

**City of Blue Earth
Parks and Recreation Subcommittee Minutes
Wednesday, November 16, 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, Public Works Director; Jamie Holland, City Engineer; Wes Brown and via zoom, Casey Byers

MINUTES APPROVAL

The minutes from the August 8, 2022, meeting were presented for the Board to review.

Motion by Kittleson, second by Smith, to approve the minutes of the August 8, 2022, Parks and Recreation Subcommittee Meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Project Updates -Jamie Holland

Holland gave a brief update noting the parks are good, the campground is now closed, and reported that the Steinberg Bridge will be here late December or early January.

Ash Borer

Wes Brown indicated that there are a couple of grant opportunities through the DNR for doing an inventory of trees, which includes mapping them out with the GIS system which would assist in keeping track of where the Ash trees are located. Brown shared that one grant is for the inventory of the trees and another grant can be used for prevention of Emerald Ash Borer with the grant application due date of March 2023. Kennedy indicated there are many Ash trees located in our parks and down South Main Street. Kennedy also shared that Jamie Holland has found a potential preventative treatment but at a high cost. Brown recommended all trees in the right of way and in the public parks would be treated, not trees on private properties. Kittleson inquired if the Main Street trees could be treated right away versus waiting for an inventory, which could take a significant amount of time. Brown indicated that most grants need the inventory work done before you can go on to the prevention stage.

NEW BUSINESS

Parks Master Plan

Bolton and Menk Parks Professional Casey Byers was in attendance through a zoom call to explain the services they are proposing to provide to complete a Parks Master Plan. Byers explained there are 4 phases of the plan and summarized each phase as follows:

Task One: Community Alignment which includes a kick-off meeting, monthly check-ins, surveys, stakeholders' meetings and other outreach tools to gain public feedback and get the community involved.

Task Two: Inventory and Analysis takes a physical inventory and visual assessment of existing parks, trails, shelters, and other amenities. Data is collected such as identifying missing elements, the life cycle of the equipment, accessibility and identifying maintenance-intensive items.

Task Three: Needs Assessment and Park System Evaluation takes all the information and inventory, as well as comparing it to other parks across the country, to review the recreational needs and identify goals for the future, while developing an understanding of budgeting of park and recreation expenditures. In this phase, all the information is presented at a community open house and more input will be utilized for a draft of the master plan.

Task Four: Recommendation and Action Plan includes the concept diagrams, a 5-year park capital improvement plan, a draft master plan report which then leads to the final report that can be presented to the City Council.

Byers referred to the anticipated project timeline in the agreement indicating it is a 5-month long process and if it were started in mid-December, could be finished in April.

Kennedy suggested that if this committee wants to move forward with this plan, she will need a recommendation to take it to the Council. Kittleson shared that he is in favor of the plan if it fits into the budget. Kennedy suggested that it's in line with the budget if there are no more projects done until a plan is made, indicating that making this master plan is the project for next year. Kennedy shared that in her discussions with Holland and Brown, they agree that having a plan in place will better support ideas that are taken to the Council. Holland added that it is also very important to have this direction when he brings things to the Council. Brown also indicated that having a master plan is also an important piece of the grant process.

Motion by Kittleson, second by Alford, to make a recommendation to the Council for approval of the Agreement from Bolton & Menk to complete a Park System Master Plan. The motion was passed unanimously.

Meeting Dates

Ristau indicated that he would like to see the Parks Committee meet more regularly, either monthly or bi-monthly. After a brief discussion about convenient times for everyone, the group agreed on meeting the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 7:00 am.

OTHER BUSINESS

Leland Parkway

Ristau shared his thoughts on Leland Parkway having great opportunities to take advantage of. Ristau asked the group to think of ideas, to discuss at a future meeting, of ways to improve the area by making it part of the plan and utilizing the area. Brown indicated that Leland Parkway fits well in this planning process, as there are already some amenities there, the skating rink, sledding hill, trails, and other areas with potential, but keeping in mind that there is some flooding there. Kittleson agreed with Ristau's thoughts on Leland Parkway's opportunities and suggested that the Active Living Coalition is focusing on that too. Kittleson extended an invitation to Ristau to the next Active Meeting Coalition meeting to be a part of the discussion.

Policy

Ristau referred to the policy that was discussed at the last meeting for associations and sports groups. Kennedy shared that she would like more direction as what that should look like and the goal of the policy. Ristau indicated that he would just like to see the groups taking the steps and doing their due diligence in preparation before going to the City for funds. Alford described her goal would be to make sure that they are doing the preparation including planning for a year,

fundraisers, grants, and more of the prep work. Just as our committee is making a plan, so should these groups. Holland inquired if there should be a minimal threshold the association or group must commit to or guidelines such as a certain percentage of funds they must raise on their own before coming to the committee for help. Ristau and Alford indicated that was more than fair. Kennedy indicated that a draft policy would have to be approved by the City Council and they would then have to uphold the policy. Kennedy also gave an update that the City and school district have created a Joint Powers Board for all of the facilities that they jointly use. It will be made up of two School Board members, two City Council Members and a Parks Board Member. The hope is once that Board is established, the associations will go directly to that Board to ask for funding and then the representative from each entity will go back to their Board with the information, which improves all communication.

Kennedy agreed to draft a policy to review at the next meeting possibly tying it into the Joint Powers Board.

ADJOURN

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

Chair Ristau adjourned the meeting at 8:02 am.