

BRAINERD PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT
Special Park Board Meeting
May 12, 2020 at 4:00 p.m.
WebEx Teleconference Meeting
Toll-free 844-992-4726 Access Code – 960 055 125

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, the special meeting of the
Parks and Recreation Board was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Board President Schaefer.

Upon roll call, the following members were noted as present: Boeder, Parks, Rushmeyer, Yeager and Schaefer. Director Sailer, City Administrator Bergman and Mayor Badeaux were also noted as present.

ADDITIONS TO AGENDA

See New Business items "D", "E" and "F".

OLD BUSINESS

A. Gregory Park Tennis Courts

Staff requests the Park Board to consider extending the Gregory Park tennis courts closure beyond May 12 due to evolving social distancing directives from the governor. MRPA member communities reported that some have tennis nets up, others not, and some took nets down due to facility users not following social distancing guidelines. The USTA continues to recommend not to play tennis due to the pandemic. Following discussion, Mr. Parks made a motion to keep the tennis courts closed until May 27 and the Board can discuss it again at the May 26 meeting. Mr. Boeder seconded. Upon roll call, members Boeder, Parks, Rushmeyer, Yeager and Schaefer voted "aye". No member voted "nay". The Chair declared the motion carried. Staff was asked to update any COVID-19 signage at the parks to say "closed until further notice" rather than post a specific date.

Memorial Park Project

Requests for Proposals for the design phase of the Memorial Park project were mailed to five area firms on May 4. The deadline to submit RFPs is 4:30 p.m. on Friday, May 29, and they will be opened at 8:30 a.m. on June 1. Mr. Sailer would like Mr. Yeager to review the RFPs with him to make sure the scope of work is comparable between the bids and asked how to get copies of all the RFPs to board members for review. Mr. Yeager agreed to review the RFPs with the director, and Mayor Badeaux recommended requesting RFPs in digital format to be able to e-mail them to board members. Staff is requesting a special Park Board meeting on June 2 to select a vendor.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Farmer's Market

Staff has been asked to take over coordination of the downtown Farmer's Market that was handled by Administration staff in the past. A new location is being sought to comply with social distancing protocols. Staff's recommendation is to allow the recreation coordinator and intern to coordinate the Farmer's Market unless the governor rescinds the directive regarding team sports. Parks staff would not be available if the summer sports season begins. Mr. Rushmeyer made a motion to allow staff to coordinate the Farmer's Market. Mr. Boeder seconded. Discussion followed. Ms. Schaefer expressed concern about focus being taken away from our parks and activities. She doesn't see how this falls under the Parks Department. Mr. Sailer said it would be an instance of one department helping another and the bulk of it would fall on the intern. Mr. Rushmeyer rescinded his motion. Mayor Badeaux added that the City Administrator has asked many organizations if they would take it over and no one has expressed an interest. He feels it is a tough task to take on and understands the Board's hesitation in doing so. Mr. Rushmeyer made a motion that the Parks Department does not take on organizing and running the Farmer's Market. Mr. Boeder seconded. Upon roll call, members Boeder, Parks, Rushmeyer, Yeager and Schaefer voted "aye". No member voted "nay". The Chair declared the motion carried.

B. Ash Management Grant

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources received an ash management grant from the USDA Forest Service in the amount of \$30,395. The DNR would like the funds to be used primarily in the City of Brainerd with a focus on an Emerald Ash Borer management plan. The matching grant of \$10,132 from the City will be waived. More details including a tentative timeline was provided with meeting materials. If the Park Board approves accepting the grant, a contract would be signed with the DNR and the department would seek bids to hire a firm that would do the bulk of the work. The department would pay the bills when received and be reimbursed by the DNR. As a result of this project, Brainerd will obtain a current inventory of public trees and establish an EAB management plan. Remaining funds would be used to slow the spread of EAB and other exotic tree pests and diseases in areas of the highest need, whether through removal of unhealthy trees and replacement with a more diverse mixture of species, treatment of healthy ash with a pesticide, or tree planting for building canopy diversity and resilience. Staff is asking the Park Board to accept this grant. If accepted, City Tree Inspector Katie Kaufman would oversee the project. Discussion followed. Concerns from board members included reimbursement turn-around time, if the cost were to exceed the grant money, and possible side effects and the environmental impact from the chemical treatment. Mr. Sailer said the contract will likely be more detailed and must be finalized by May 29. The Board directed him to request answers to those questions and report back at the May 26 meeting when they will vote on the grant award.

