

Skate Park Special Committee

July 17th, 2018

The Merrill Skate Park Special Committee met on Tuesday, July 17th, 2018, at 4:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers at the Merrill City Hall.

Members Present: Dan Wendorf, Kyle Gulke, Kate Baker, Justin Novitski, Shawn Molley, Ryan Bartz, Dakota Branski

Visitors: Dave Sukow, Mayor Woellner, Erik Pfantz

Wendorf called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. and asked for introductions once again because a number of members were unable to attend the first meeting.

The next item on the agenda was to continue the discussion on skate park location. Wendorf began the discussion by summarizing the discussion and sentiments from the previous meeting to help bring the new members up to speed. After the summary, Wendorf asked the new members for their input and thoughts on potential locations. The general theme was that a skate park needs to be accessible to pedestrian traffic (walking/biking distance), enough space for different levels of skaters, not on a main. They also mentioned that parking doesn't make any difference at all because a lot of the users can't drive anyways. Gulke asked them if they had any opinion on two smaller parks versus one main park. They said they liked the idea but Kurth stated that with the struggles to find one location it might be a difficult proposition to find two acceptable locations. The skaters mentioned that they actually do not mind the current location and that could potentially remain, if the steel ramps are removed and the fencing around the park, as one location with newer amenities and add another wherever we decide. They felt the current location is well known for skaters. Gulke suggested removing the Festival Grounds from consideration. Wendorf agreed and mentioned he has heard from a few people that there will be push back if this location continues to be considered. Gulke suggested the possibility of leaving the current location as the "beginner" park and the other location is for more advanced skaters. Wendorf mentioned the MARC (where the old outdoor ice rink was located) as a good potential site that has been overlooked. He said the Merrill Area Recreation Complex (MARC) was built for purposes such as this; it is a Recreation Complex that is designed to handle any and all of the issues that have come to light throughout the previous process. He mentioned that there is ample parking, lighting, ready ground, and plenty of eyes and ears around at all hours to ensure the investment is treated with respect. Wendorf stated that it is obviously not centrally located but that argument should be rendered moot after the construction of the Aquatic Center. The same argument was utilized repeatedly throughout the Aquatic Center location process and since it opened has been tremendously successful, and Wendorf stated that there are a great number of kids that walk and/or bike out to the Aquatic Center. It would also be another wonderful amenity for siblings who are not participating in soccer, baseball, softball, hiking the trails, using the dog park, etc. Also very close to Council Grounds State Park so it would be a draw for visitors who are camping. The skaters agreed with the MARC as being a strong location and was moved to the favorite category. Baker asked the skaters what they felt about the potential of a vacant building for four season skating opportunities. They unanimously agreed that that would be the best possible scenario because in the winter months they have to drive over to Green Bay to skate. Wendorf did state that obviously a four seasons location would be tremendous, but with that comes heating/cooling, restrooms, staffing, etc. Not that it should be overlooked but that is the reality of a comprehensive facility such as that. Kurth asked Wendorf if he could research any potential vacant buildings that could

potentially serve as an indoor skate park, and Wendorf said he would look into it. Gulke also mentioned the area by the Weinbrenner Outlet as another location that he thought would be viable. Wendorf agreed but said he was unsure if that space was owned by the City or Weinbrenner and would look into it. It was also suggested that another really good location would be the open space between Genesee Street and Wright Street just north of West Main Street where the old factory was demolished. Wendorf stated that he believes that property to be owned by the individual who demolished it but would also check on that. There was no further discussion and Wendorf asked that the new members digest the information that was discussed and also try to talk to as many skaters as they could to gain their input before we move forward on a recommendation. Everyone thought that was a good idea and agreed to solicit input and additional ideas for the next meeting.

The next item on the agenda was public comment. Alderman Sukow commented that he felt that if we had done this special committee previously we might already have a skate park. He also urged the committee to not choose Stange Park tennis court area due to concerns with water and being at the bottom of two hills and a road. He said this is a significant investment and would like to see it be built in a more tolerable spot for it to last. Erik Pfantz commented that he had a few other locations to suggest, the empty lot next to the Post Office, the WPS building(s) area immediately west of the Center Avenue Bridge, and the former Anson Gilkey property.

The next meeting will be scheduled for July 31st, 2018 at 4:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers at the Merrill City Hall.

****Motion Baker, seconded by Gulke to adjourn at 5:13 p.m.**

****Carried unanimously.**

Dan Wendorf
Recording Secretary