

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, the joint workshop of the Brainerd City Council and Park Board was called to order at 4:00 P.M. by Council President Bevans.

Upon roll call, the following members were noted as present: Czeczok, Terry, Stenglein, Johnson, and Bevans. Mayor Badeaux was also noted as present. Members O'Day and Stunek were noted as absent. Park Board Members noted as present: Miller, Schaefer, Yeager, and Shipe.

Also noted as present were Administrator Bergman, Finance Director Hillman, City Engineer/ Public Works Director Dehn, and Police Chief Davis.

Discussion of Parks Capital Budget

Public Works Director Dehn stated that the Park Board is looking for direction on capital planning and annual funding amount.

Park Board Chair Shipe asked how the Council would like to close the gap of deferred maintenance and planning for the future.

Chair Bevans asked Personnel and Finance Chair Johnson what the capital budget of the Park Board was previously.

Member Johnson stated that without accounting for ARPA dollars, the capital budget for Parks was \$217,500 in 2023 and averaged \$399,000 the previous three years.

Chair Bevans asked whether the Park Board can work with \$400,000 instead of asking the taxpayers to support \$1.6 million in capital in 2024.

Park Board Chair Shipe stated that the Park Board inventoried all of the capital items at all parks and made a rough assessment of when the items need to be replaced. By planning for those future expenditures and those that need more immediate attention, the Park Board developed the current needs in our parks. The Park Board is not asking for \$1.6 million in 2024, if the City is to maintain capital, based on the analysis done by the Park Board that is what is needed for 2024 to repair or replace capital items.

City Engineer/ Public Works Director Dehn stated that to maintain the parks the cost is about \$645,000 annually, without replacing structures that are already in dire need.

Member Johnson stated that all the deferred maintenance is about \$5 million dollars in order to be able to maintain at \$645,000.

Park Board Chair Shipe stated that he would like to start with determining what items the parks would be better to remove than maintain to determine how much the capital needs are in the future.

Mayor Badeaux stated that the Park Board has determined the reach of the "kingdom" that the City has. The maintenance philosophy has previously been to let things rot, and in working with this Park Board they have developed a philosophy of maintaining the assets we have, removing assets that aren't as valued, and planning for the future.

Member Czeczok asked what has been removed in the last five years.

Mayor Badeaux stated that small things have been removed, Mill Park was removed from the property and not completely replaced in its move to Memorial.

Discussion took place surrounding vision and philosophy.

Chair Bevans questioned whether the City could provide the funds without a tax increase, whether through bonding or referendum.

Finance Director Hillman stated that bonding, especially for Parks, has a lot of requirements. If bonding was the route, the City would probably have to increase taxes.

Member Stenglein does not see a problem with \$650,000 the question is how the City gets to that number.

Member Johnson referred to the agenda request for funding ideas by the Park Board. Activities should contribute to the maintenance of the fields and facilities they use. The service groups that are developing these parks can contribute more to the maintenance of the facilities they are funding. He also thinks, some things need to be removed from parks.

Discussion took place surrounding removal of items and fundraising.

Member Johnson stated that the \$645,000 sounds great for capital for Parks. However, fitting that into the plan city wide is more complicated. There are years when larger purchases need to be made by other departments and Parks budget would need to be reduced.

Member Yeager stated that he would ask for the money to get back to a baseline, adopting a general philosophy of reduction of capital, and developing long-term partnerships to maintain parks.

Chair Bevans stated that he would be in favor of a referendum in 2024 to ask the taxpayers whether they would support funding over a period of time to get the Parks back to baseline.

Discussion took place surrounding referendums voted on previously by citizens.

Finance Director Hillman stated that the City needs to be mindful of donated structures when removing items.

Member Miller stated that all donated items should have one life cycle, after that life cycle the group is responsible for its replacement or understand it will be removed.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Dehn asked for clarification for the 2024 budget. Staff will look into the referendum option.

Member Johnson stated that he would be comfortable with a Parks Capital budget proposal of \$750,000. He would like to see items specified in the Capital Budget.

Park Board Chair Shipe stated that by capital planning and creating a capital fund for parks, the department would have money to replace structures when their life cycle is completed.

Member Johnson stated that this idea is much like the Fire Department's fund that they have to save for trucks so that the City does not have to issue debt when the time comes to purchase a truck.

Member Schaefer stated that she believes that marketing of our parks would help to bring attention to the parks. So that when a gazebo needs to be taken down, people would know what's happening or be given an opportunity to make changes.

Discussion took place on the notification of removal of items and marketing.

Chair Bevans thanked the Park Board for their analysis. Next steps are to figure out who is going to be responsible for taking on fundraising projects and prioritizing projects.

Discussion of Cannabis in Public Places

Park Board Chair Shipe gave an overview of the discussion from the Park Board based on cannabis. The Park Board recommends that cannabis smoking not be allowed in public places. There was also discussion during the Park Board to include cigarette smoking in the ordinance as well. The Park Board ultimately split 3-2 in favor of no smoking cannabis in public places. The dissenting votes wanted to support smoke-free parks.

Member Johnson stated that the City should leave the cigarette smokers alone. He does not support smoking cannabis in public places. Cigarette smokers can no longer smoke inside of a bar/restaurant, not being able to smoke on the sidewalk would cause someone to break a rule somewhere or cause people not to want to go to our restaurants.

Member Stenglein stated she would be interested in extending the policy to cigarette smokers as well.

Mayor Badeaux agrees that smoking cannabis in public spaces makes him uncomfortable. As a city he believes we should ensure that everyone feels comfortable using our public spaces.

Members Terry and Czezok stated that they support no smoking anywhere in public including cigarettes.

Police Chief Davis stated that regulating cigarette smokers does not seem aesthetically pleasing, but if that's the decision that the Council makes, the Police Department will enforce it.

Member Miller stated that there is a cultural difference between cigarette smokers and cannabis smokers.

Member Terry asked for clarification of his statement.

Member Miller stated that he believes those who smoke cigarettes are more aware and move away from people when they smoke as they are used to being separated. He does not believe vapers and cannabis smokers have the same consideration for others.

Police Chief Davis added that the impairment from cannabis is the major concern.

Member Johnson asked to have the City Attorney check into state statute for regulating cigarette smoking. The law for cannabis specifically states that cities have the ability to regulate the use in public spaces. He wonders if the cigarette law also states the same thing. He is in favor of banning smoking cannabis in public spaces.

Mayor Badeaux stated that the Park Board voted to not change their policy on smoking at youth events.

Adjourn

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 7:25 p.m.



Jennifer Bergman
City Administrator