

CITY OF WAUSAU – PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Date/Time: October 7, 2024, at 5:15 p.m. Location: Council Chambers, City Hall

Parks and Recreation Committee Members Present: Lou Larson (c), Carol Lukens, Tom Neal, Lisa Rasmussen, Sarah Watson

Others Present: Andy Sims – Operations Manager, John Kahon – City Forester, Anne Jacobson - City Attorney, Matt Graun - Becher Hoppe

In accordance with Chapter 19, Wisc. Statutes, notice of this meeting was posted and sent to the Daily Herald in the proper manner. A quorum was present, and the meeting was called to order at 5:15pm.

1. Approve Minutes – September 3, 2024 – **Motion** by Neal, second by Lukens to approve the Park and Recreation Committee Minutes as written. Motion **carried** by voice vote; vote reflected as 5-0.

2. Discussion and Possible Action Granting Permission to 3M for Soil Testing – 3M purchased a segment of railroad at Riverside Park. That section of railroad was tested and was found to have traces of arsenic. Per DNR requirement the land adjacent to that test site must now be tested to see if this toxin has gone beyond the rail bed. 3M is asking this committee for permission to conduct core samples on the park property. The trees will not be disturbed, and the core holes will be backfilled with topsoil and reseeded. **Motion** by Rasmussen, second by Neal to grant permission to 3M for soil testing. Motion **carried** by voice vote; vote reflected as 5-0.

3. Discussion and Possible Action Approving a Park Improvement Request for a Communication Board at Oak Island Park – Request to add a communication board for children who have limited verbal skills at Oak Island Park. This would require some maintenance from the park staff who recommend approving this request. **Motion** by Lukens, second by Watson to approve the installation of a communication board at Oak Island Park. Motion **carried** by voice vote; vote reflected as 5-0.

4. Discussion and Possible Action Approving a Request to Relocate the Boy with Boot Statue – The Boy with the Boot Statue is a self-standing statue with a water feature. Once the water is added, the water is self-circulating. The intent is to bring the statue out during the warmer season and replace it with something else during the colder season. Questions were answered. **Motion** by Neal, second by Rasmussen to approve to relocate the Boy with Boot Statue. Motion **carried** by voice vote; vote reflected as 5-0.

5. Discussion and Possible Action Approving Repairs to 10th Street Park Wall and Funding Recommendation – The stone retaining wall at the 10th Street Park has been deteriorating and last winter was failing. Temporary repairs were made but after consulting with Allen Wesolowski, City Engineer, the most cost-effective recommendation is to backfill the utilitarian wall and cap it off at grade level even with the sidewalk. This would help maintain the integrity of the sidewalk and ultimately the roadway behind. The contractor-estimated cost is \$31,950 with a 20% contingency fee of \$6,390. We believe we can do much, if not all, of the work in-house. Questions were answered. **Motion** by Rasmussen, second by Neal to approve to backfill and grade level the 10th Street Park Wall and do as much of the work in-house as possible. Motion **carried** by voice vote; vote reflected as 5-0.

6. Emerald Ash Borer Management Plan Update – John Kahon, City Forester, gave an update on the Emerald Ash Borer Management Plan. In 2016 the original presentation was given to the Committee. In the winter of 2020, we did find Emerald Ash Borer here in the City of Wausau. Per the recommendation of the Council, we extended our removal period from a 7-year period to a 12–15-year period to lessen the aesthetic impact to the city. We have been removing roughly 350-400 ash trees per year and replacing those trees with other trees. We have started a process of thinning and renewal, so the aesthetic impact is not so drastic. Every year we are treating about one third of the trees we are trying to maintain. The last three (3) years we have injected almost 2,600 trees. Questions were answered.

7. Educational Items

A. Park Updates – The State of Wisconsin had four million dollars available for EAB DNR grants through the Inflation Reduction Act Funds. There were 61 applicants, and 10 grants awarded. Of that the Marathon County Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department received almost one half million-dollar of EAB DNR Grant. This fully funded three (3) year grant is specifically for underserved urban forestry initiatives. About \$380,000 is going to tree planting in the boulevards and rights of way in the city so they can be maintained for the next three years. About 900 diverse species of trees will be planted, focusing on replacing the ash trees that we are losing. About \$100,000 is earmarked for ash tree mitigation on private property. The Community Development Office will be accepting applications from homeowners who need help with removal of these trees. This is a first-come, first-served process and we want to help as many people as possible with the money earmarked for ash tree mitigation. Finally, each school within this area specified by the DNR will receive educational programs on valuing, caring for, and the importance of having trees. Then each school will receive five (5) trees to plant on their school grounds. The Committee wants to thank John Kahon, Forester, for all the time and effort that went into applying for and receiving this grant. Questions were answered.

Our department, in conjunction with the Wausau Fire Department, received a grant for three (3) Save Stations. These are AED stations that are encased either on a pedestal or are a wall mount that is climate-controlled and camera-monitored and alert the fire department when the door is opened. These AED stations decrease response time and have been placed at the 400 Block, River Life, and the east side of the Athletic Park. Athletic Park turf has been installed in three (3) phases. We would like to highlight the fill material which is ground olive pits. The benefits are that it is cooler to play on, is not synthetic material, and its playability is phenomenal. The drinking fountain at River Life Wharf was moved. The Oak Island shelter/playground and Rose Bowl drinking fountains are done. Water winterization is underway at all the parks. Woodson Park fountain has some issues that are being addressed. We have partnered with Wausau West woodshop classrooms to help construct the park kiosks which have been recently added. We are experiencing an increase in excess garbage and human feces, especially at Hammond Park; we want the Committee to be aware of this issue. We are working closely with our two officers who are making individuals clean up after themselves. ABC Supply Company was connecting a storm sewer lateral into River Life Park, which was city approved but appears to our department to be vandalized. The contractor, PGA, will be restoring that area to its previous condition. Events: Art in the Park September 5-8, Festival of Arts September 6-8, Oak Island Beer and Bacon Festival September 13-16, Fall Cup (90 teams) at the Sports Complex mid-September, Ragnar at Nine Mile (1749 runners).

8. Future Agenda Items - Park Ordinance Updates, Banners at River Life, update on stain removal on 400 Block

9. Next Meeting: Monday, November 4, 2024, at 5:15 p.m. Maple Room (City Hall 407 Grant Street Wausau, WI 54403)

10. Adjournment – **Motion** by Watson, second by Lukens to adjourn at 5:53 p.m. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 5-0.