

**PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES**

MONDAY SEPTEMBER 27, 2021

1. CALL TO ORDER

Vice-Chair Talvitie called the meeting to order at 6:36 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Committee Members present: Scott Creighton, Ken Halverson, Scott Marotz, Jack Merwin, and Laura Talvitie. Committee Members absent: Doug Peterson and Kristi DeCamillis.

Also present: Recreation and Communication Coordinator Corrie Scott, and Streets, Parks, and Fleet Superintendent Norm Michels.

3. ADOPT AGENDA

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

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Committee Member Marotz motioned to accept the June 28, 2021 Parks Advisory Committee minutes as presented. Seconded by Committee Member Creighton, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

5. BUSINESS

5A. POWELL PARK RECONSTRUCTION DISCUSSION

Michels reviewed that staff is recommending to Council that Powell Park playground be removed and reconstructed due to rust concerns and being in overall poor condition. Three total playground designs were provided from St. Croix Recreation and Midwest Playscapes upon request from staff. A replacement park would include new amenities, meet ADA requirements, have a portable toilet pad and have one or two picnic table pads. Staff is asking for the Parks Advisory committee to review and include input on the designs.

Talvitie stated that the designs seem large for the area. Michels stated that the dimensions will fit within Powell Park, but that the St. Croix option removes an existing tree and the Midwest Playscapes option keeps the tree. Halverson stated that he would like to see a design that is ADA compliant. Marotz stated that he prefers the option where the sidewalk

goes all the way around the park equipment. Halverson stated that he doesn't like the sit down zip line because it is a hazard for kids to get stuck. Michels stated that he doesn't like the sit down zip line because he can see the wrong age group using and breaking it.

Halverson asked if the park designs utilize wood chips. Michels confirmed that they are all proposing to use wood chips. Halverson asked if woodchip replacement could be an issue. Michels stated that there are some costs involved but that Public Works staff no longer has to replace it as there is an outside vendor that will contract that task. Halverson asked if there are other options that don't need as much maintenance as wood chips. Michels stated that there are other rubber options, but that they are exponentially more expensive than wood chips. Marotz recommended using the rubber flooring option at Brom Park instead as it is much smaller of a space and wouldn't cost nearly as much as it would for Powell Park.

Halverson asked about the timeline of installing the park. Michels stated that due to supplier backups, the earliest that Powell Park could be installed is summer 2022. Talvitie asked if the damage done at Sanford Select Acres is ongoing. Michels stated that the damage done to Sanford Select Acres Park was only a one-time occurrence. Talvitie stated that she likes the zip line feature because it appeals to a wider age group. Marotz recommended using a portion of Park Dedication Funds toward the replacement of Powell Park and a portion of funds from the General Fund. Scott stated that the only funds that the Finance Director has set aside for park creation is about \$35,000 in a CIP Fund. Halverson stated that he would rather see the Park Dedication Fund used for the creation of new parks rather than the replacement of equipment on an existing park. Marotz asked if it is possible to fund the replacement of Powell Park with the Park Dedication Fund and ask Council to replace that funding in the future. Scott stated that she is unsure if this is an option, and that the Parks Committee would have to consult the Finance Director.

Marotz stated that although he doesn't have an issue with fully funding the replacement of Powell Park with Park Dedication Funds, he does feel that it sets a precedent for the replacement of other parks. He stated that this use isn't sustainable with the amount of parks in Big Lake that are going to need equipment replacements in the near future versus the amount of development bringing in funding to the Park Dedication Fund. Creighton agreed that Council should start setting aside money in the General Fund to go toward the replacement of parks. Scott stated that each year about \$5,000 is being put into a CIP Fund for this purpose. Halverson stated that this needs to be increased significantly to match the need of park replacement in the City. Marotz stated that in the past this hasn't been an issue because most of the City's parks were newly created, but that the majority of parks in Big Lake now need replacement and there needs to be a larger conversation with City Council on how to fund these projects in the future.

