BRAINERD PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT
Regular Park Board Meeting
November 24, 2020 at 4:00 p.m.
WebEx Teleconference Meeting
Call Toll-Free 844-992-4726
Access Code: 146 353 0695

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, Kevin Yeager, Troy Rushmeyer and Park Director Tony Sailer. Also noted present were Mayor Dave Badeaux, City Administrator Jennifer Bergman, Finance Director Connie Hillman, City Engineer Paul Sandy, Recreation Coordinator Katie Kaufman and Chris Sonmor and Jason Amberg from WSB.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Yeager noted the Lum Park Campground Host was missing from Unfinished Business, so it was added after Item C and Item D was changed to Item E. Mr. Sailer also requested that New Business Item D be switched with Item A. Moved and seconded by Boeder and Yeager, duly carried, to approve the amended agenda.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT CALENDAR

Moved and seconded by Yeager and Boeder, duly carried, to approve the consent calendar.

A. Approval of Minutes
1. Special Meetings held on August 4, 2020, September 1, 2020, and September 10, 2020
2. Regular Meeting held on August 25, 2020

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

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Memorial Park Project

Mr. Sailer turned the floor over to Project Manager Chris Sonmor from WSB and City Engineer Paul Sandy. Mr. Sonmor shared the site plan. The base bid package includes the warming house, large rink, site work, utility work, electcrical, pavements and trails, site amenities and erosion control. Cost estimates are just under $930,000 for the base bid package. The smaller rink, splash pad and plantings will be bid as alternates. The overall bid amount of $1.3M is with all of the alternates included. He shared the most recent splash pad concept design, with an estimated cost of almost $194,000 which doesn't include donor-related items such as pavers, stepping stones and picnic tables. Mr. Sandy met with Emily from the Splash Pad Committee and they currently have $188,000, which includes $100,000 the City has in its budget. He suggested separating this project from the Memorial Park project, procure the equipment and hire the contractor separately as a city staff project. This would allow staff to seek in-kind donations of contractor services or materials to get it completed from start to finish. In-kind donors would either get a spot on the archway or a paver, depending on their donation. Mr. Yeager verified with Mr. Sonmor that this would not impact the bid package. Mayor Badeaux clarified that the City Council agreed to match up to $100,000 so if the Splash Pad Committee comes in shorter than that, the match would be less. Following discussion, Mr. Boeder made a motion to remove the splash pad as a bid alternate from the Memorial Park bid package and to move forward with city staff seeking a design architect and other contractors that may provide in-kind services to design and construct the splash pad. Mr. Yeager seconded. Upon roll call, members Boeder, Parks, Rushmeyer, Yeager and Schaefer voted "aye". No member voted "nay". The Chair declared the motion carried.

Discussion continued with Mr. Sonmor seeking confirmation on the height of the hockey boards, possible interest in advertising panels, and if the City would like to purchase directly through Sourcewell to realize a discount. Mr. Sandy said it makes sense to purchase through Sourcewell to take advantage of any savings. Following discussion Mr. Rushmeyer made a motion to direct staff to purchase materials for the hockey rinks directly from Sourcewell to realize a discount. Mr. Yeager seconded. Upon roll call, members Boeder, Parks, Rushmeyer, Yeager and Schaefer voted "aye". No member voted "nay". The Chair declared the motion carried.

Mr. Sonmor asked the Board to establish a completion date to help WSB with the start date and scheduling of the project, adding that the more compressed the schedule, the higher chance of higher numbers, and the more time provided, the better numbers will likely be. Board members agreed there was no rush to have the project completed before fall. Mr. Sandy commented the best growing time for turf establishment is going to be in the fall. Mr. Amberg agreed, and suggested September 1 or 15 for substantial completion which also gives some time if something happens that causes a delay. Board members agreed to have WSB move forward with bidding in January and a mid-September substantial completion date. WSB and Mr. Sandy will report back to the Park Board as soon as bids are received.

B. Park Programming Agreements

Mr. Sailer met with the City Attorney to discuss the content of the park programming agreements, then met with the YMCA and Community Education to review them. Both entities were fine with the language in the agreements. He is seeking Park Board approval on the contracts, and when to issue payment to the two entities in the amounts of $5,000 to the YMCA and $6,000 to ISD 181 Community Education. He is recommending early in the year to allow them to start preparing for the programs. Agreements don't need to be signed until December; Mr. Sailer is just seeking approval of the content of the agreements. Mr. Yeager made a motion to go ahead with the contracts as written. Mr. Rushmeyer seconded and added to have payments due by January 15, 2021. Mr. Yeager concurred with the addition to the motion. Mayor Badeaux asked for the Finance Director's approval on the payment date of January 15; Ms. Hillman approved. Upon roll call, members Boeder, Parks, Rushmeyer, Yeager and Schaefer voted "aye". No member voted "nay". The Chair declared the motion carried.

