

BRAINERD PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT
Regular Park Board Meeting
May 26, 2020 at 4:00 p.m.
WebEx Teleconference Meeting
Toll-Free Number 844-992-4726 Access Code 964 673 275

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, the regular 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.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A. Additions: Items "D", "E", "F" and "G" under New Business

Motion to approve the amended agenda made by Yeager and seconded by Parks. Upon roll call, members Boeder, Parks, Rushmeyer, Yeager and Schaefer voted "aye". No member voted "nay". The Chair declared the agenda approved.

**MOVED AND SECONDED BY RUSHMEYER AND BOEDER,
DULY CARRIED TO APPROVE CONSENT CALENDAR AS PRESENTED**

A. Approval of Minutes

1. Regular Meeting Held on April 28, 2020
2. Special Meeting Held on May 12, 2020

B. Approval of the disbursements for the month of May 2020

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Tennis Courts Re-Opening

At the May 12 special meeting, the Park Board extended the closure of the Gregory Park tennis courts until May 27. Mr. Sailer reported the League of Minnesota Cities advises signage stating tennis courts are not sanitized and play at your own risk, and the USTA has relaxed its recommendation to limiting use to every other court. He offered three options for board members to consider: 1) keep the courts closed, 2) open all courts, and 3) open three courts (one on the north courts, and two on the south courts with the middle court not used). If the Board votes to open courts and people are observed not practicing social distancing or the facility becomes overcrowded, the Board can re-visit its decision. Mr. Rushmeyer made a motion to open three courts. He doesn't see the tennis courts as a gathering place. Mr. Yeager would like to discuss opening all courts, citing to be careful about trying to control people's behavior and to put up the correct signage to let them know the risks. After further discussion, Mr. Rushmeyer amended his motion to open all tennis courts and post cautionary signage at the entrances. 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. State Qualifier Tournaments

At the May 12 special meeting, the Park Board approved cancelling all June youth baseball state qualifier tournaments by May 22 if youth sports were still restricted and COVID-19 sanitizing and social distancing guidelines could not be met. Mr. Sailer reported that as of June 1, restrictions were eased somewhat to allow practices for 10 or fewer players, but dates have not yet been established for the second and third phases that would allow games and then tournaments. Due to ongoing COVID-19 restrictions, the June tournaments have been cancelled and coaches have been notified that refunds will be issued.

C. Ash Management Grant – Follow-up

Mr. Sailer provided detailed answers from the DNR grant representative to questions that were asked at the May 12 special board meeting. Staff recommends accepting the grant offer. The DNR needs to know by May 29 if the Park Board will accept the Ash Management Grant offer. If accepted, the DNR will write a contract which will be reviewed

by the Park Board prior to final acceptance. Mr. Parks made a motion to accept the Ash Management Grant offer with a three-month return on reimbursements included in the contract. Mr. Boeder seconded. Discussion followed. Upon roll call, members Boeder, Parks, Rushmeyer, Yeager and Schaefer voted "aye". No member voted "nay". The Chair declared the motion carried.

D. Park Evaluations

Mr. Sailer apologized for not forwarding the second round of park evaluations for Memorial, Lum and Gustafson parks until right before the meeting. Park evaluations from individual board members are being submitted to Vice Chairman Kevin Yeager for tabulation, are considered public information by state statute and must be turned in to the office for public review if requested. President Kara Schaefer said she would get those to Mr. Sailer and asked if she could white out the names of board members. Mr. Sailer said he didn't care about seeing names, and he reiterated it is a positive thing to have Park Board members evaluate the parks. Mr. Rushmeyer said his name can be revealed on his evaluations; he looks at it as doing his duty as a board member and would be more than happy to expand on his observations if staff requests it. Mr. Boeder said he is obviously a bigger fan of our parks than some making these judgments; that some of the parks he sees are fantastic and some need work and you can only make so many people happy with the amount of staff that we have and the hours it takes to finish things in a day. Mr. Rushmeyer stated that none of this is a judgment; it is an objective look at what we see in parks and maintenance. For him this re-emphasizes there is more that gets maintained versus not maintained; he doesn't think it's about not working hard or doing a good job; he thinks it's the structure we are using within the Parks Department that is set up to fail. Ms. Schaefer sees it as more of a list of ideas for a five-year plan. She asked if anyone had anything specific to discuss at this time. Mr. Parks would like to wait until they have a chance to review all the evaluations, and he feels they need staff input on prioritization of tasks. He would like to see a special meeting in June or July to go through all evaluations. Mayor Badeaux suggested this would be a perfect time and opportunity to combine with budget planning, so that the budget is based on what they are seeing from the evaluations. Mr. Yeager concurred. He feels this is an initiative of the Board to look at a long-term strategy that is tied to budgeting. He referred to the City's Comprehensive Plan that gives a high priority to a long-term plan for maintenance of parks and open spaces. He stated that just having a list of maintenance items is clearly not getting it done and it is a bigger conversation than just having a list and hoping that it gets done. Ms. Schaefer said the Board will have a special meeting related to park evaluations and budget planning. She said there are some awesome things they are finding and a lot of similarities. She thinks it is super awesome to see everyone out there in the parks, digging in, trying to help Mr. Sailer and his team make the parks better. She thanked everyone for that and reminded them the last group of park evaluations are due June 5.