Creighton asked how much money is budgeted for general park maintenance. He asked if the Parks Committee can recommend an amount to be allocated each year for the maintenance of existing parks. Scott clarified that there is an amount budgeted for general maintenance of parks each year, however, the replacement of park equipment is not

considered maintenance. Halverson stated that there are unallocated CIP funds that could potentially go toward the replacement of Powell Park. Michels stated that there was originally \$80,000 from the Park Dedication Fund budgeted toward the replacement of Powell Park. Talvitie recommended that the Parks Committee recommend that Council use the originally budgeted \$80,000 from the Park Dedication Fund and the remainder of the cost to replace Powell Park from CIP funds.

Michels stated that when a park is fully replaced, it needs to be ADA compliant. He stated that the parks needing replacement in the future will not necessarily always need to be fully replaced, and in that case they do not need to be ADA compliant and they also wouldn't qualify to be funded through the Park Dedication Fund. Marotz stated that regardless of whether Powell is fully funded through the Park Dedication Fund that he would like to ensure Council has a conversation about how to fund the replacement of existing parks that is sustainable. Halverson stated that he is worried if Council uses full funding from Park Dedication Fund for Powell that it will make it difficult to ever get them to agree to use other funding sources in the future. Martoz agreed, but expressed concern that if they do not allow Powell to be fully funded by Park Dedication Funds now that it will postpone the project, which is already overdue.

Committee Member Marotz motioned to recommend that City Council approve installation of Option 1 by Midwest Playscapes with total cost not to exceed \$120,000 at Powell Park with \$80,000 funding coming from the Park Dedication Fund and the remainder coming from other funding sources deemed appropriate by Council with the expectation that staff and Council find a better funding mechanism to replace existing park structures in the future. Seconded by Committee Member Merwin, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

Michels stated that he is planning to go through the Park Improvement Budget and update it to reflect more accurate costs per park. He noted that not all parks will need full replacement like Powell Park and in that case the funding is not able to come from the Park Dedication Fund and they do not have requirements from the state to be ADA compliant. Halverson asked if there are any grant opportunities regarding ADA compliance that could help offset the cost of full park replacement. Michels stated that he hasn't done any research on grants at this point, but that there are likely grant opportunities out there.

5B. STAFF UPDATES

Scott reviewed the status of various programs and recreation taking place in the community's parks.

6. COMMITTEE MEMBERS' REPORTS – None.

7. OTHER

Halverson asked when Powell Park will be going to Council for Workshop. Michels stated that he hopes to bring it to one of the October Workshops for Council approval. He stated

that he plans to make Powell Park a priority and once the plan has been set in place, he will start to put more work into Brom Park. He stated that Powell Park is projected to be created in 2022 and that Brom is more likely to be constructed in 2023 depending on what type of equipment is approved for installation. Talvitie expressed concern about the creation of new parks without a plan for sustainable funding for replacement of park equipment. Marotz stated that the area near Brom Park is underserved and that he agrees it is important to wait to put effort into Brom until it can take main focus from staff and the Parks Committee as the goal is to make the park unique.

Scott stated that there are three concept plans that will be brought to Parks Advisory Committee in October. Marotz stated that he anticipates an increase in development in 2022. Creighton stated that he went out and viewed the City's parks and noticed that some of them do not have much for amenities. He recommended that the Parks Committee go out and view all of the City's parks and talk about where there is a need for new amenities including benches, trees, and picnic tables. Marotz stated that generally these types of amenities are funded by other sources than the Park Dedication Fund in an attempt to stretch those dollars. He stated that an option for the City is to look into the Park Dedication fees required from developers.

Michels stated that general maintenance of parks including mowing grass has increased over the years. Marotz stated that people in Big Lake tend to go to parks in the area and use that as a standard when expecting certain amenities for Big Lake's parks. Talvitie stated that some of the larger parks in the region have a cost involved. Halverson stated that most city-owned parks do not require a fee. Marotz stated that some of these parks are county-owned, but there are parks as close as Princeton that do charge a fee to use certain amenities including concessions, rentals, or use of a splash pad. Talvitie stated that the Committee needs to be careful of getting into the mindset of what Big Lake doesn't have compared to other communities because traffic of some of those communities is different. Marotz agreed, but stated that many prospective and current residents choose to live in a community due to aesthetics and amenities and those things require investment.

8. ADJOURN

Committee Member Marotz motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:58 p.m. Seconded by Committee Member Merwin, unanimous ayes, meeting adjourned.