

# MEETING MINUTES

RECORDED BY: Melonie Trang

MEETING PURPOSE: PRC Board Meeting

MEETING DATE  
AND LOCATION: June 8, 2016  
Community Center



ATTENDEES: PRC Board Members:

Rick DeVore, Tom Rupsis, Dayton Rush, Lew Morris, Mark Wahl, Darwin George, Rich Lorenz, Marcia Clausing

PRPL Staff Members:

Mike Whitaker, Director

Kory Thomson, Recreation Superintendent

Jon Thompson, Park Superintendent

Lee Stadtmiller, Cemetery Superintendent

Chris Waite, Volunteer Coordinator

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## I. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Chairman Rick DeVore called the meeting to order at 11:28

### A. INTRODUCTIONS

Pat Weber, City Finance Director

Mike Ferguson, Billings Gazette

Harry Miller, Billings Resident

### B. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

*No May minutes to approve*

### C. ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

None

## II. DIRECTORS REPORT – Michael Whitaker

- Phipps Park is currently closed due to a recent rock slide. Plans are to have a geologist come out and inspect the site for any possible future slides. He will continue to keep the board updated on the situation.
- The roofs on the Amend restrooms have all been replaced by the city. Cost for the project was around \$2,500. The City covered the costs.
- We have a partnership with the senior non-profit organization the “Billings Senior Citizens”. They do the majority of the senior related programs next door in the Senior and Community Center. Over the years they have been purchasing land adjacent to our parking across the street from our office. Recently they have proposed to the city that they would like to deed the land to the city so the city can

build a parking lot. The proposal will be going before Council for their approval at an upcoming meeting.

### **III. PUBLIC/BOARD COMMENT**

None

### **IV. OLD BUSINESS**

#### **A. Rose Pool Bathhouse Fire:**

Rose pool is scheduled to open today. The roofing, plumbing, and electrical repairs are complete enough to make the bathhouse usable. There is also power to a shack that was donated by Pepsi for a concession stand.

#### **B. Funding Undeveloped Parkland:**

A subcommittee was formed by the board and staff to discuss funding options for undeveloped/underdeveloped parkland. Members of the committee included Rick DeVore, Tom Rupsis, Dayton Rush, Catherine Grott, Marcia Clausing, Rich Lorenze, and PRPL staff.

A Powerpoint presentation from information collected at the committee meetings was prepared by Rick and Tom and presented to the full board and staff.

“Building a Greater Billings” discusses the parks current state, park development history, issues the parks are facing, and recommendations on how to help solve some of those issues.

Some of the points presented and discussed were:

- Undeveloped parkland suitable for development includes Centennial, Coulson, Cottonweed, Lampman and Wilson.
- Underdeveloped parks include Castle Rock, High Sierra, Optimist, Descro and Lampman Strip.
- Park usage is growing given the success of PD1 funding.
- The 2014 Needs Assessment showed that the community needs and wants more dog parks, sports fields, a recreation center, aquatic facilities, etc.
- The city has not developed a new community/regional park since Castle Rock in 1982 and was only partially developed.
- Park land acquisition and development requires large upfront costs that don’t fit well into general fund finances.
- All new parks built since 1982 have been neighborhood parks developed by SIDS and maintained by PMD’s.
- Possible proposed funding solutions are:
  - **Option 1** to increase PD1 annual assessment. This means the current amount would increase to from \$2M to \$4M The first year would be \$2M for Centennial Park infrastructure. Year 2 would be \$2M for Centennial Park completion. Year 3 and beyond would for Castle Rock, Coulson, etc. and assessment increase determined by project priority and cost. The advantages would be interest free development “Pay as you go” and flexibility in annual planning. Disadvantages with option would be higher near term increase to

PD1 assessment, high potential for loss of interest/support and some projects cannot be broken into multiple years due to expense. This option is based on approval from City Council.

- **Option 2** would be for Council to authorize the City of Billings to issue Revenue Bonds in order to acquire and develop parkland and facilities in Billings. Bonds would be issued over a 20-year period with Council giving a total maximum bond authority of up to \$15M with a series of bonds sold over several years. Bonds would be used within 2 years of issuance. Bonds would be repaid via an increase to annual PD1 assessment. Initial bond issuance would be \$5M and would be used to develop Centennial and Castle Rock Parks. Additional bonds for projects during the remainder of the 20-year period would be subject to Council approval such as Coulson, Lampman and Cottonwood. The maximum impact at the end of the 20 year would be \$1.35 increase to total city wide PD1 assessment and approximately \$22.50 per year for a \$200,000 property. Advantages with this option would be higher up front capital for development, lower increases to annual PD1 assessment and potential for larger scale projects. Disadvantages would be financing and interest costs and resistance to debt issuance by citizens.

There were 2 kinds of bonds discussed; General Bond and Revenue Bond. A General Bond is voted and approved by the taxpayer. A Revenue Bond is Council approval. An example of Revenue Bonds used is PD1. Council approves and controls the amount each year for PD1/Revenue Bonds.

