOT treat the affected trees that are still in a condition to be saved, as well as options for treatment. Therese also thought it would be important to provide this information in other languages for citizens needing translation.
 - Therese made the motion to recommend to the city council to amend the current fee schedule to allow private citizens residing in Albert Lea to dispose of infected ash trees

at no charge. Whitney seconded the motion. The board voted in favor of the said motion 6-0. Motion declared passed.

- **Updates on the Rec Facilities Referendum**

- Staff provided the board with the latest public presentations that have been attended by city staff and also what others are coming up. Cathy, Bob and the mayor have been or will be at many service club meetings as well as the CVB, Chamber, School board, Freeborn County board, etc. There will be an open house at the city arena on March 7 with free ice skating sponsored by Waldorf University. Cathy welcomed the board to attend any of the upcoming events.

Staff Reports:

Recreation: Report provided by Bob Furland and Dani Bakken;

- February 16 Valentine Rock on Ice- we had about 110 people attend
- February 24 candle light walk at state park 6-8p
- Summer job opening are posted online
- March 14 & 15 Spring Break Skate and Swim – with Comm Ed and YMCA
- March 30 Easter Egg Hunt
- Working on the summer guide which will be mailed out beginning of April
- Young Athletes started on February 6 - we have 22 participants
- **Tentative Events Recreation is involved with for 2024:**
 - May 4 Cinco De Mayo
 - May 29 Albert Lea Thursdays on Fountain - First Night
 - June 12 Wind Down Wednesday
 - June 15 Pride
 - July 10 Wind Down Wednesday
 - August 14 Wind Down Wednesday
 - September 16 Mexican Independence Day
 - September 17 Safety Day
 - October 18, 19, 25, 26, 27 Oktoberween Freeborn County Fairgrounds
 - December 12 Holiday Bizarre

Parks: Report provided by Mike Westney;

- Working on equipment maintenance.
- Ben, Alex, & Mike V along with MDA surveyed the city on 2/13/24 for Emerald Ash Borer.
- Ben, Alex, Monte, Mike V, & Jim are going to an arborist work shop in Rochester.
- Working on purchasing a new out-front mower.
- Working on purchasing two new playgrounds, Troy hammer & Belleview.
- Working on the two fences by the volleyball courts.
- Working on Southwest playpark building.
- Edgewater Bay we will be insulating the ceiling in the new hallway area.
- Rick has been doing landscape maintenance.

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

- **Facility update –**
 - Recreation staff attended user group meetings to inform and answer questions about the facilities project and referendum
 - Afton and Bob attended and presented at the noon Kiwanis
 - Bob presented at the Morning Kiwanis and Masons
 - Bob and Cathy will be presenting to the Lions and other service clubs in the next month
- **Events -**
 - Hockey tournaments
 - Done for the season
 - Waldorf Games
 - Done for the season
 - Will continue to rent ice twice per week through the beginning of April
 - High School Games
 - February 22 Albert Lea Tigers Boys Varsity Section Game at 7:00 PM
 - Figure Skating
 - Albert Lea Figure Skating Show will be held March 23 and 24th
- **Programs –**
 - February 24 will be the last day for Park and Rec Mites- ended the year with 83 participants
 - Albert Lea Youth Hockey Spring League Hockey will start on March 19
 - Learn to skate finished on February 11- we ended with 115 participants in the 3 sessions

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

- None

Senior Center: Report provided by Bob Furland;

- **Trips -**
 - None
- **Programs –**
 - February 20 – Health and Wellness Expo
 - February 28 – Art with Emelia
 - February 29 – Arcadian Bank will have a Fraud Protection presentation

Marion Ross Theater: Report provided by Bob Furland;

- March 14-23: ACT play – The Complete Works of William Shakespeare
- March 30 - Kit Mayer and the Pack concert

Other: Report provided by Cathy Malakowsky;

- The Albert Lea City Council is scheduled to hold the second reading and vote on the final adoption of the Park Rules at its Feb. 26 meeting.

- Also Feb. 26, the Council set to vote on funding half of the consulting contract – estimated total of \$300,000 so the City’s portion would be \$150,000 - for the preliminary work on the UP Rail to Trail project. This contract with HDR would include environmental review, construction design and grant-writing. We need a name for the proposed trail! Would the Parks and Rec Board like to brainstorm a few ideas?
- And one more agenda item for Feb. 26: The council will vote on accepting a bid for rain gardens at Academy Park and on The Fairway.
- The Rec Department is hiring for the summer. If you know of a student interested in working as a pool attendant, pool manager, lifeguard, play park leader or arena custodian, please send them to the city website: <https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/albertlea>.
- The City is gearing up for the informational campaign on the April 9 referendum to fund Rec Facilities. Project descriptions, upcoming events and how to vote are on the City website: <https://cityofalbertlea.org/recinvest/>. The City and ACT are hosting an open house and tour on Tuesday, March 19, from 4 – 6 p.m. at the theater, for people to learn more about the projects. The CVB is heading up the “Vote Yes” campaign. Reach out to Holly or Konrad at the CVB for more info.

**** Top 5 Project Updates:**

Restrooms by Splash Pad –

- Included in the proposal for long-term maintenance of Rec Facilities

Develop the Union Pacific rail to trail –

- See Cathy’s update

Develop an off-season field house –

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

Upgrade Snyder Fields –

- Much progress made with future improvements planned; currently working on dugouts

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

- See Cathy’s update

Board Member Items:

- Whitney Sauer –
 - Attended the candlelight walk at the State Park and thought the event went great. She thoughts there were about 400 people in attendance. The weather and turnout were really good. She suggested possibly doing one around Halloween time.

Adjournment: Therese Salazar made a motion to adjourn the Park Board meeting, and Whitney Sauer 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