C. Children's Museum

Mr. Sailer reported that the Region 5 Children's Museum is ending its involvement in the site master planning at Lum Park. They came to an impasse with the City as far as the location of the Children's Museum within the park. Mr. Yeager thanked everyone for sticking to their decision while he was working with the task force.

D. Lum Park Campground Host

Mr. Yeager requested that the condition of the campground host site be continued as unfinished business so it doesn't get forgotten.

E. Public Works Department

Mr. Sailer reported that City Engineer Paul Sandy will be put in charge of the interim Public Works Department on a one-year trial basis beginning December 19. He will oversee maintenance staffs of the Street Department and the Parks and Recreation Department, with both foremen reporting to him. They will still be separate entities but under one umbrella. They are the same union but separate bargaining units. Ms. Bergman thanked Ms. Schaefer and Mr. Yeager for taking part in the Public Works discussions. She feels there was a lot accomplished. Mr. Sandy reported that staff has been working closely with Widseth to design the new Parks buildings at the Street Department.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Discussion of Recreation Coordinator's Position

Mr. Sailer said that with his retirement Ms. Kaufman will be handling all of the recreation-type things in the park along with many other duties, and turned the floor over to Ms. Kaufman. Ms. Kaufman presented her position description with proposed changes due to the restructuring of the department and the decision to not fill the director's position. She included Park Director duties she anticipates absorbing, and wanted to give the Board some background about what has been discussed behind the scenes to get a perspective of her position once Mr. Sailer retires. She is asking the Park Board to consider a $5,000 per year raise for the additional duties and responsibilities she will be assuming. She believes that by the end of 2021 there should be some concrete job description revamping, as well as a wage study conducted on the position so that it can be accurately paid and placed in the organizational structure. If possible she would like to request that the Park Board, at a very minimum, provide her with a list of expectations and duties they would like her to perform and have those available at the December Park Board meeting. She thanked the Board and opened the floor for discussion.

Mr. Yeager opened by requesting that meeting documents be sent out earlier than the day before the meeting. He went over Ms. Kaufman's submittals thoroughly, and he does not think this is the correct approach. He does not see Ms. Kaufman as a busy desk work type of person, but as a person who works with the public with energy and excitement with new ideas for programming, events, facebook pages, etc. He feels they would be doing her a terrible disservice if they put her in any version of what is being presented, and does not support a director/department head position for Ms. Kaufman because he does not believe it is a good fit for her. If they were to move forward with her proposal, they would be doing a very non-typical thing by attempting to hybrid a Public Works Department with a directorship department. Most cities our size function exclusively with a Public Works Department and he believes that we need to give this an opportunity. The vast majority of the things he sees on Ms. Kaufman's submittal should be done by Public Works, including meetings and budgeting. He is appreciative of the vast scope of work she has brought to their attention, but would like to get as much of this work as possible into Public Works' court so Ms. Kaufman can focus on programs and events during a normal 40-hour work week. Nobody knows what 2021 is going to look like, but he thinks to move forward now with a job description or scope of work that is based on what we have learned in years prior would be very near-sighted and reactive. Regarding budgeting, if we don't have programming we don't have revenue, which means that right now is probably the worst time possible to be considering tapping our budget for another $5,000 or $10,000 in the upcoming year. He encouraged patience and to rely on the Public Works Department and the creative thinkers on this team to help narrow this job description down by 50-80% so that Ms. Kaufman's true gifts can be put to their full potential.

Mr. Parks said this is a difficult situation. He wanted to fill Mr. Sailer's position and he thinks we need to treat the programming differently. Some of the strongest participation levels are programs that we have not farmed out such as adult softball and special events. We need to have somebody hands-on that reports to us to give us that information and he just doesn't see that happening with a Public Works Department. He thinks Ms. Kaufman's plan makes a lot of sense and the Board should take more time to look at it. We are saving some money by not hiring a director, but there's a lot of things that were mentioned in Ms. Kaufman's job description that he thinks are going to end up falling through the holes. Since we have Public Works and we have the two contracts, he thinks her position should sit for a year and then re-evaluate the whole thing and see where we need to move forward.

