

**PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES**

MONDAY, AUGUST 24, 2020

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair McDowall-Seyko called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Committee Members present: Scott Marotz, Denise McDowall-Seyko, Doug Peterson, Laura Talvitie, and Scott Zettervall. Committee Members absent: Shane Fisher.

Also present: Recreation and Communication Coordinator Corrie Scott, and Streets and Parks Superintendent Nick Abel.

3. ADOPT AGENDA

Committee Member Peterson motioned to approve the agenda as presented. Seconded by Committee Member Zettervall, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Committee Member Zettervall motioned to accept the June 22, 2020 Parks Advisory Committee minutes as presented. Seconded by Committee Member Marotz, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

5. BUSINESS

5A. PAC INTERVIEWS

Scott stated that a total of two submittals were received by the deadline from Scott Creighton and Jack Merwin for the current vacant seat on the Parks Advisory Committee. The Parks Advisory Committee asked each candidate to explain their interest in the current vacancy.

Zettervall asked about the Bylaws and what is stated regarding termination due to absences from meetings. Scott stated that the Committee is able to recommend termination of a Member due to absences, but there isn't a specific number of absences stated in the Bylaws. Peterson stated that it might be best to recommend termination rather than waiting for a formal resignation in the case that the process of accepting resignation takes longer than accepting a termination.

Committee Member Peterson motioned to recommend to Council the termination of Shane Fisher from the Parks Advisory Committee with the ability to reapply for future vacancies. Seconded by Committee Member Talvitie, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

Committee Member Talvitie motioned to recommend to Council the appointment of Jack Merwin to the current vacancy on the Parks Advisory Committee and to recommend to Council that Scott Creighton be appointed to Shane Fisher's current seat contingent on Council approval of his resignation or termination. Seconded by Commissioner Zettervall, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

5B. BROM PARK DISCUSSION

McDowall reviewed that residents in the neighborhood near Brom have come forward with hopes to create a park near Brom Lane, but that staff has concerns that the currently owned City parcels are not feasible for a park structure due to flooding. Zettervall stated that there is land near Brom Lane that could potentially be purchased by the City for a future park, but that staff prefers to negotiate with current land owners prior to a formal discussion at a Parks meeting on which land they prefer for a future park. McDowall stated that residents commented on how traffic at the corner of Brom and Tarrytown is dangerous for children and they preferred a different parcel farther from Tarrytown. Residents stated that they prefer having the current City owned land continue to be natural wetland and that a small park for young children be put in on another parcel in the area.

McDowall asked about costs of land in the Brom Lane area for potential purchase. Zettervall stated that he consulted staff and although there aren't official quotes, it is likely that it would cost around \$30,000 for land in that area for a playground. Zettervall stated that he will keep the Parks Committee updated as he learns more from staff about potential purchase of land for parks near Brom Lane.

5C. FAIRY HOUSES DISCUSSION

Scott reviewed that residents have been creating 'fairy houses' and placing them in local parks; mainly McDowall Trail. In April, the City made a Facebook post encouraging that these 'fairy houses' be made with natural items to avoid hurting wildlife and the environment. In the early summer months, pictures of vandalized 'fairy houses' were posted on the Big Lake Forum Facebook group. This poses a risk for Public Works staff that uses equipment to mow the grass and maintain the trails and parks. Staff would like the Parks Committee to discuss ways to encourage eco-friendlier 'fairy houses' and potentially a week or two 'event' in the summer where residents can show off their creations and then remove them for maintenance and to avoid more vandalism on the trails. Staff is asking the Committee to discuss the potential for hosting a Fairy Houses event annually on McDowall Trail.

Marotz commented that this could be a possibility to get Spud Fest or another non-profit group involved. He stated that there could be a judging ceremony where eco-friendly fairy houses are given priority for winning. Marotz stated that we could designate a small portion of the trail to keep the houses condensed to a certain area of the trail to simplify the judging process. Zetervall stated that the Parks Committee would make great judges for this type of event. Zetervall stated that Halloween or Spud Fest would be great times of year to host this style of event. Abel recommended setting a timeline for picking up fairy houses at the end of the fall season in 2020 and including an update for a fairy house event for the year 2021. Zetervall asked when Public Works would like the fairy houses picked up. Abel stated that pickup for fairy houses from this year would be best by November 1st at the latest. Marotz mentioned that there should be a prize for the winners, i.e. tokens to the farmers market, gift certificates from local businesses, wristbands to Spud Fest, etc... Scott stated she would bring more in depth options and marketing materials to the next Parks Meeting for a final decision.

