

BRAINERD PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT
Regular Park Board Meeting
August 25, 2020 at 4:00 p.m.
Brainerd Fire Department Training Room
23 Laurel Street, Brainerd, MN 56401

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

Present were President Kara Schaefer, Tim Boeder, Dale Parks, Troy Rushmeyer, Kevin Yeager, and Park Director Tony Sailer. Also noted present were Mayor Dave Badeaux, City Administrator Jennifer Bergman, HR Director Kris Schubert, City Engineer Paul Sandy, Recreation Coordinator Katie Kaufman, Maintenance Foreman Troy Harris and Maintenance Staff Joe Koering.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A. Under New Business: Added item "D". Motion to approve the amended agenda made by Parks and seconded by Boeder. All members voted "aye" with none opposed. The Chair declared the agenda approved.

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

A. Approval of Minutes

1. Special Meeting held on June 10, 2020

B. Approval of the Disbursements for the Month of August 2020

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Splash Pad

The history of the Park Board's action pertaining to the Splash Pad was distributed. Mr. Sailer pointed out that the Board's original motion placed the splash pad at Gregory Park. Ms. Schaefer met with Chris Sonmor, Emily Rolfson and the Landscape Structures representative to give them permission to meet to discuss the splash pad space the Park Board is incorporating into the Memorial Park redesign. Mr. Yeager made a motion to add Memorial Park as a potential site for the Brainerd Splash Pad with the condition that the site meets the space requirements that we have set forth with our preliminary planning with WSB. Mr. Rushmeyer seconded and board approval was unanimous. Ms. Rolfson will be invited to the September 1 budget meeting to discuss the project.

B. Parks Department Structure

Mr. Sailer announced his retirement at the July 28 meeting, at which time Mr. Yeager suggested discussing restructuring the department to create a public works department. Mr. Yeager stated that most of the cities he researched has a public works director that runs park maintenance staff and street staff collectively as one labor force. He would like staff to present what the options might be for that type of a structure versus what we have now, and what the advantages and disadvantages might be monetarily with programs and other areas. He feels right now is a great time to explore this with Mr. Sailer's retirement and budget talks happening soon.

Mr. Sailer had a few comments. He said there is already some sharing of staff and equipment between the Parks and Street departments, primarily with snow events and tree removal. There are currently two separate union bargaining units. This brings up concerns about how seniority would work if they were to combine workforces, if there would still be one foreman for each entity, and who would oversee the department. Community Education runs Baxter's programs and the Baxter Park Maintenance Supervisor told Mr. Sailer that there is often a lack of communication about who is using the fields and when, so fields get prepped and not used. Mr. Sailer reported that approximately 80-90% of municipalities he has visited with at MRPA conferences reinforce his concerns about the parks becoming secondary to streets in the event of a public works department.

Mr. Rushmeyer reiterated that the Park Board needs to look at the current structure and determine if it is still the best structure for our community. He said one of the keys to this is not knowing if other entities are willing to pick up the

management of some of the programs. Depending on what happens with the RFP, he thinks if the director position merges into a public works director the department would have a maintenance supervisor and program director.

Mr. Boeder asked Mr. Yeager how many of the people that he talked to have careers on the line if their job gets lost. Mr. Yeager said he is not putting himself in the position of hiring and firing, he is just asking what the structure might look like to not replace a director.

Mr. Sailer cautioned that with one person in charge of streets and parks, it may consume a lot of that person's time just addressing frequent acts of vandalism, maintenance issues that pop up and weather events that can affect fields, programs and leagues.

Mr. Sandy stated he is neutral to the issue and will do whatever the City Council directs him to do. He feels merging could be beneficial to both departments to have access to 13 employees as far as infrastructure and maintenance. He agrees we owe it to the public to look at this, and that it is a very common structure among municipalities to have a combined department. Mr. Harris said the biggest objection he has with the Street Department garage is the distance they will be from the major parks. Currently staff can drive mowers on residential streets to Lum and Memorial parks but they will have to trailer every piece of equipment to every park from the street garage. Seasonal employees must be 18 years old to drive City vehicles, and very seldom do we get an 18-year-old applying for a \$12 per hour job. Also, at Lum Park, they are 300 yards from an off-road diesel station; the closest one to the street garage is two miles away. He is concerned that the addition to the street garage will not be enough space for all the equipment, and he would not like to see the Lum Park maintenance buildings torn down because they are very valuable storage space. He noted that the City invested approximately \$56,000 in the Lum Park maintenance shop over the past 5-6 years, including a new roof and insulation to make it much more efficient. Mr. Badeaux asked for clarification that there would still be specific street staff and specific park staff for maintenance purposes that will possibly cross back and forth. Mr. Sandy concurred but said it depends on what the ask is from the Park Board. He noted that the City Council has already made the decision to move the Parks Department to the Street Department resulting from the facility study, so that is beyond this group's control. The Council has also offered the existing buildings at Lum Park as a possible site for the Children's Museum. Mr. Sandy said space won't be an issue when the Police Department vacates the cold storage building plus an acre of land they are using for old squad cars, and the building addition is in the preliminary planning stage so they can basically make that as large as they need. Mr. Rushmeyer said the Park Board and the City Council should hear staff's input to determine the need for a structure at Lum Park to house equipment if it would be that much more effective logistically rather than having to trailer every mower every day. Mr. Harris pointed out that 2019 utilities for the current structures cost roughly \$5,400 for electricity and water (reimbursed by Brainerd Public Utilities) and \$1,800 for natural gas, which is cheap storage. He asked if the Park Board and City Council would consider allowing the Parks Department to keep using the Lum Park buildings if the Children's Museum isn't going to come in for a while.

