

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

September 2, 2020

The Merrill Parks and Recreation Commission met on Wednesday, September 2, 2020 at 4:15 p.m. at the Merrill City Hall.

Members Present: Dan Novitch, Kyle Gulke, Jean Ravn, Joan Tabor, Brian Artac, Amanda Groth and John Van Lieshout joined the meeting at 4:25 p.m.

Members Excused Absent:

Department Staff Present: Dan Wendorf and Dawn Smith

Visitors: City Administrator Dave Johnson, Mark Weix and Draco Fink from MP3 and Steve Sabatke.

***Motion by Artac, seconded by Ravn to approve the minutes from the August meeting.

Novitch stated that he would like the minutes to reflect about him stating that the commission will always welcome comments or suggestions from the City Council.

***Carried unanimously.

***Motion by Ravn, seconded by Artac, to approve the claims from August.

***Carried unanimously.

Public Comment: Steve Sabatke stated that he was at the meeting to start the process for next years budget.

The next item on the agenda was to review and potentially approve 2021 Operating Budget, to include request for lifting hiring freeze to hire one additional park laborer. Wendorf led the commission through each page of the budget. Wendorf stated that he has attached all the information regarding the increase to the Park and Recreation Department operating budget if they would be able to hire a third person. Wendorf stated that this year the Park and Recreation Departments budget was \$865,964 and have only used \$377,644 to date. Wendorf stated that they are \$488,000 under budget. Wendorf stated that with all the new parks, new projects and maintaining what they already have, the Park and Recreation Dept. is struggling to keep up. Wendorf stated they will not be able to take on any new work, the department is stretched to the max. Johnson stated that the good news is there will be no health insurance increase. Johnson also stated that in 2021 another part to the River Bend Trail will be added on to the existing trail, that will have to be maintained. Gulke stated that he was in favor of adding another employee, there is a lot to maintain and having another employee is long overdue. Artac stated he was also in favor of another employee. Johnson stated that even if the City Council approves hiring another park laborer, the Personal and Finance Committee would have to lift the hiring freeze.

***Motion by Van Lieshout, seconded by Artac, to approve the 2021 operating budget, with the request to lift the hiring freeze to hire one additional park laborer in March of 2021.

***Carried unanimously.

The next item on the agenda was COVID-19 updates and discussion. Wendorf stated that they are continuing to work with the LCHD in regards to setting a return to ice plan in place. Wendorf stated that park rentals went good this summer with no problems.

The next item on the agenda was to request to remove dilapidated tennis courts and fencing at current skate park area. Wendorf stated that they would like to remove the old tennis courts by the skate park. Wendorf stated they are beyond repair and would like to turn that space into green space. The commission agreed that the area should be cleaned up.

The next item on the agenda was monthly reports. Wendorf asked if anyone had any questions. Wendorf stated that the River Rat is up and the windows are the only thing that has to be put up yet. Wendorf stated that they will probably end up closing the steps by Lion's Park over the winter months. The future of the steps is undecided at this point. Wendorf said he met on site with City Engineer and the Street Superintendent to review options. Wendorf felt the best option would be to remove upper and lower areas and railings and block it off to limit liabilities and no longer maintain them.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 7, 2020 at 4:15 p.m. at the Merrill City Hall.

Public Comment: Kyle Gulke was wondering what ever happened to sign at Lion's Park where it changed with the seasons. Gulke stated that someone brought that to his attention and he thought that would be kind of neat to have back at the park. Mark Weix stated that he would like to see the pole replace on the back stop at Streeter Square.

***Motion by Ravn, seconded by Van Lieshout to adjourn at 5:20 p.m.

***Carried unanimously.

Dawn Smith
Recording Secretary