

SPECIAL PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

May 13, 2020

The Merrill Parks and Recreation Commission met virtual on Wednesday, May 13, 2020 at 4:15 p.m.

Members Present: Kyle Gulke, Jean Ravn, Joan Tabor, Brian Artac, Dan Novitch and John Vanlieshout.

Members Excused Absent:

Department Staff Present: Dan Wendorf and Dawn Smith

Visitors: City Administrator Dave Johnson

Novitch stated that agenda item number one and number two will be skipped.

The next item on the agenda was discussion and recommendation on Aquatic Center and certain recreation program potential openings/closings for 2020 season. Wendorf stated that he has been working with neighboring communities to come up with a plan on working together. Wendorf stated that he has been meeting with Wausau/Marathon County, Stevens Point, Weston, Rothschild/Schofield, Marshfield, Wisconsin Rapids and Thorp. Wendorf stated that all surrounding communities want to cooperatate with each other. Wendorf stated that there concern is that if one pool opens and the rest close, the pool that remains open will be packed from people coming from surrounding communities. Wendorf stated that all the pools would like to open at the same time, using the time line of meeting phase 3 of the Badger Bounce Back. Wendorf stated that the surrounding communities all agreed that trying to open after July 1st would pose challenges for their pools and to operate for less than half of the season would be costly and could potentially be difficult due to staff shortages by making seasonal employees wait to see what happens. In order to open by July 1st it would take several weeks and that is why June 15th was used as a time frame to activate a decision. Wendorf stated that Phase III allows for mass gatherings again, and trying to run the Aquatic Center with severely restricted numbers would cost the department and City a significant amount of money without any solid revenue returns. Wendorf stated that all the communities are working on a press release that will go out at the same time with the same information.

***Motion by Vanlieshout, seconded by Ravn to consider only opening the Aquatic Center under Phase 3 of the Badger Bounce Back or updated guidelines that are ordered (and allow for mass gatherings). Phase III (or mass gatherings) must be declared/allowed by June 15th in order to allow time for July 1st deadline to consider opening for the season.

*** Carried unanimously.

Discussion was also held on the recreational programs. Wendorf stated that recreational programs is also a gray area. Wendorf stated that we have to follow state guidelines. Wendorf stated that at the moment there is simply not enough information to make a recommendation. We need to know what type of gathering numbers we can use, physical distancing, disinfecting, as well as registration requirements to name a few. Wendorf said the timing is not very good due to the fact that people are asking what our plans are, but without concrete details to use it is important to wait until we have clarity. Discussion was held and it was decided to revisit recreational programs at the Park and Recreation Commission meeting on June 3, 2020.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 3, 2020 at 4:15 p.m. at the Merrill City Hall.

***Motion by Artac, seconded by Vanlieshout to adjourn at 5:00 p.m.

***Carried unanimously.

Dawn Smith
Recording Secretary