

HARTFORD PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MINUTES

Wednesday, July 6, 2022

5:30 PM – City Hall Council Chambers

Present: Todd Rusniak, Karin Buhle, Joe Kohler, Ken Mikulec, John Klabecek, Scott Helms

Excused: Kate Carroll

1. President Rusniak called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM; "This is an open meeting under 19.81 to 19.98 of the Wisconsin State Statutes".
2. Approval of Minutes – **MOTION BY** Kohler, seconded by Buhle to approve June minutes.
MOTION CARRIED
3. Informational Monthly Staff Reports – None
4. Communication and Correspondence – None
5. Appearances / Public Comments – None
6. Old Business – None
7. New Business

ADMINISTRATION

Introduction of Randy Wojtasiak – The Director introduced Randy Wojtasiak, the new Parks and Recreation Director. Randy volunteered his time on Monday, July 4 helping with the 4th of July fireworks. His official start date was July 5. As the former Recreation Supervisor, Randy comes into the position with a great deal of knowledge of the Department and City. The current Director expects a smooth transition as he prepares for his retirement on July 29.

2023 Operational Budget Plans and Discussions –

New Additional Full Time Park Maintenance Proposal – Executive Summary – City Administrator, Steve Volkert and the Director Mike Hermann outlined the following on the new position request. The Parks Department, which also includes two Cemeteries, operates with a staff of 3 full time positions since as far back as 1979. However, since 1979, the growth in the community and parks has been significant. Staff is finding it extremely difficult to keep up with general park and cemetery maintenance much less special projects. In addition, the re-development of Centennial Park and further development of Homestead Park, will add even more maintenance and general upkeep for staff.

The Director is requesting a new full-time staff to be added. The Request for Additional Staff form as required by the City Administrator completed by the Director was shared with the Commission. It outlines the growth in the City's parks in acreage, sites, number of shelters maintained, and amenities since 1979. It also included a number of pictures of some of the maintenance projects that need to be done but cannot be with the limited man power.

Commissioner Mikulec fully supports the additional help but he commented that going forward we should focus on keeping up with maintenance at all existing parks prior to developing new parks like the future Beine-Southwest Park.

Adding an additional full-time, year-round staff member, including benefits and fringe, would be \$94,901.72. This would be fully funded by the tax levy.

MOTION BY – Kohler, seconded by Klabecek to approve the addition of one new fulltime Parks-Cemetery Equipment Operator for the 2023 City budget.

MOTION CARRIED

Additional Afternoon Office Aide Proposal – To assist with office functions a part time seasonal/year round position is being proposed. Currently 11 full office hours are covered by two fulltime staff. Presently, there is a seasonal afternoon aide that works 3 – 6 PM to help when one full time staff leaves so there are two staff working. However, the workload in the last 20 years has increased with the increase in the population as well as programming in particular drop in programs and the Silver Memberships. Increased traffic causes constant interruptions in the office work. With just front desk duties/work, little time is available for office staff to help with other management projects. The Office Manager works an additional 3-5 hours per week and more when the other office staff member is out. Flexing time is difficult, as is taking PTO, as it requires the two program managers to cover office hours which takes them away from their own duties.

Staff is proposing adding another office aid to work 12-3 Monday – Friday. The fiscal impact is \$10,076. Increases in drop in programming (gym, pickleball, toddler play time, drop-in soccer/volleyball) as well as room rental costs would be increased to help fund this administrative expense.

MOTION BY – Rusniak, seconded by Helms to approve the addition of an afternoon office aid.

MOTION CARRIED

Plans to Adjust Seasonal Wages - As staff works on the operational/program budgets, close attention will be made to staff wages. The goal will be to get most if not all wages in the \$10-\$15 range. The increased expense would need to be offset with increase in program fees.

VMAC Annual Increases to Day Pass Fees – Executive Summary – Washington County offered to use AARP funds to help us increase aquatic staff position wages. This assistance will gradually be reduced over the next 5 years. In 2023 we will need to cover 20% of this increase expense, 40% in 2024, then 60%, 80% and by 2027 the City will have to fully fund the aquatic salary expenses. To offset the wage expense, staff will incrementally increase daily admissions by .25 each year.

The Commission wondered if season passes would be increased as well. The Director affirmed that season passes would also be raised.

Commissioner Klabecek would like to see more diligence in asking for ID to help decrease patrons getting resident rates when they do not live in the City. He understands that the young admission staff will likely not know the exact addresses in the City, but would like to see more effort to check if their address is even Hartford.

President Rusniak asked if the County subsidies over the 5 years would vary based on if other pool/aquatic facilities re-open. The City Administrator confirmed the subsidies would stay the same regardless.

Commissioner Helms questioned if the increase in pay rates has helped with staffing issues. The Aquatic/Fitness Supervisor commented that with the pool already opened when this increase was approved, it was not timely to fully help with hiring. However, it has seemed that staff are a bit more willing to pick up additional shifts where there are openings. The season end bonus being offered this year likely helps with that as well. He explained that in addition to the increase in pay, the County is also offering a one-time payment at the end of summer based on the number of hours a staff member works. The Aquatic / Fitness Supervisor did say that the increase in pay has helped with adult guards at the Indoor Pool. Many of the older guards are more willing to work for the \$13/hr vs. the \$10.

MOTION BY –Helms, seconded by Klabecek to approve the five year daily admissions fee increase as proposed.

