

DRAFT
CITY OF WAUSAU – JOINT PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE & PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Date/Time: August 7, 2023 at 4:30 p.m. Location: Council Chambers, City Hall
Parks and Recreation Committee Members Present: Dawn Herbst (c), Lou Larson, Tom Kilian, Carol Lukens, Sarah Watson
Public Health and Safety Committee Members Present: Lisa Rasmussen (c), Doug Diny, Lou Larson
Excused: Becky McElhaney, Chad Henke
Others Present: Jamie Polley-Parks Director, Matt Barnes-Deputy Police Chief, Tara Alfonso-Assistant Attorney

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 4:30pm.

1. Discussion and Possible Action Amending Section 9.20.020 Regulations of Persons and Section 1.01.025 Issuance of Citations – Rasmussen explained a couple months ago the Committee of the Whole analyzed a number of issues surrounding the unhoused population. Following a police department presentation, research occurred regarding restrictions on consumption of open intoxicants in City parks. Choices emerged which could include a complete ban at all City parks on open intoxicants all the time with the exception of facility rentals and organized events or because not every neighborhood park has that same issue to mirror the policy on the 400 Block which doesn't allow open intoxicants prior to 4:00pm. The question then is if it would apply to all City parks or just those parks that are mostly affected which is where the idea of a zone surrounding the downtown came in.

Deputy Police Chief Barnes spoke about the issues occurring mainly in the parks in and around the downtown area related to daily drunken behavior and how they would like to mitigate those issues. Herbst concern is for the people that would like to have alcohol in a park that do not display daily drunken behavior. Lukens would rather this apply at all parks on a temporary basis. Rasmussen originally thought about it from a city-wide perspective for consistency and ease of understanding but the logistics of managing it in neighborhood parks was a concern as not all of them had problems but all would receive the consequence.

Polley said one concern is that there are County parks within the City limits so the problem may just shift. She originally had been opposed, but the compromise of allowing consumption of alcohol after 4pm in general and exempting events and rentals is a possibility. She has a concern because this is putting a restriction on the entire community because of a very small percentage of people. However, people do not go to some of the parks because of these activities that are occurring. Having a boundary allows not as many park users to be affected. She said the public intoxication ordinance is vague and doesn't help in this situation. Barnes discussed the ordinance. Larson didn't want to penalize the whole City of Wausau but realizes something needs to be done. He didn't mind if the boundaries were set up as a trial period and questioned when it would go into effect. Barnes recommended January 1, 2024. Kilian would support something City wide but not just a certain area. He didn't believe they should have two sets of regulations for two different areas of town and discussed why he felt this could be viewed as discriminatory even if that wasn't the intent. Rasmussen felt that Kilian was right. They had wanted to impact the least amount of people and address the problem but if they do it in all City parks it may also be less confusing to the public. Larson mainly wanted people to feel safe in the parks. **Motion** by Larson, second by Kilian to move ahead with the ordinance as written except that it would apply to all City owned park facilities, try it for a year making it go into effect starting January 1st, 2024. Motion from the Park and Recreation Committee **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 4-1 with Herbst as the dissenting vote. Discussion occurred on the needed signage. **Motion** by Larson, second by Diny to allow consumption from 4p to 11pm in all City owned parks. Motion from the Public Health and Safety Committee **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 3-0.

Motion by Diny, second by Larson to adjourn the Public Health and Safety Committee at 5:20pm. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 3-0.

2. Public Comment or Suggestions – none brought forward.

3. Approve Minutes – June 5, 2023 – **Motion** by Lukens, second by Kilian to approve the Park and Recreation Committee draft June 5, 2023 minutes. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 5-0.
4. Discussion and Possible Action of Petition Submitted for Repair of Stewart Park – Polley explained that the City received a petition for funding to repair the historic rock wall structures within Stewart Park. Staff met with a contractor and assessed the cracking of the stage wall. There are areas in need of tuckpointing. The contractor feels the cap of the wall should be replaced as this is where water can get into the rock causing some separation. Long term, replacing the cap is best and Polley is waiting on a quote for this work. The wall is solid and the foundation has not shifted so there is not an immediate threat or danger. The items that need to be completed are maintenance items. Staff has the ability to complete some of the tuckpointing as time allows. At this time, there is not enough staff time to do it, these items are on the work list and will be worked on as time allows. Tasks are prioritized and items in immediate need are addressed first. This was done a few years ago with the pillars at Stewart Park when they did pose a safety risk.
- Polley received a quote for \$4600 from Kowalski to work on the three major cracks if they would like to do those before getting to the cap. Funds can be allocated to hire this out but as far as a larger Capital Improvement project it doesn't reach the same priority as other projects that have been submitted that aren't being funded. Because this petition was submitted it needs to come to them for discussion. Diny explained that Mr. Johansen circulated the petition and had also spoke to the Community Foundation which could be a potential option for funds. Polley discussed Stewart Park usage. She said other neighborhood groups have funded improvements in parks and there is a process to do so. Kilian felt the number of signatures was noteworthy and they should base their priorities on what the citizens priorities are. Larson would like this to come back when the full costs are known and to discuss different types of funding partnerships. Lukens noted that not all the petitioners were residents of the area and would also appreciate some type of fundraising sharing. Polley reiterated that staff assesses safety, usage, revenue, and ADA access and gives Committee what it feels are project priorities each year. This was assessed and the structural integrity of the wall is not hurt. It does need work which can be done over time. Diny commented that users of the park signed the petition at the park and it was a grass roots effort. He would like to have all the estimates and thought the group may be amenable to helping out. He felt the neighbor's expectation is that it is general maintenance and not a significant improvement or feature they were looking to add.
- Committee members would like to see this item on the next agenda with the full costs and to hear from Mr. Johansen about neighborhood ideas to help with it. Polley said the quotes she is getting are just for the cracks and the cap. She would need other specifics from Mr. Johansen about what the expectations are for a proper quote. Herbst said this item will be taken to the September meeting.
5. Educational Items
- A. Park Updates – Barker Stewart Island Goats – Goats are back and enjoying the buckthorn. Once completed they will return in September. Brockmeyer Park – shelter pad was repoured from frost damage. Schofield Park Parking Lot – received new gravel base and is complete. Lincoln Tot Lot – playground is complete. Trail Tales – book is up from Oak Island boat launch to River Drive offices. Vandalism – has increased in the downtown area, including needle finds. Skate Park – bidding document completion is on hold due to contract delays. It is our hope this can be addressed on our end quickly to keep the project moving forward.
- B. Riverside Park Remediation Update – The remedial excavation had a few delays however the grading, infill, topsoil and erosion control was completed the last week in July to complete the remediation of the park.
6. Future Agenda Items – Stewart Park repairs
7. Next Meeting Date – The next regular scheduled meeting will be at 6:00pm on September 11th in Council Chambers at City Hall, 407 Grant St., Wausau WI 54403.
8. Adjournment – **Motion** by Lukens, second by Larson to adjourn at 6:10pm. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 5-0.