C. Park Evaluations

Mr. Yeager compiled a summary of the first round of park evaluations that included Triangle, Kiwanis, Buster and Gregory parks. He noted there were very differing opinions on what a park should or shouldn't be and appreciates everyone's time and energy. He stressed that the evaluations are not intended to be critical, but he is disappointed in what we put out there to the public. He feels that we can do much better in virtually all aspects. Mr. Boeder stated the budget just isn't there to do everything on the evaluations and make the parks what some people think they should be. Mr. Parks is not as critical, and with a few exceptions he thinks the parks are beautiful. He agrees we want to have the best parks we can have, and cited staffing and budget concerns. Mr. Rushmeyer thinks overall the parks are beautiful. He feels we should focus on any safety issues and agrees with Mr. Yeager that there are a lot of things we can do. He mentioned restrictive funding and thinks the structure of the department may need to be looked at to potentially be doing more with what we have. Ms. Schaefer said these are all valid points and it is good to look at things annually and use the evaluations to make the park system bigger and better.

Mr. Sailer pointed out that he and the maintenance foreman communicate daily to discuss maintenance issues and have an ongoing list of things to take care of. He commented on several items on the evaluations. Safety issues are addressed right away. He evaluates every playground each fall. The mature dead trees could not be removed last fall because the Street Department was unable to assist and we don't have the necessary equipment. Stump grinding is done every 3-4 years. There are six staff for 15 parks. Vandalism often occurs daily and picnic tables are a common target. Re-decking the Lum Park pier was a five-week project. We have staff mowing 40 hours a week. When the dog park was built, a volunteer group planted the landscaping but did not maintain it as promised. He agrees there is room for improvement, and evaluations from fresh eyes are a great tool.

Mr. Yeager asked who creates the maintenance list and could the Park Board be a part of that. Mr. Sailer reiterated that he and the maintenance foreman have a to-do list that can change daily. He offered to type it up and e-mail it to board members. Mayor Badeaux feels the City Council spends a lot of money on the park system, but he has not been comfortable with the budget as presented the past few years. He feels the evaluation process is a step in the right direction and the Board should be looking at the budget earlier in the year so it is "rock solid" when presented to the City Council in September.

Ms. Schaefer feels the maintenance list should be a working document and keep the Park Board in the loop so they know their time is being used wisely. Mr. Sailer said many things on the evaluations are on the list already and it can be updated as items are completed.

D. Baseball Tournaments

Mr. Sailer feels a decision needs to be made on the June baseball tournaments. The first two age groups are only four weeks away. The MYAS is deciding by May 15 for May tournaments, but June dates are currently up to the individual communities. Youth activities are still not allowed per the governor, and according to his "dial" for lifting restrictions, team sports is all the way to the right. If we do hold tournaments, where will teams and families go for meals if restaurants are

closed? The police chief has stated at department head meetings that any gatherings put them in a tough spot regarding the six-foot social distancing guidelines. Even if you follow strict guidelines in dugouts and at the fence line, how do you manage the fan base and keep people from mingling? Mr. Rushmeyer reported that American Legion baseball is cancelled for the summer. Travel coaches are waiting a couple more weeks which still allows teams to cancel reservations. He doesn't see how this is going to happen – Major League Baseball is starting in July with no fans. We are running out of time. Mr. Sailer needs to hire 25 people for tournament weekends. He said it is a difficult decision because the out-of-town teams really look forward to coming to Brainerd for tournaments. Does the Park Board want to wait, cancel all the tournaments, or cancel the first weekend, then the second weekend, then the third? Mr. Yeager said do it like programs, work backwards to arrive at the latest possible date to cancel. Mr. Sailer explained it is a little different because these tournaments must be played in June, but he could cancel each weekend beginning on May 22.

