

**City of Blue Earth
Parks and Recreation Subcommittee Minutes
Thursday, August 4, 2022 @ 7:00 AM
Council Chambers at City Hall**

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Ristau called the meeting to order at 7:01 am.

ROLL CALL

Members present: Chair Dan Ristau, Bruce Ankeny, Dave Kittleson, Ryan Northwick, Brenda Smith, and Katie Alford

Also present: City Administrator, Mary Kennedy and Public Works Director, Jamie Holland

MINUTES APPROVAL

Motion by Ankeny, second by Kittleson to approve the minutes of the February 23, 2022, Parks and Recreation Subcommittee Meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Project Updates -Jamie Holland

Holland gave an update on this year's projects, reporting that the only big project for the year was the Steinberg Park bridge, which was \$7,000 more than budgeted for, but the used bridge market has dried up. The bridge will be here in December and can be put in place this winter or next summer. The playgrounds have all been mulched and have required extra watering this year due to the dry weather. Holland also reported that the Fair Board and the campground may have to meet again for a discussion on how the campground is used during fair week. There was a short discussion on a possible name change for 3rd Ward Park before the sign needs replacing next year.

NEW BUSINESS

2023 Capital Expense

Kennedy referred to Chapter 8, Parks and Trails, from the Comprehensive Plan that was included in the packet for viewing. She explained that this plan is an official document and is only updated every 10 years, but it is important to look at when planning a budget. The budget does not just include parks, but also maintenance, mowing, campground expenses, etc. Kennedy provided a spreadsheet of the costs of maintenance of the existing parks and trails each year from 2022-2027, to understand maintenance costs before adding in capital expenditures. Kittleson inquired about the campground expense cost for 2023. Holland reported that adding more camping spots was at one time a Council priority, but that has changed and is not planned at this time. Holland suggested that they are just starting to identify Parks costs separate from the Public Works Department budget, it takes 2-3 years to identify those differences. Holland shared that the contract mowing costs are about \$54,000 alone each summer.

2023 Budget/ 5-Year Plan

Holland suggested he get some feedback and guidance from the committee as to what the goal is for 2023 on top of the maintenance costs, noting that the reported inflation is 8-12%, which he is actually seeing as 20-25% inflation on costs. Kennedy suggested there be a discussion about the

Baseball Associations requests. They have requested dugouts, and more recently, new lights, which would come out of this budget. If not planned, this is really hard on the budget therefore Kennedy suggested a conversation is worth having. Holland added that the budget needs to be spread out fairly among all entities. Holland provided a handout with lighting costs for the varsity field being approximately \$158,000 for materials only and another \$100,000 can be added for installation and new posts. Northwick suggested that if the lights are from the 1950's, they are at the end of their expected life. Smith questioned which would be their priority; lights or a dug out.

The committee agreed that the campground expansion, with attendance down slightly this year, can be pushed back to 2024. The Putnam Park project, which includes the reconstruction of the current footprint to a multi-use facility of some kind, can also wait because that can be planned after the school gets the new Tennis Courts in place. Ristau pointed out that those 2 items reduce the 2023 budget by almost a million dollars but does place it out to another year. Holland again suggested guidance from the committee on the hopes for 2023, while Kennedy reiterated the fact that those conversations need to be done now to be put in the budget for 2023. Kennedy brought forth the idea of a playground in the new housing development to entice people to build there. Kittleson suggested maybe to look at it differently by possibly making it easier to walk/bike to existing parks, for example a path from there, down East Street to 3rd Ward Park. Holland suggested that a separate path is less expensive than widening the road to add a bike lane, as that needs to be weighted for cars. Alford pointed out it would be safer as well. Holland agreed to look into that, do some research, and get the cost estimate back to the group by email and also get some prices on a gaga pit.

OTHER BUSINESS

Kennedy scheduled the next meeting for Thursday, September 1, at 3:00 pm with a park professional from Bolton & Menk to discuss some planning, priorities, and goal setting. Due to members being unable to attend, Kennedy will try to reschedule for a later date.

Kittleson questioned if the Trees line in the 5-year plan was about replacing Ash trees. Ristau explained that with the ash borer disease present in the area, a plan should be in place to treat the trees. Kennedy shared that the DNR has grant programs for doing an inventory on GIS to find where the trees are located, which ones are diseased, which have been removed, etc. Holland suggested they are working on identifying the scenic corridors like South Main Street, where losing trees would change the look completely. Holland also recommended that all the ash trees in the parks be treated because cutting them down would be a more significant cost.

Conversation went back to the budget discussions with suggestions about associations looking for fundraising as well as budgeting. Alford suggested that it should be the responsibility of any association to apply for grants, do fundraising, and do the work before going to the city. Holland replied that it would be a good policy to have. The group then directed Kennedy to draft a policy for them to review.

ADJORN

Motion by Ankeny, second by Alford to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

Chair Ristau adjourned the meeting at 8:22 am.