E. Maintenance Projects

Mr. Sailer provided lists of maintenance projects completed through May 21 and maintenance work orders that are on the schedule for this summer. Mr. Yeager requested this information at the May 12 special meeting. Removal of dead and diseased trees and stump grinding throughout the park system are high priority items. The department will need the Street Department's heavy equipment for removing larger trees. Staff is also looking at the park evaluations and identifying common denominators to add to this list. Mr. Sailer noted that each year a contractor is hired to weed and feed park areas with a focus on ball fields. With roughly 180-200 acres of park land that is mowed, these areas are done on a rotating basis as the budget allows.

Ms. Schaefer asked when a new playground at Lum Park was approved. Mr. Sailer reported that the old swing sets had to be removed because they were very old, had broken parts and were dangerous. The Park Board approved a new swing set in the 2020 capital improvement plan at budget planning. Staff relocated the new swings to be closer to the other playground equipment. Mr. Rushmeyer asked if the new sand for the beach was also something that was approved at budget planning. Mr. Sailer explained that every couple of years we have the Street Department bring in sand for the Lum Park beach from the City pit at no cost to us. Maintenance staff also cleaned up the retention pond area coming off the parking lot and used sod cut from the new swing set area to fill it in. They leveled and extended the beach area further toward the pier to create an access point for staff to get a tiller in there to periodically

fluff up the sand. The DNR shoreline restoration area was left as is. Ms. Schaefer asked where the social distancing sign at the new pier came from; Mr. Sailer stated it was from the DNR.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Staff, Facilities, Programs, Completed Projects

Staff provided an overview of department staff, parks, facilities, daily maintenance and programs. With the Park Board looking at cities that have similarly sized parks departments for the potential restructuring of the department, Mr. Sailer wanted board members to have a snapshot of our facilities and programs that may help with that discussion. A list of park facility improvements over the past 8-9 years was also distributed. Mr. Sailer thanked the City Council for funding many projects and for recognizing there were issues with many of the park buildings that were old and decrepit and needed replacing. He commented that there have been a lot of improvements to the park system, adding that when he and the maintenance foreman took over their positions they basically inherited a mess that they have been pecking away at. He acknowledged there is still a big list of things that need to be done, but they are working on it. There was no discussion.

B. Concerts in the Park

The Center director DeAnn Barry is asking if they will be able to have Concerts in the Park this year. She is preparing to write a grant to help fund the program that needs to be sent in soon. The governor's Executive Order prohibits public gatherings of more than 10 people and specifically notes concerts. Mr. Sailer looked at some information from the CDC that determined a concert is 250 or more. He feels there is some conflicting information out there, and noted that concert goers at Gregory Park bring their own chairs or blankets so there is some built-in social distancing. Mr. Parks indicated that Ms. Barry will do whatever is necessary to promote social distancing at the concerts. He made a motion to move ahead to allow Concerts in the Park. Mr. Rushmeyer asked what would happen if Ms. Barry applied for and received the grant, and then couldn't have the concerts. He suggested that she have a discussion with the grant people about the special circumstances this year. He doesn't see how we can move forward with the executive order in place. Ms. Schaefer was concerned about seniors who are at the highest risk in the community attending. Mr. Parks said there are also families that attend. Mr. Boeder feels the Board's hands are tied as long as the governor's order is in place, but he would like to see things open up. Mayor Badeaux brought up an online photo of a city park in San Francisco that painted circles on the park grass to promote social distancing. Ms. Schaefer suggested this might be an option for the concerts. Mr. Rushmeyer asked how could we allow this for one group and not others? He mentioned the Board's discussions about whether or not to open tennis courts, and now we are talking about opening a concert area and trusting everyone to practice social distancing. He also asked about the restrooms and if they would be accessible. At this point he didn't think the guidelines would allow that. Mr. Sailer stated the only way the restrooms could be open is if there were staff there to constantly sanitize them; same with any portable toilets. Ms. Barry would have to make it known the restrooms would not be open. Ms. Schaefer said Ms. Barry should find out what would happen if she didn't use the grant money by a certain date, and she needs to be informed the restrooms won't be open. Mr. Parks said to bring this to Ms. Barry and wait until the June 2 special meeting to vote. Ms. Bergman said bars and restaurants need to submit a plan to City Council about how to re-open, and suggested the Board ask The Center about how they are going to address restrooms and social distancing. Mr. Sailer will reach out to Ms. Barry. Mr. Parks rescinded his motion and the item was tabled to June 2.