Mr. Boeder agrees with Mr. Parks that we need some type of direction. Right now with COVID we have no idea what 2021 is going to bring. We need someone to fall back on that's not afraid to take these challenges and move forward with them. We are not sure how things are going to go without a park director. He 100% agrees that Ms. Kaufman offering the $5,000 deal is actually a bargain for the Park Board; he would rather go with the $10,000.

Mr. Rushmeyer thinks everyone has valid points and thanked Ms. Kaufman for the work she put into this. This has been a year of unprecedented change and he agrees with Mr. Yeager that we need to take things slow. In order to do that we need excellent communication from all parties involved. We may need to meet more often with Ms. Kaufman, Mr. Sandy, and Troy from Park Maintenance to ask staff how the communication is going, how are our tasks getting performed, what are the hindrances, what's working well, and address these things as we go. This is a trial for us and we absolutely will need to look at what Ms. Kaufman is doing. Having been an administrator/supervisor/head of management, the last thing you want to do is start throwing a bunch of additional tasks on your plate that you're not sure if you can perform or not. He thinks we need to look at the Recreation Coordinator position, see how it is meshing with the Public Works maintenance part of it, then make adjustments as we go. He recommends to proceed with caution and without emotion and keep an open mind as to what is going to work here. The board can help the staff make this gel and come together by looking at first priorities then move forward from there.

Ms. Kaufman would like some direction with who is going to put together Park Board packets, attend meetings and all of those duties that will not be filled by someone like Tony or herself after Mr. Sailer leaves. If there is added duties and she is assigned them, she would really hope they would understand. If she is not assigned them, they are assigned to Mr. Sandy for some reason, that is fine; she just needs to know, minimally, some direction in December, of what the Board would like her to do when Mr. Sailer retires.

Mr. Yeager said Ms. Kaufman is asking the Park Board to help create a job description. He wants to be careful that this doesn't turn into a Park Board versus Ms. Kaufman conversation, because he doesn't see it this way. He would like to have Ms. Kaufman, Mr. Sandy, and the Board talk about this at an open meeting so they can go through this list that has been created and talk about what this looks like now, what should it look like under a Public Works Department, are there tasks Ms. Kaufman wants or doesn't want, and have an open discussion. He would like Mr. Sandy to speak up a little bit as he has been a proponent of the Public Works Department. He is not sure if Mr. Sandy has seen this list but he's read through it and can see massive amounts of this that should not be done by Ms.

Kaufman; not just in the near future when Mr. Sailer leaves, but ever. He would like to ask how Mr. Sandy feels about this list and help the Board to narrow the scope.

Ms. Schaefer agrees with a lot of what everyone is saying and thanked Ms. Kaufman for this information. She thinks the Board needs to look at this a little bit more with Mr. Sandy, and take some of these things off Ms. Kaufman's plate. She would like Ms. Kaufman to have a normal life and not work 70-80 hours a week. She agrees with Mr. Yeager that Ms. Kaufman's passion is with the people, doing the events, but definitely believes that she can be a leader. She wants to make sure that she is starting off the most successful that she can be. The money thing definitely needs to be a conversation, but it all depends on how much she is going to have on her plate.

Mr. Sandy said from his perspective, city staff including himself, Ms. Kaufman, Mr. Sailer and Ms. Bergman, need to sit down and come to the Park Board with a recommendation with how this is going to work cohesively. It sounds like they need to go through Ms. Kaufman's list and parse out what they can take on at Public Works and what Ms. Kaufman should take on from her side and go forward that way. He just received what Ms. Kaufman sent out and hasn't had an opportunity to look at it. His thought is to have something ready for the December meeting.

Ms. Bergman thinks this is a bigger discussion, and this has to be a conversation with the City Council as well. What are the City Council's expectations of staff, and also the Park Board's expectations of staff. She concurs with Mr. Sandy that this might be an intro conversation that they can bring something back at a future meeting.

Mr. Rushmeyer said this is a huge conversation and if the Board determines that Ms. Kaufman has more tasks on her hands, he is never against paying someone for what they are doing. He thinks what needs to happen is for Ms. Kaufman and Mr. Sailer to look at their current job descriptions, determine what Mr. Sandy and maintenance staff will take on and identify things that Tony normally does that can't fall through the cracks.

Mr. Yeager is in agreement with city staff to whittle this down and come back to the Park Board with what they are missing. He wants to hear about this from everyone's perspective. He made a motion to direct the appropriate city staff, between now and the next meeting, to sit down and come back to the Park Board with a scope of work that has been reviewed by everyone. Mr. Parks seconded. Upon roll call, members Boeder, Parks, Rushmeyer, Yeager and Schaefer voted "aye". No member voted "nay". The Chair declared the motion carried.

