

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

May 4th, 2016

The Merrill Parks & Recreation Commission met on Wednesday, May 4th, 2016 at 4:15 p.m. at the Smith Center.

Members Present: Mike Willman, John Burgener, Jean Ravn, Brian Artac, and Ben Debroux

Members Excused Absent: Troy Pieper, Melissa Schroeder

Department Staff Present: Dan Wendorf

Visitors: Donna Block, Jean Howick, Kathy Wulf, Helene Ader, Dave Johnson, Lynn Zentner, Ginny Drew, Erik Pfantz, Derek Woellner, Austin Moldenhauer, Mary Ball, Mark Moldenhauer

***Motion by Ravn, seconded by Artac to approve the minutes from the April Meeting.

***Carried unanimously

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

***Carried unanimously

The next item on the agenda was to discuss the watering of flower beds as requested by the Merrill Gardner's Group. Chairperson Willman asked a representative of the group to describe for the Commission what they are looking for. They started by saying they have been providing flower beds for the City of Merrill for over 25 years and have 22 beds currently and 50 volunteers. They feel the beds need to be watered every day and are looking to the City to find a way to accomplish this task. They specifically mentioned the large beds (Round about, Normal Park bed and Gazebo) and thought that at some point installing drip irrigation system for those beds would be a viable option. Wendorf stated that last year there was a successful request for more watering during the budget process. This will allow for a few more hours per week to perform additional watering. Wendorf did state that the request from last year will not be enough to water flower beds every day. He said the best the department could do was systematically water them on an alternating schedule. Wendorf stated that the first priority for the department is the hanging flower baskets and requested that both groups prioritize beds. Wendorf also stated that it might be worth looking into automated irrigation for some beds, because at some point the staffing and operational costs to water (staffing, equipment, fuel, water, etc.) on an annual basis is going to exceed a one-time expense of irrigation. Wendorf also stated that all of the beds that are not located on park property would have to have Board of Public Works approval if work was to be done on or in them.

There was no action on the item but it was agreed that with the additional hours and funding for this year the groups would work together with the City to try and accomplish their goals.

The next item on the agenda was to discuss a transient merchant permit from Austin Moldenhauer for selling goods on a bicycle on the River Bend Trail. Wendorf introduced the topic to the Commission stating that he talked with Moldenhauer about his wishes and included his business outline and permit

form in the packets. Wendorf stated that he discussed the topic with the City Administrator and City Attorney and they both had concerns regarding approval. Their main concerns are precedent for other parks and the ability to control activity along the linear park. Wendorf applauded Moldenhauer for his idea and for his entrepreneurial spirit and shared the concerns of the Administrator and Attorney. Wendorf stated that if this is allowed, it would make it very difficult to control similar activity in other parks. Wendorf stated that in the past similar services were bid out with detailed specifications that were controlled by the Commission. This allows for the Commission to specifically identify what services they were looking for, where it can be located, who is qualified, what products, etc. There was also a percentage the awarded vendor would have to pay the City, as they were making a profit off of City funded property and activities. Chairperson Willman suggested revisiting this topic at a future meeting and looking at it park by park to see if this is something worth pursuing.

There was no action on the item at this time. Willman requested the item be on a future agenda.

The next item on the agenda was to discuss the request from the previous meeting to have cross walks installed to connect Stange Park to Lions Park and Kitchenette Park, along with a cross walk to be located at the intersection of Marc Drive and Grand Avenue/Highway 107. Wendorf passed maps of the referenced areas around to the Commission for them to review. Wendorf showed the commission where he felt the cross walks would be most beneficial and stated that this would need to be approved by the Board of Public Works as it is a street matter. Wendorf did have concerns about the Kitchenette to Stange area due to 4 lanes of traffic. Wendorf agreed there should be a cross walk there for pedestrian safety but this might be a time to look into traffic calming. There isn't the traffic volume for 4 lanes and a center turn lane would allow for a safe spot to cross. A member of the public asked to speak and also suggested a cross walk to connect the skate park to the library as it is an unsafe area there.

***Motion by Burgener, seconded by Artac to approve the request and forward to the Board of Public Works for cross walks to connect Stange Park to Lions Park, Stange Park to Kitchenette Park, the Skate Park to the Library area, and across Grand Avenue/Highway 107 onto Marc Drive.

***Carried unanimously

The next item on the agenda was to review and approve the director's board report. Wendorf fielded questions first. Ravn asked what the status was on the farmer's market as she heard of a potential move from Normal Park to the River Bend Trail. Wendorf stated that there are no formal plans yet and that it would be something that would have to come before the Commission, as it would be a similar situation to the transient merchant topic earlier on the agenda. Wendorf stated that the Commission should lay out some specifications on how they would like the market to function, products allowed, and schematics of the space.

***Motion by Ravn, seconded by Burgener to approve the Director's Report.

***Carried Unanimously.

Public Comment: Mary Ball commented that she would like to see the existing skate park moved to a different location. She felt that the current location is a bit undersized and dangerous. She also mentioned that a potential solution to the Round About dilemma of watering would be to lessen the plants on the site and add a sculpture as it would be less maintenance. She stated that the flowers are very beautiful and commended the garden group for all that they do.

Chairperson Willman stated that if nobody had any issues, he would like to adjourn the meeting before the site visit through the Bierman Family Aquatic Center.

The next meeting is scheduled for June 1st, 2016 at 4:15 p.m. at the SMITH CENTER.

***Motion Ravn, seconded by Artac to adjourn at 5:54 p.m.

The Parks & Recreation Commission then proceeded to the Bierman Family Aquatic Center for a site visit of the entire facility to see progress.

Dan Wendorf
Recording Secretary