C. Re-Opening Campground

Mr. Sailer reported that Governor Walz has given RV campgrounds the green light to re-open on June 1. Campers will be notified that RV units must be self-contained, as the restroom/shower building will remain closed until further notice. Ms. Schaefer and Mr. Yeager both commented on the appearance of the campground host's site. They would like to see some maintenance and improvement at the site, expressing concern about visitors' first impression of our property. Mr. Sailer said the host is dealing with a medical condition right now, but he will follow up with her. Maintenance staff currently only mows around her site.

D. Structure of Department

Mr. Rushmeyer stated he is not pointing any fingers or saying that anyone is not doing their jobs, but after doing park evaluations he is more convinced than ever that it is not the staff or the people working; it's the system or the structure

we are operating out of. Trying to run youth and community programs and maintain the parks – it comes down to a budget issue. He feels if we move away from youth programs we will have more time to maintain. We are struggling to maintain what we have and now adding more facilities to be maintained. If the Parks Department could focus on the parks instead of hiring people to run programs, we could hire more people to maintain the parks. Mr. Sailer said that most departments he talks to at conventions have associations that run the programs and the departments maintain facilities. He suggested forming a small committee to bring ideas to the Board. Mr. Boeder asked if we can change because of the City Charter and the rules that are in place. Ms. Bergman read from the charter which gives the Park Board options for the structure of the department and the hiring done by the department. Mayor Badeaux suggested bringing the HR Director into the conversation where employees are concerned and Ms. Bergman concurred. Union agreements must also be considered. Ms. Bergman went back to Mr. Sailer's idea of a sub-committee that could really dig into this. Mr. Yeager said he would basically like to echo what Mr. Rushmeyer said. He reported that most of the municipalities he talked to are stacked way heavier on the maintenance side and he is working at putting this information together for the Park Board. He stated that he personally is not a fan of the sub-committee just because he thinks every single person that is on this team has a valid voice and has proven to be engaged in this so far. He wants to stick with that as much as possible as they are working through the structure conversation. He said he is just one part of this team but feels there are some things that can definitely be done differently and he is anxious to hear other people's comments as well.

E. YMCA Sports

Ms. Schaefer asked to present the YMCA sports item next as it ties in with the restructuring topic. YMCA Director Shane Riffle contacted her about meeting with Mr. Sailer, herself, and Recreation Coordinator Katie Kaufman to talk about taking over or partnering on youth sports. She did not have a lot of details as far as what Mr. Riffle has in mind and asked if it would be okay to set up a meeting with him to get more information to bring back to the Board. If two Park Board members attend it is not considered a quorum. Mr. Yeager will also attend.

Returning to the discussion of department restructuring, Mr. Parks pointed out that what they just formed was a sub-committee. He is a fan of sub-committees and feels that Mr. Yeager and Mr. Rushmeyer have insights that are beneficial to him because it has been awhile since he was involved with youth programs. He would like to see a sub-committee put together for the structure of the department.

Mr. Rushmeyer responded that they aren't that big of a board, just five members, and he likes input from Mr. Sailer, Mr. Badeaux and Ms. Bergman. He feels this is a huge thing they are talking about. He knows that Community Education has expressed a willingness to take on any of our programs that they currently already have. With programs not being run due to COVID-19, he thinks it is a perfect time to really look hard at the structure of our department and what this can look like in the future for our community. Rather than a sub-committee, because he values everyone's opinions and input on the things they might be talking about, he asked if they could set up to have each of them look into a topic before their next meeting and come back with more information.

