

City of Blue Earth
Parks and Recreation Subcommittee Minutes
Wednesday, January 18, 2023 @ 6:00 PM
Council Chambers at City Hall

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Ristau called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm

ROLL CALL

Members present: Chair Dan Ristau, Dave Kittleson, Ryan Northwick, Brenda Smith, Katie Alford, Wendy Cole, and Ann Hanna

Also present: City Administrator, Mary Kennedy; Public Works Director, Jamie Holland; City Engineer, Wes Brown; and via Microsoft Teams Casey Byers and Aus Perez, Bolton and Menk

OLD BUSINESS

Parks Master Plan-Kickoff Meeting

Casey Byers, project manager, introduced himself and landscape designer, Aus Perez. Byers presented the agenda he would follow for the meeting to explain the process of creating the Master Plan. Below is a summary of the agenda items:

Progress Update

The park inventory was completed in the Fall and data has been collected. The survey questions have been drafted. The next step will be the analysis of the data.

Overview of Project Scope and Goals

There are 4 components of the project.

1. Community Alignment –surveys, meetings, and a SWOT analysis
2. Inventory and Analysis-looking at and understanding the data collected
3. Needs Assessment and Park System Evaluation-pairing the needs with the information
4. Recommendation and Action Plan- compile the information to prepare the Master Plan

Park Metrics and NRPA (National Recreation and Park Association)

The NRPA compares parks across the country, broken down by categories like population, or by location geographically. This information is used to understand trends and a few example metrics were given.

Community Mapping

A map with a complete list of all the parks was presented and discussed. A graphic showing the distance between all parks was shown as well.

Individual Park Discussion

There was a 5-minute discussion on each park indicating what works well and what may be missing. Some of the comments are as follows:

1. Beyer Field/Leland Park- The south side is well used with sledding hill, ice rink, warming house. Flooding is an issue, especially on the north side, but a possibility of natural playscapes.
2. 14th Street Baseball/Softball fields- Fields are City owned, some buildings and fencing are school owned which causes some confusion. Joint Powers was created to help with this issue.
3. Dog Park- A few complaints that it is too small, could expand to the north, a possible split park with areas for large dogs and areas for small dogs.

4. Green Giant Park- City owns land and does maintenance, Chamber owns some of the buildings.
5. Putnam Park- Two shelters used a lot, tennis courts past life span, pool getting older with costly repairs needed soon.
6. Steinberg Park- Nice shelter added in 2013, adding a walking pedestrian bridge soon to include more use of the SE corner.
7. Third Ward Park-Nice new playground equipment, sheltered sandbox, but needs a new name.
8. Unity Trail- Trails are in good condition, the loop around the fairgrounds will be resurfaced in the next 5 years.

Draft Survey Questions Review

Byers asked that the survey questions be reviewed, and input given. Eventually the survey will be created with an online platform and run live for 4-6 weeks.

Critical Success Factors for the Project

The vision for the plan needs to be understood to gauge the success of the plan. The group agreed that moving forward in planning and prioritizing, with budgeting in mind is a critical piece.

SWOT Analysis

The following is the summary of the input given:

Strengths- the cleanliness and maintenance of our parks, multiple parks in several locations, lots of recent improvements, nearly 10 miles of trails, and an engaged Park Board.

Weaknesses- quantity of staff, (no Parks Department) lack of budget, lack of vision, groups with their own agenda, backlog of big projects that need attention soon.

Opportunities- connecting the trails, housing development park, the river, Giant Park, Putnam Park's tennis court area being redone.

Threats- safety concern (tennis courts), competing interests, and division of ideas.

Project Timeline

Byers indicated that the survey would go live in the next couple of weeks using social media, the city website, through schools and other organizations or groups. After the survey is complete, an open house with the community will be scheduled, possibly in March, to roll out ideas. Byers added that the Master Plan will be a guiding resource to move forward and will involve the whole community.

ADJOURN

Motion by Kittleson, second by Hanna, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Ristau adjourned the meeting at 8:00 pm.