

PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

August 3rd, 2016

The Merrill Parks & Recreation Commission met on Wednesday, August 3rd, 2016 at 4:15 p.m. at the Merrill City Hall.

Members Present: Mike Willman, John Burgener, Jean Ravn, Brian Artac, Dave Sukow, and Melissa Schroeder

Members Excused Absent: Ben Debroux

Department Staff Present: Dan Wendorf

Visitors: Erik Pfantz, Derek Woellner, Hunter Lane (MP3), Heather O'Neill, Jon Kurth, Dave Johnson, Kandy Peterson, Mary Ball, Mayor Bialecki

**Motion by Sukow, seconded by Artac to approve the minutes from the July meeting.

**Carried Unanimously.

**Motion by Burgener, seconded by Ravn to approve the claims.

Public Comment: Erik Pfantz complimented the Commission on how nice the bike lanes are and thanked them for making it happen

Sukow asked why there were so many "gas for flowers" items for Pine Ridge Mobile. Wendorf stated that the description was wrong. City vehicles had to refill fuel at Pine Ridge Mobile until the Street Department pumps were fixed.

**Carried Unanimously.

Chairperson Willman asked if the other Commissioners had any issue with moving item number 7 (Skate Park Discussion) up to the next item on the agenda. Everyone agreed.

The next item on the agenda was continued discussion on potential future skate park. Wendorf asked Heather O'Neill to introduce her guest Jon Kurth, who owns a skating related business in the Wausau Area, to speak on the merits of a skate park in a community. Jon began by saying he was excited about the new initiative and that it is important to have a nice skate park for many reasons and that it keeps skaters in areas they are desired. Stevens Point recently built a beautiful park, as well as Wausau and Weston. He stated they have had good numbers of users at those parks. He said skate boards are loud and locating them near residential areas might not be a great idea. Skate Parks bring capabilities to host events, competitions, and to provide lessons. Skate parks draw skaters from all over the state and beyond – Jon stated that Wausau & Weston draw from Milwaukee and Madison and that it has a tourism impact on a local community. Jon also stated that size and design are important as well as working with everyone in the community to ensure that the needs/wants of as many people as possible are addressed. Chairperson Willman asked Jon if he will be Heather's design consultant throughout the process. He replied that he is willing to help, and Heather said that Jon will help her look over designs

and help in that area and that Jon is not an actual designer. Jon said he is willing to make sure it is the right fit for the area, our skaters, and the community. Commissioner Schroeder asked Wendorf if he has heard anything back from WDNR or USACE and Wendorf stated that he has made contact with both entities and that he was asked to provide more information to both and he did so. He pointed out that during the Aquatic Center process it took some time to get definitive answers from both entities when asking this very same question. Commissioner Burgener stated that he would rather see the skate park elsewhere as Stange Park is a popular scenic destination where many people go to take special occasion pictures. Commissioner Sukow stated that he had some concerns with visibility in this location. City Administrator Johnson said the first question that needs to be answered before going any further is regulatory restrictions (if any), then it is up to the Commission to decide what they would like to do as they have final say on all park property decisions. Mayor Bialecki stated that he supports Stange Park being returned back to green space and mentioned the possibility of utilizing another city owned space that is currently not a park. Commissioner Ravn said she has had a number of calls regarding the skate park at Stange Park with some mentioning they would rather see a band shell put back there. Willman stated that in fairness to Heather we should choose a site so she doesn't spend money designing for one location that ultimately isn't approved. Jon Kurth said that the site does have a great impact on design so it is important to have that information. Burgener questioned how many Commissioners want Stange Park as the potential location. Willman asked Wendorf to go through potential locations, similar to concessions a few months ago, and bring back potential options to the Commission (or other available City Property). Willman asked Wendorf to utilize some of the criteria that was laid out by Mrs. O'Neill at the previous meeting. Heather stated that she thought we went through this last month – that Stange Park is the only park that fits these professional criteria. She said she is currently setting up a not for profit to be able to take donations. Once this is established and she is able to raise some funding, it will be used to work on actual designs. Heather told the commission to take her opinion seriously as she has studied skate parks for the past six months and that the Commission doesn't have the knowledge she does. She stated that photographs won't have anything to do with the skate park. Commissioner Artac stated that one positive about Stange Park is that it would be out front and not hidden.

The next item on the agenda was to continue discussion on Capital Budget for 2017 and beyond. Wendorf updated the Commission on the Normal Park Restroom request. He mentioned the memo he distributed to Council members as well as Commissioners. Wendorf mentioned that with the current timeline, combined with the cost increase by the pre-cast restroom company it was a good time to re-evaluate. Wendorf stated that it would be in our best interest to compare stick built with block as well as pre-cast. We might find that we can build more for less. Wendorf stated that that was the only change from the discussion last month. Willman commented how nice it is to have so much cooperation with the Street Department under its new leadership. Sukow stated that he hopes the City Council approves our new request for Normal Park restrooms and keeps in mind that we have provided quite a bit of our own funding from City Forest timber sales.

The next item on the agenda was to discuss potential aquatic center refund policy. Wendorf stated that with the number of incidents thus far at the aquatic center he wanted to have a clear policy sponsored by the commission. He stated that the public has been frustrated (along with the department) with the hassle that unexpected closures bring. Wendorf stated that he has spoken with a number of other aquatic centers around the state and some have policies and others are not clear cut – as they don't have anywhere near the issues that we have had. Wendorf stated that he favored how Appleton deals with closures. He said that Appleton doesn't give monetary refunds but will give a single day pool pass if the pool closes unexpectedly due to a loose stool incident or mechanical issue. Anything else (weather, formed stool) they do not issue "refund passes" as formed stool is a very temporary closure and

weather is unpredictable and people take a calculated risk when swimming while there is a chance of inclement weather.

**Motion Artac, seconded by Ravn to refund day passes to pool patrons who purchased a day pass on a day where the aquatic center has to be closed due to a loose stool incident or mechanical breakdown only (no refunds to season pass holders)

**Carried Unanimously.

The next item on the agenda was monthly report. Wendorf asked if there were any questions from the Commission. Willman said he wanted to pass along a compliment from an acquaintance of his, who didn't know he was on the Parks & Recreation Commission. This person told Willman they were at the Merrill Fast pitch tournament and they said the MARC is one of the nicest facilities in the entire State of Wisconsin and he said that they were treated so well by everyone all weekend. Wendorf thanked Willman for sharing that and stated that we have some fantastic youth sports organizations doing amazing things in our community. Artac also wanted to thank the Bierman Family Foundation for helping this community continue to make improvements to facilities so we can continue to have the best facilities.

**Motion Schroeder, seconded by Sukow to approve the monthly report.

**Carried Unanimously.

The next regularly scheduled meeting will be September 7th, 2016, at 4:15 p.m. at the Merrill City Hall.

Public Comment: Derek Woellner commented about the lights at Kitchenette Park and stated his support for a skate park and that he felt it should be located somewhere near the middle school.

**Motion Artac, seconded by Sukow to adjourn at 5:35 p.m.

**Carried Unanimously.

Dan Wendorf
Recording Secretary