B. Park Master Plan and Design

Mr. Sailer turned the floor over to Mr. Yeager, who submitted this agenda item. He would like to see if there is any interest in this Board to direct staff to create an RFP to do a park master plan. This master plan could be used as a long-term vision for the parks that would be in alignment with city ordinances and the City's Comprehensive Plan. He doesn't know what this would cost but he can see how it would have long-term advantages for budgeting, making smaller decisions within our parks, and establishing a design standard that would be used throughout the park system. A design standard sets the "brand" for the City's park with uniform paint and shingle colors, signage, etc.

Mr. Parks doesn't disagree but he doesn't think the timing is right. With all of the balls the Board has juggling in the air right now he would like to give it a year until they see how things go. Mr. Boeder commented that we pay City employees to figure this stuff out; we are an advisory board. Ms. Kaufman is excited about master park planning, as it helps align decision-making in the future. She would love to be involved with visionary planning and doesn't feel that $50,000 is far-fetched. Mr. Rushmeyer agrees that it is a great idea, especially when you look at the time board members spent reviewing the parks during the summer. He also agrees with Dale to table this for a bit, because we still have a lot to get through even before the end of this year. He thinks we should come back to it but get through some of the issues talked about previously in this meeting. Mr. Sandy said having a set of design standards would help from the procurement standpoint if you are buying maintenance materials such as paint, shingles, signage. You can buy in bulk and will always have the same type of product and the same type of materials for all the buildings you are doing, thus saving money and making things look nice and consistent across all the parks. Having guidelines for design standards and a master park plan to him seems to fit very well together. He does agree that it might be a year too soon, and to let this whole thing kind of work itself out for a year. Ms. Schaefer thanked Mr. Yeager for bringing this idea to the Board and starting the conversation.

C. Community Action Grant

Ms. Kaufman is seeking Park Board approval to submit a $2,000 grant request to Brainerd Community Action's Community Empowerment fund. Grant funds would be used to purchase an outdoor water bottle filler to help kick start a community-wide "Re-Think Your Drink" campaign. Crow Wing Energized has two upcoming grant opportunities for additional funding to purchase good quality water bottles to hand out at a groundbreaking event. Bottle stickers would have a QR code to access a map of bottle-filling stations in the City of Brainerd. Water bottles could be sold with profits designated for the purchase of more bottle fillers. Mr. Rushmeyer made a motion to move forward with the application for the Brainerd Community Action grant. 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.

D. Rules of Decorum

Mr. Sailer provided a copy of amended Rules of Procedure and Decorum that was adopted by the City Council on November 2 that now applies to all Boards and Commissions to make meetings consistent.

PUBLIC FORUM

There was no public forum.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

Ms. Bergman reported that the Park staff moved to City Hall at the end of October. Due to 14 COVID-related issues and to protect staff and be able to have coverage, the City Council decided to go to a working from home model. Union negotiations have begun. On November 30 the City Council will have a budget workshop in addition to a closed session for union negotiations. Mike O'Day and Tiffany Stenglein are newly elected City Council members.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- Mr. Sailer reported that staff recently completed their staff evaluations. He will schedule times with each employee to go over their evaluation prior to his December 18 retirement date. He has been working with Ms. Kaufman for passing the torch to have a smooth transition.
- Mr. Sailer visited with Mr. Rushmeyer about the tournaments that are coming up and this will be on the December board meeting agenda. He noted that Cragun's will need to know as soon as possible because they block off approximately 150 rooms for tournament teams. Mr. Rushmeyer reported that the Brainerd and Baxter baseball associations have unanimously agreed to merge, and he strongly encouraged them to pick up these tournaments. They will meet on December 6 and should make a decision at that time.
- The latest ruling from the Governor is in effect through December 18. At this time Pond Hockey would be off the table, and it doesn't look like we can open warming houses either. We may know more by the December 15 meeting. The plan is to flood the rinks when it gets cold enough, but we probably won't be able to open the warming houses. We are accepting applications for warming house attendants and will be prepared if allowed to open.
- Ms. Hillman reminded the Board that they will need to finalize their budget for Council prior to December 17 when packets go out. Mr. Sailer suggested that Ms. Kaufman be included in the budget meeting. Ms. Hillman said Mr. Sandy should also be there.

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, December 15, 2020, at 4:00 p.m., via WebEx Teleconference Meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Moved and seconded by Boeder and Parks, duly carried, to adjourn the meeting at 6:30 p.m. The Chair declared the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Finch, Administrative Specialist