Plans for the department are to focus on building infrastructure and core services, look for private contributions for upgraded amenities and look into grants to reduce tax payer costs.

It was expressed that Option 2 seems easier and more palatable to present to Council plan option.

There were concerns with both options affecting what was presented to the community back when PD1 was being sold to the community, as a way to pay for deferred maintenance and not for building new facilities. A comment was made that the sub-committee in presenting these 2 options, was not looking at changing what PD1 is currently funding but to instead, add to PD1 as a way to find additional funding for the much needed development of our parks. It was also expressed that in the documentation for PD1 it did not say that it would be created strictly for deferred maintenance. It did say that it could not be used for any Recreational programming.

PRPL staff spoke on the increase over the last 5 years in the usage of our city's parks. It was indicated that during our busy the department on average per week

has 50-60 shelter rentals, 15+ large special events, and 3-4 thousand people at those large special events. It was noted that the number of people in our parks for special events does not include the general public using the parks for picnic, walk, play, etc. Staff commented that they have had to tell user groups they could not use some of our more popular parks such as Pioneer and Veterans, because there was not enough room. Jon Thompson expressed from the parks side of view that the increased of usage has affected the maintenance. He said often they have had to change the whole watering or mowing schedule to accommodate a large group/event in a park.

No action was taken on either options presented. It was decided to postpone any further discussion until more information had been collected. Board and staff will pick up the discussion at an upcoming board meeting.

**C. Billings Softball Agreement:**

Due to time constraint, discussion on the agreement was postponed until next month.

**VI. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Swords Rimrock Park Issues:**

There have been some concerns brought up regarding safety and vandalism at Swords Park.

Harry Miller, a concerned citizen expressed his concerns to staff and the board regarding littering and vandalism. He suggested locking the gates, install cameras and speed bumps, have patrols of the area and charge huge fines for littering as a possible answer to the problems/issues.

Jon Thompson said there have problems with safety and vandalism throughout all of our parks. He understood that Swords is a little more unique since it is in a more remote area where people can walk or drive back into off road/trail areas out of site. He said the department has installed gates to help with some of the concerns. The first one is located at Yellowstone Kelly's gravesite and is closed/locked year round. The other gate, by the parking lot is kept open except when there is snow, then staff will close it. He said due to staffing issues the gate is not closed at night but staff does have a regular presence during the day light hours. They are usually up there picking up trash, cleaning the restroom, checking the trails, etc. Jon said staff is working closely with law enforcement and Bike Patrol to better keep an eye on our parks. He also explained that staff is constantly working on making sure things are locked up, graffiti is removed, and vandalism is repaired right away in all of our parks including Swords.

Volunteer Coordinator Chris spoke on the department recently taking over the Bike Patrol operation. He explained the patrol is a group of volunteers who go all over the city as the eyes and ears on what is going on in our parks and community. He explained they are not law enforcement but can call 911 if they

see any suspicious.

Due to time it was decided to have further discussion on Swords issues at next month's meeting.

**B. Facility Naming Request:**

Jim Sommerville sent a letter to the PRPL staff requesting to name the larger ball field at Centennial Park after Cecil Musburger, the gentleman who started Little League in Billings.

Rick DeVore said a memorial sign, if the naming is approved by Council, would be installed next to the scoreboard above the fence. It would be around 12 x 18-24 ft.

The board was asked for their recommendation for the Council to approve the naming of the lard field at Centennial to "Musburger Field".

*Board member Lew Morris approved. Board Chair Rick DeVore abstained since he is currently on the Little League Board. Board member Darwin George seconded. On a voice vote, all were in favor and the motion passed.*

**VII. DIVISION REPORTS**

**A. Recreation Division-Recreation Superintendent Kory Thomson:**

Recreation Superintendent Kory Thomson's report was handed out at the beginning of the meeting. A copy of the report is in the 2016 board binder.

**B. Park/Urban Forestry Division-Park Superintendent Jon Thompson:**

Park Superintendent Jon Thompson's report was handed out at the beginning of the meeting. A copy of the report is in the 2016 board binder. No additions to his report.

**C. Park Planning Division-Park Planner Mark Jarvis:**

Park Planner Mark Jarvis report was sent out to the board for review. A copy of the report is in the 2016 board binder. Michael touch on a few of his current projects presented in his report.

**D. Volunteer Coordinator's Report-Chris Waite:**

Volunteer Coordinator Chris Waite's report was handed out at the beginning of the meeting. A copy of the report is in the 2016 board binder. No additions to his report.

**E. Cemetery Division-Cemetery Superintendent Lee Stadtmiller:**

Cemetery Superintendent Lee Stadtmiller report was sent out to the board for review. A copy of the report is in the 2016 board binder. In addition to his report he said the fee increase for the Cemetery will go before Council this month.

**VII. ADJOURNMENT - 1:10 pm**