MOTION CARRIED

RECREATION PROGRAMS / ACTIVITIES

No Report

ADULT / YOUTH SPORT

No Report

AQUATICS

Signicast Aquatic Center – New Water Feature Project and CIP Budget Update – The current CIP includes \$2,500 for the design, engineering and permits for a new water feature to replace the current one. Staff believes a new feature will significantly add novel and exciting interest to the 22 year old aquatic center. At the WPRA conference, staff spoke with a company called WaterPlay regarding doing a site evaluation and proposal.

Working with WaterPlay and a self-design software program they have, the Aquatic Fitness Supervisor designed a preliminary water feature. The feature includes a 'climb slide' – a very popular feature with young kids at the outdoor pool – and interchangeable spray features. The biggest challenge was to be sure the feature fit, leaving space for other pool activities; in particular, swim lessons.

Based on this preliminary design, the cost, delivered and installed would be \$78,200. Staff will be recommending the 2023 CIP for this project be adjusted to \$85,000. Funding for this already includes \$29,000 approved from the GO Debt. The balance could be from the Recreation Center Fund Balance and/or sponsorships.

This project will likely be scheduled while taking into consideration the pool re-surfacing project which was pushed back from this summer due to increased cost. When staff is ready to move forward with this new water feature project, formal proposals/bids will be requested. The Director did comment that he was very impressed with WaterPlay, their staff, product and warranty.

PARKS OPERATIONS

Parks Report – As usual, very few special projects were completed.

On Going Work –

- Mowing and Trimming
- Restroom Cleaning
- Shelter Preparation
- Cemetery Care and Burials
- Ball Diamonds Preparation
- Playground Equipment Inspection and Repairs

Special Work for June Activities

- Sawyer Park Cleanup For Flag Day
- Riverwalk Work with VBH
- Repairs to Skatepark
- July 4th Preparations
- Rotary Bridge New Bench Site Preparation
 - Excavated Area and Prepared Base Gravel and Reinforced Abutment
- Site Preparations for Baseball Club Tournament

Fourth of July Fireworks Summary / Evaluation – Despite the weather being a bit uncooperative, the fireworks were held. With sponsorship from Festival Foods, the show had bigger shells for a bigger show. This meant a new location, with less obstructions in the vicinity of the show, was needed. Independence Park was the best location. The fireworks company commented that they liked the new location as it had more room and less obstructions of poles/lighting/fencing. The Festival Foods representative that was on site was pleased with the event. She is responsible for over 36 firework shows for Festival. As expected, the only hiccup (non weather related) was traffic flow after the event as there is only one road that leads into and out of the park. Recreation Director, Fire Chief, Police Chief and City Administrator will be meeting next week to discuss ways to improve the event.

Parks Tour – The Commission went on site to the following Parks.

HOMESTEAD PARK – Commission discussed adding park amenities such as playground equipment and an open shelter (no bathrooms) to this 4 acre site. \$100,000 is in the current CIP. A shelter will cost around \$30,000 and with concrete walkway and electric up to another \$20,000. Playground equipment would be about \$50,000. The Director recommends adding a swing set as well. Due to increased Centennial Park costs, CIP Projects like Homestead require some reduction for the short term, therefore, it might not be possible, with this CIP, to get both shelter and equipment. Minimally, the Commission felt playground equipment should get installed spending about \$50,000. Commissioner Mikulec, on behalf of a resident of the park's subdivision, asked how soon the equipment might be installed. The Director believes the new Director could have it in place by this Fall.

CENTENNIAL PARK – Visual oversight of the upcoming park re-development and pond retaining wall was reviewed.

ROTARY PARK – The Director pointed out the new rain gutters and water barrels installed on the pavilion to serve the educational prairie garden which was put in near the pavilion. This was done by a Rotary member. The garden will have an educational placard with basic instructions on how to start a prairie garden. The Rotary organization is strong on education and this project fits well with their mission.

The Eagle Scout Project next to the Rotary Bridge was also reviewed. This project is being done on an old bridge abutment. This abutment serves nicely as a fishing platform. The Eagle Scout will be installing concrete, a bench and rail (as asked for by Alderperson Kohler).

CANDY CANE PARK – The Director informed the Commission that the bushes along the west property line were removed. These bushes belonged to the resident west of the park. City crew helped him remove the bushes and he installed fencing. This small neighborhood park serves the needs of the homes and apartments in the area yet has not gotten a lot of attention as far as updates to the equipment. Staff has budgeted \$25,000 in the 2025 CIP for equipment upgrades. However, family of a former Hartford DPW Director, John Nightingale, approached the City about making a significant donation for new equipment in their father's memory. With this donation, the CIP budget for this park will likely not be needed and the project will likely be able to be done sooner using the donation.

VETERANS PARK – The Commission was able to get a visual of where, potentially, the mono-pole cell tower would be located. Also discussed were the repairs made to the skate park equipment. Some of the panels on the ramps were replaced and some of the decks were reinforced underneath the ramp. Overall, staff is impressed with how well this equipment has held up over the years.

VETERANS MEMORIAL POOL – The tour ended with the Commission Stopping at VMAC

OTHER REPORTS /COMMISSION REQUESTS

Commissioner Helms thank Director Mike Hermann for his years of service and wished him a happy retirement.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY Mikulec, seconded by Helms to adjourn at 8:05 PM.

MOTION CARRIED

Submitted by,

Mike Hermann and Sara Cummings

"Persons with disabilities requiring special accommodations for attendance at the meeting should contact the City Clerk at least one (1) business day prior to the meeting." Members of the Common Council may attend the above meeting. Pursuant to State ex rel. Badke v. Greendale Village Board, 173 Wis. 2d 553, 494 N.W. 2d 408 (1993) such attendance may be considered a meeting of the Common Council may attend the meeting without violating the open meeting law."