Ms. Schaefer asked if the restructuring could be tabled to the next meeting. Mr. Badeaux asked Ms. Bergman to speak to the HR Director to gather information. He said the more information they have the better, so they can start looking at all the pieces. Mr. Sailer asked Ms. Schaefer if she wanted this tabled to the next regular meeting or the June 9 special meeting. She will follow up with the YMCA director and get back to him.

F. Registration Deposits Received

Mr. Yeager asked if we have any of the public's money for summer programs in our pocket right now that we don't know that they are going to be able to use. Mr. Sailer said there are kids enrolled in programs and we have adult softball deposits. Staff has been in contact with the adult leagues who have a "wait and see" attitude. A few people have called about the youth programs and they know if we do not have programs they will be refunded in full. Mr. Yeager asked Ms. Bergman and Mr. Badeaux if the money we have already taken is spoken for or are we using it for anything. He thinks it would be a nice gesture by the Park Board to refund the money that has been given to us back to these people until we know for sure that they can get a program. Some of these teams get a pretty large amount of money from sponsorships, so he is sure some of these teams are potentially getting heat from the people that sponsor their teams. He would like to just give the money back and keep these teams on a list and if we do decide to kick off a season, call them first and give them their spot first. He asked to open this up for discussion. Mr. Sailer asked if he was mainly talking about adult softball sponsors. Mr. Yeager said he was talking about pretty much everybody. He said it does not sound like we've taken a lot of youth sports money but for sure he knows the big one is adult softball. Mr. Sailer said that Ms. Kaufman has contacted the adult teams informing them they can request sponsor money back at any time, but a lot of teams are still hoping to play. Mr. Badeaux's concern is that maybe the

teams are aware they can get the money refunded but he doesn't know about sponsors necessarily. He said the City is trying to be as helpful as they can with businesses, to open things up as much as possible, prorate liquor licenses, not have parking fees, little things like that. He doesn't want to create a divide between people and their sponsors but it might be a good opportunity to show some businesses a little bit of a reprieve. Mr. Yeager said that's exactly what he was saying, it's not just the people that registered, it's the sponsors, it's the restaurant that supports a softball

team that is no longer in business, can't serve, could probably use that two grand back, he didn't know how much, but that is where he was going with this. Ms. Kaufman explained that staff works with team managers. The team managers are responsible for getting sponsorships for their adult softball teams, so as far as the professionalism and the relationship, it is the team manager that develops this rapport with their sponsors. When she contacts the team managers stating if they would like a refund to please discuss with their sponsors, they have that responsibility. They are the tie between a sponsor and their team. If they don't connect with the sponsors, later down the road they're not going to get sponsors. Regarding banners, they have all been contacted. If we don't have a season this year, we will extend their contract for next year. Mr. Rushmeyer said that's exactly how it should be for adult softball. The team managers are responsible for acquiring donations from sponsors and that has nothing to do with the Parks Department or the director or who is running it. It is the team manager's responsibility. He thinks that's a fair way to do it with the banners to extend it a year. Mr. Badeaux asked Ms. Kaufman if she thinks that is something they are passing on to their sponsors. When she sent out an e-mail informing them of what to expect and what their options were, she listed in there about contacting their sponsors. If she needs to, she can send another e-mail to team managers. Mr. Badeaux asked if any sponsors had contacted her directly. When we first went into quarantine, she said there was one local business that said his livelihood was at stake. She informed him he would have the ability to get a refund at any time, he would just have to communicate this to his team manager so the manager could make sure the team's deposit was still paid. There have been two teams that have requested refunds; everybody else is just hanging in there. Mr. Yeager said he didn't mean to open a can of worms, he was just thinking that we shouldn't be hanging on to anyone's money if we weren't going to use it, that's all he was asking.