Mr. Yeager made a motion to have Mr. Sailer cancel the June tournaments on May 22, May 29, and June 5, respectively. Mr. Parks seconded. Mr. Rushmeyer said there are obviously going to be restrictions and if the guidelines aren't followed it could be bad. Mr. Sailer said he is concerned that it will be very difficult to control the movement of people and have the extra manpower to sanitize everything. Mr. Parks said from a staff point of view it will be difficult to put tournaments on with the procedures we would need to have. Upon roll call, member Yeager voted "aye" with members Boeder, Parks, Rushmeyer and Schaefer voting "nay". The Chair declared the motion did not pass.

Mr. Sailer suggested May 22 for the decision to cancel all three tournament weekends, and we must follow what the governor says. Mr. Boeder made a motion to cancel the tournaments by May 22. Mr. Parks seconded with the stipulation that even if the governor gave some leeway but there were so many restrictions, to give Mr. Sailer the right to make that decision. Upon roll call, members Boeder, Parks, Rushmeyer, Yeager and Schaefer voted "aye". No member voted "nay". The Chair declared the motion carried.

E. Campground Rates

Mr. Sailer asked the Board if the campground can open but the restrooms and showers are still closed, should we revert to the 2019 rates until the restrooms/showers can be open. Mr. Yeager made a motion to leave rates the same. Mr. Boeder seconded. Upon roll call, members Boeder, Parks, Rushmeyer, Yeager and Schaefer voted "aye". No member voted "nay". The Chair declared the motion carried.

F. Potential Retirement-Tony Sailer

Mr. Yeager requested this agenda item be added after Mr. Sailer's potential retirement was mentioned in an email from the recreation coordinator to the Park Board President. He asked if Mr. Sailer could narrow down a time frame to the best of his ability with budget planning coming up, to let the Board know sooner versus later if/when he plans to retire. Mr. Sailer responded that he has not set a date to retire but will give the Board the earliest notification possible to give them time to fill the position.

Mr. Rushmeyer would like the Board to consider the structure of the Parks and Recreation Department. Following the first round of park evaluations, he is questioning trying to maintain parks and run youth programs at the same time, thinking that it is stretching the system we have in place. He feels the system is outdated, not blaming anyone, but should be looked at. He asked if this is the best model for our Parks Department and community.

Mr. Sailer stated that we are rare in that our department runs adult softball, youth baseball and other youth activities. He reminded the Board that when he was hired as director, his position of Recreation Specialist wasn't filled and maybe the Board would want to look at filling that position.

Mr. Yeager reported that he has reached out to other park system facilitators and directors from five similarly sized cities and has been meeting with those people to put together a report about how they do everything. He feels the Board should have the right information to make these decisions and it is a good thing to do with budget planning, the new park and what their dynamic looks like.

Mr. Parks reminded board members that Brainerd is a charter city with our structure set up by the charter. There may be things the Board can and cannot do per the charter. Mayor Badeaux called on Ms. Bergman for comment. The City Administrator stated the City has budgeted \$10,000 for 2020 to look at the charter. Mr. Badeaux believes it is up to the Board how to structure the department.

Mr. Rushmeyer said with the upcoming Memorial Park project we need to make sure we are able to maintain the parks we have.

Ms. Kaufman introduced the summer intern, Joe Pfeiffer, via voice conference from the Lum Park office. Mr. Pfeiffer greeted the Board and made a brief statement.

PUBLIC FORUM

There was no public forum.

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, May 26, 2020, at 4:00 p.m. WebEx teleconference meeting information will be posted.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made at 6:00 p.m. by Mr. Rushmeyer and seconded by Mr. Boeder. Upon roll call, members Boeder, Rushmeyer, Parks, Yeager and Schaefer voted "aye". No member voted "nay". The Chair declared the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Finch, Administrative Specialist