Ms. Schubert said union issues would be a matter of negotiating with the two bargaining units to determine seniority and other items.

Ms. Bergman advised board members that if the Park Board decides to go in this direction that the City Council will need to be a part of the conversation. Mr. Yeager asked Ms. Bergman for guidance in how the Park Board should proceed if it decides to move forward. Ms. Bergman said if the Park Board is interested in exploring what a Public Works department would look like, a request can be made to the City Council for its consideration in exploring this jointly with the Park Board.

Discussion followed about the reason for and purpose of City boards and commissions and what the employee structure might look like under a public works department. Mr. Parks pointed out that the first step would be to ask the City Council if it is even interested in the possibility of a public works department before discussing restructuring.

Mr. Yeager made a motion to request the appropriate city staff to approach the City Council to explore a public works department. Mr. Parks seconded and board approval was unanimous. The Chair declared the motion passed. Ms. Bergman will put this on the September 8 City Council agenda. Mr. Sandy and Mr. Sailer will submit an agenda request to the Safety and Public Works Committee for a recommendation to the City Council.

Mr. Sailer asked if the Board wanted to discuss the park director hiring process at this time. The item was tabled to the September 1 special meeting when the budget will be discussed. A preliminary budget needs to be submitted to the City Council prior to the Council's September 14 budget meeting.

C. Maintenance Projects

Staff provided a list of completed maintenance projects from July 23 to August 20, many of which addressed issues that were on the park evaluations. Numerous graffiti and vandalism incidents were highlighted. Mr. Yeager commented that he has been out looking at the parks and there is a noticeable difference since the evaluations were done. He complimented the Park Board and staff.

D. Children's Museum Update

Mr. Yeager reported that he and Mr. Sailer attended the second task force meeting for the Children's Museum. He said this meeting seemed to be a continuation of an exploration of spaces to use in Lum Park that is not where the park buildings are. The museum committee stated they were going to come up with two plans; one where the Park Board wants the museum located and a second option for them to consider. Mr. Yeager would like the Park Board's permission to reinforce to the Children's Museum task force that the Board is not interested in having a building on the beach or anywhere other than the Park Board buildings that have been offered by both the Park Board and the City Council. Mr. Boeder made a motion that the Park Board is adamant that the Children's Museum will only be located in the general vicinity of the existing office/maintenance/storage facility buildings, as offered by the City. Mr. Rushmeyer seconded and board approval was unanimous. The Chair declared the motion passed.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Arts in the Park

Community Action Director Badeaux presented a site and preparedness plan for the October 10 Arts in the Park event at Gregory Park. The deadline for vendors to sign up is September 8, which is also the date of the next Community Action board meeting. The Board will make a decision whether or not to proceed with the event at that meeting. Mr. Parks made a motion for the Arts in the Park event to proceed as presented with the stipulation that vehicles are not allowed in the park during the event unless it is someone with an ADA requirement. Mr. Rushmeyer seconded and board approval was unanimous. The Chair declared the motion passed.

B. Rotary Riverside Park Pavilion

Mr. Sailer presented the Brainerd Rotary Club's request to construct a pavilion in Rotary Riverside Park. There would be no cost to the City and the Rotary Club would handle all aspects of construction. The pavilion will become City property and be available for rentals. Portable toilets would need to be provided by the City. Mr. Sailer recommended placing security cameras at the park. Mr. Rushmeyer made a motion to approve the proposed pavilion at Rotary Riverside Park. Mr. Parks seconded and board approval was unanimous. The Chair declared the motion passed.

C. 2021 Capital Improvements

Mr. Sailer presented the proposed 30-year Capital Improvement Plan. Equipment needs for 2021 include a new skid steer trailer, a mower to replace a 2011 Toro mower and a heated cab for the John Deere mower/snowblower. Proposed projects from the park evaluations include replacing the Buster Park gazebo, new playground equipment at Triangle Park, Gregory Park basketball court overlay, and numerous buildings to paint and re-shingle. Requests total \$115,300. Mr. Parks would like to see the \$150,000 Memorial Park parking lot overlay scheduled for 2022 moved to the City to pay. Mr. Yeager would like to see money set aside each year for security cameras. Mayor Badeaux would like to see \$25,000 added for replacement trees each year from both the Street and Parks departments. Following discussion the Park Board would like Mr. Sailer to add \$2,500 each year for security cameras and \$25,000 each year for trees to the proposed 30-year capital improvement plan, and to research the cost of a stump grinder attachment for the skid steer. Ms. Schaefer asked about requesting money for the Memorial Park project which was tabled to the September 1 budget discussion.

D. New Maintenance Department Hire

Mr. Sailer reported that 20-year employee Bob Anderson accepted the Street Department Maintenance position and would like Park Board approval to proceed with the hiring process for filling that position. Mr. Parks made a motion to approve replacing the maintenance position, Mr. Rushmeyer seconded and board approval was unanimous. The Chair declared the motion passed. Ms. Schubert said it will take 6-8 weeks before we get someone on board.

PUBLIC FORUM

There was no public forum.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

There was no report.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, August 4, 2020, at 4:00 p.m., at the Brainerd Fire Department Training Room.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn to the September 1 meeting at 6:15 p.m. by Rushmeyer; seconded by Parks. All members voted "aye" with none opposed. The Chair declared the meeting adjourned to September 1.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Finch, Administrative Specialist