5D. RECREATION AND COMMUNICATION UPDATE

Scott reviewed the following:

1. **Summer Programming**
 - a. **Farmers Market:** The summer market takes place every Wednesday from 3-7pm from June-August and 3-6pm in September at Lakeside Park. There are 22 vendors on average each week and staff has noticed a spike in attendees this year. Staff is looking into the feasibility of hosting an indoor winter market with current COVID-19 restrictions.
 - b. **Backyard & Beyond:** Sherburne County 4-H and the City of Big Lake hosted two day camps this summer. They went well, even with COVID-19 guidelines. Staff will work with Sherburne County 4-H to put together plans for more day camps in 2021.
 - c. **Movie in the Park:** Staff is working on making this a drive in style event without any activities beforehand. Information will come out by early September on how the event will take place.
2. **Park Maintenance Survey:** Staff is asking the Parks Committee to keep an eye on the existing parks in Big Lake and make a list of updates that should be considered for 2021. Examples include updated sidewalks, deteriorating park equipment, etc... Later in the summer or fall the Parks Committee will have a discussion on what parks should be considered priority for repairs and upgrades.
3. **Freedom Rock:** The Freedom Rock committee received approval from Council to move the Freedom Rock to a location farther from Highway 10 because it was considered too loud of an area. They are moving the Freedom Rock to the area under the trees off of Lakeshore Drive at Lakeside Park. They are having a rock setting event on September 19, 2020.
4. **Skate Park:** Streets and Parks Superintendent Nick Abel closed the skate park temporarily after finding a massive amount of inappropriate graffiti, garbage, and other vandalism. This has become an increasingly bigger problem compared to previous years.

Zettervall stated that an option for the winter farmers market is the Windstream building as they have a large, open courtyard area that is heated and used to be used for community events. Scott stated that she will look into this option.

Abel stated that the skate park has been closed temporarily in prior years due to past vandalism. McDowall asked about the age ranges that use the skate park. Abel stated that it is mainly high school students that don't have the ability to drive. Abel stated that there is an excess of garbage and graffiti being found at the skate park this year. McDowall asked if there are youth that would be interested in coming up with a plan to help keep the skate park open. Abel commented that the purpose of shutting down the skate park is to help the individuals using the park realize they need to take care of it. He doesn't want to close the park permanently, but is looking for ways to reduce vandalism as it is becoming more expensive and time consuming to clean up. Peterson stated that he notices there are many people that use the skate park, but that the spectators of the facility tend to be those that vandalize and litter. Peterson stated that there is a similar problem happening at the basketball courts located at Lakeside Park. McDowall asked if the issue has gotten worse without a park attendant. Abel stated that the park attendant generally was working a booth that isn't near the skate park or basketball court, so they wouldn't be able to view any issues that arise in those portions of the park unless notified by another park goer.

Talvitie commented that this year she has noticed an increase in garbage and foul language from park goers compared to other years. Abel agreed with Talvitie's statement and stated that this likely is because of recent changes in society due to COVID-19. Peterson stated that he has seen the basketball area, that used to be a problem area in the park, become cleaner and less of an issue. He commented that hopefully shutting the skate park down temporarily will help this area as well.

6. OTHER

Peterson stated that the Code Revision Task Force had their first meeting and that the current code is at over 500 pages and they would like to reduce it to closer to 200 pages.

Zettervall stated that earlier in the year there was an ATV run and it was viewed as a great success. He stated that there is another event taking place at Lakeside Park on September 26, 2020. Marotz asked if the allowance of ATVs on City streets has helped to cut down ATV usage on trails. Abel stated that Public Works hasn't noticed a significant decrease. Marotz stated that there is a trail near his home that he has noticed a reduction in ATV usage recently which he prefers so that there is less deterioration of trails.

7. ADJOURN

Committee Member Zettervall motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:32 p.m. Seconded by Committee Member Peterson, unanimous ayes, meeting adjourned.