G. Picnic Tables

Ms. Schaefer reported that Council President Gabe Johnson had an idea for the Park Board to partner with the City and Brainerd restaurants to rent or use picnic tables from the parks so they could have outdoor seating which starts next week. She talked to Mr. Sailer today to see what kind of extra picnic tables we have. Mr. Sailer said this was discussed at the department head meeting this afternoon, and he also talked with the maintenance foreman about it. He likes the idea of getting these businesses open. He got the impression they are going to open spaces in front of stores or on the street, maybe blocking streets off. He said the picnic tables weight about 150 pounds, they use a skid steer to move them and can put two on a trailer. His question would be what would we charge; would we charge? Is there liability if we are using public benches for private businesses, and what happens if benches get broken? Would we potentially be opening a can of worms if we do this? Where would the tables be placed when not in use? Would these tables be blocking access for the public or people with physical disabilities? These are some questions that need to be answered or addressed. Mr. Yeager said he could streamline this easily. He said these are completely valid points, but he is 100% on board with helping any small business in our town in any capacity we possibly can. He would recommend that businesses bring us a system or an option of how that business can protect the tables and get them back to us. Bring something forward that we can specifically discuss. Mr. Sailer asked Ms. Bergman to report on today's discussion with Community Action. Ms. Bergman said that last Wednesday the governor announced that bars and restaurants could open with outdoor seating only, and asked cities to be creative about helping them be able to open. There are two bars and restaurants with outdoor seating, Shep's and Sage on Laurel, and we have a lot of other bars and restaurants in the City of Brainerd. After the governor's announcement, staff and Community Action got together and tried to figure out a plan to present to the City Council for helping our bars and restaurants open and still protect our residents and community. The City Council will meet May 27 to consider the plan they came up with that asks bars and restaurants to submit a plan to the City, taking into consideration things like noise and light, what part of the City they may be asking to use – is it a parking lot, is it a sidewalk, is it the parking stalls in front of them, is it a parking lot across the street? Mr. Rushmeyer asked if they were looking for the Park Board to approve the use of the picnic tables that are available. He commented that many businesses would have tables and seating they could move outdoors, and maybe picnic tables wouldn't work for some businesses because they are too big and bulky. Mr. Sailer would like to know what happens with the tables when they aren't being used. He said they could take tables from the pavilions at Lum Park and they will certainly help if the Council or Park Board directs them to. Ms. Bergman added that businesses will be required to add the City of Brainerd to their insurance policy, so if something were to happen, we would be held harmless. Ms. Schaefer didn't think Mr. Johnson was looking for the Board to make a motion, he just wanted to know if we would be receptive to the idea. There was no further discussion.

PUBLIC FORUM

Mr. Yeager said Greg Fagereng from Disc Golf had been present but left the meeting. He will come to next week's meeting.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

Ms. Bergman reported on the fire at City Hall. The fire did minimal damage to the roof but the water and smoke damage was considerable. She wanted to share that the City Council allocated \$90,000 to the Economic Development Authority to create a small business relief grant up to \$3,000 for our small businesses that have been closed or had their business impacted as a result of the COVID-19 virus. Grant applications and guidelines are ready to go. The Council had four applicants for the Region Five Children's Museum Task Force but none were residents of the City of Brainerd. The Council is still seeking applicants and it will be on the next City Council agenda. The City Council has decided to suspend the 2020 Farmer's Market and would like to find a group to take it over.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- The Brainerd Rotary Club planted more than 100 trees at Rotary Riverside Park recently, have put the roof on the gateway to the park and stonework will be completed soon.
- The Brainerd Ski Loons have cancelled their season including all practices. They will not be putting out their dock or ramps.
- Ms. Kaufmann and Parks intern Joe Pfeiffer are working on virtual programming. Some are up and running and the rest will be done soon. There is a wide variety of things for all ages to do including kids' coloring contests, nature photography, virtual tours of state trails, sport practice plans, scavenger hunts and much more.
- The Minnesota DNR reported they had more than 50 applications for the Outdoor Recreation Grants and are hoping a special session will provide more funds. They will be making the award announcements after the special session. Staff should hear results within two weeks.
- The RFP's for the Memorial Park project are due May 29. Mr. Yeager has indicated he will help review the digital bids with staff. The bids technically will be opened at 8:30 on Monday morning and the Park Board will hold a special meeting at 4:00 p.m. on June 2 to look over the RFP's and hopefully make a decision on who to go with to move forward with this project. Mr. Yeager asked to be able to review the digital RFP's over the weekend.

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, June 2, 2020, at 4:00 p.m., WebEx Teleconference Meeting to be established.

Mr. Rushmeyer asked if the discussion on Park Department structure was being added to the agenda for the next meeting or for June 9. Ms. Schaefer said June 9 so the June 2 meeting can just be focused on Memorial Park.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Boeder made a motion to adjourn at 6:21 p.m.; Mr. Rushmeyer seconded. Upon roll call, members Boeder, Parks, Rushmeyer, Yeager and Schaefer voted "aye". No member voted "nay". The Chair declared the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Finch, Administrative Specialist