

MEETING MINUTES

RECORDED BY: Chris Waite

MEETING PURPOSE: PRC Board Meeting

MEETING DATE March 14, 2018
AND LOCATION: Community Center

ATTENDEES: PRC Board Members:
Rick DeVore, Rich Lorenz, Mark Wahl, Tom Rupsis, Lew Morris, Tim Warburton, Chuck Platt, Clark Johnson

PRPL Staff Members:
Mike Whitaker, Director
Kory Thomson, Recreation Superintendent
Mike Pigg, Park Superintendent
Lee Stadtmiller, Cemetery Superintendent
Mark Jarvis, Park Planner
Chris Waite, Volunteer Coordinator



I. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Board chair Rick DeVore called the meeting to order at 11:03 AM

A. INTRODUCTIONS

Mayor Bill Cole

B. ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

Park Signage added to Old Business

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of the February minutes was postponed until the April meeting

II. DIRECTORS REPORT – Michael Whitaker

Mike Pigg reported on the snow impact on parks and sports. Staff are receiving daily requests to plow fields for youth sports groups. Little League wants to begin as soon as possible, however, the fields are still snow covered. The first games are scheduled for April 16th. The snow has delayed park field inspections. Once snow does clear, the department is expecting immediate high use.

Rick noted that the leagues have moved up their schedule in recent years. This has impacted the beginning of the season. Weather delays are common.

III. PUBLIC/BOARD COMMENT

None

VI. OLD BUSINESS

A. Park Project Update:

Michael Whitaker and Mark Jarvis presented an update on current projects.

- Hawthorne Park Playground Equipment- The equipment is ordered and will be the first inclusive playground. The playground will include a companion swing.
- Rose Pool Operations Building- The project is moving ahead quickly. The contractors are currently finishing the drywall and will proceed to the painting. The windows installation and exterior painting will take place in April.
- South Park Sprayground- The project is over 95% complete. The remaining items are scheduled to be done by April 19. Landscaping still remains to be finished. Staff will receive training on sprayground operation also.
- Optimist Park Parking Lot- Currently on hold until snow clears.
- Rose Park Playground Equipment Replacement- The Department has applied for \$150,000 LWCF Grant to enhance this project.

Lew asked about the snow dropped on Amend Park Parking Lot. He inquired whether it has damaged the surface or not?

Mike Pigg responded that the Streets Department will come in and repair the lot. They are waiting for asphalt plants to open before the repairs can be done.

B. Park Signage:

Rick said that an issue was brought up during a visit with Councilwoman Penny Ronning regarding park signage. She expressed concerns about feeding ducks inappropriate foods. She asked if the Department was considering signage about appropriate human/duck interactions. Michael said the goal is to add signage in major parks. This will primarily include information kiosks that will have key park information.

Mark Jarvis commented that if there are too many signs, it becomes sight pollution. Signage needs to be done tastefully.

Rick expressed concern that some of the existing park signs are leaning. He asked if the department can start installing kiosks. A suggestion was made to use Park District One (PD1) funding. Mark responded that signage protocol in place already that can be used. However, funding needs to be identified.

Michael suggested starting with the signs that are in the poorest shape. Additionally, park rules need to be updated.

Michael explained that Park Officer Lam would like to update park ordinances so there is easier enforcement procedure.

C. Park Funding:

Rick provided an additional update on the meeting with Councilwoman Ronning and the Park Funding Plan. He and Tom have completed all scheduled meetings with current the City Council members. Rick feels there is support by the Council for the park funding project. He feels the three-pronged approach is essential to get the parks funded (Cash in lieu, PD1 and the City's reserve funds). They are seeking direction from City Administrator Bruce McCandless, on when this project can go back to Council. Currently, Bruce wants to meet with the Mayor, Park Board Representatives and staff to talk about it one more time before going to council.

Lew suggested talking to the current city council members in addition to new members to make sure they are informed of the project.

Michael Whitaker said it is beneficial to meet with all council members.

Mayor Cole presented some items that may conflict with the PD1 park development funding. The first was water assessments. There is a question about whether Public Works should require other departments to pay water fees. There is a state statute that requires cities to charge other entities for water. The question is, does that apply to other departments. The City Attorney presented a legal opinion that the City doesn't need to charge other departments for water based on an attorney general's opinion. Although it doesn't require the City to charge departments for water, the City can still choose to do that. The Mayor encouraged the Parks Department to continue to implement water conservation measures.

In response to the Mayors comments on water conservation, Mike Pigg provided an update that 4 parks are getting wells or using ditch water to eliminate need of city water. Additionally, the Park staff are converting the irrigations systems to new ones that will reduce water consumption between 20-30%. Lastly, South Park sprayground is a recirculating system that will conserve water.

Mayor Cole suggested getting public attention on all the water savings efforts.

Mike mentioned that Veterans Park was switched from a manual to an automated system. Other upcoming changes are scheduled for North Park and Poly Vista Park also.

The Mayor continued on to the PD1 Park Development plan stating that there is not much discussion at the council level yet. However, the Mayor ran on a platform that acknowledged that no major parks had been developed. He encouraged the park board to have specific plans for how the development funds will be used. It is important for the park board members to speak at Council Meetings. Increasing PD1 to \$1 million a year would not solve the \$120 million park projects identified in Park Comprehensive Plan. He sees this as a deficit that needs to be address.

VII. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Facilities and Parks Tour:

Michael proposed the idea of holding a parks tour for the Park Board. The City Administrator had suggested holding a park tour that is open to the city council.

Mike Pigg proposed holding it in May.

Rick recommended doing it in addition to monthly meeting.

Michael said the tour typically lasts 1 ½ to 2 hours. We would use one of the Recreation buses and during the tour, the board can view completed projects.

Tom suggested including the heights parks since most of the board members live on the west end.

B. Sports Tourism:

Michael explained that a local group hired a consultant to assess the feasibility of sports tourism in Yellowstone County. A presentation will be given on March 19th at 3p at the Bighorn Resort. This assessment could have great impact on the department.

The South Billings Urban Renewal Association (SBURA) is looking at building a facility adjacent to Amend Park and have included it in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). They would also like to make improvements to Amend.

Tom asked how it was added to CIP. Michael responded that SBURA is a funding source and the facility will potentially be operated by Parks. SBURA is also a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district.

Kory said the main identified components of the facility include swimming, sports courts and ice. It is still very early in the planning phase.

Tom asked if SBURA is providing 100% of the funding. Mike responded that they are providing 100% of the funding for construction however, the TIF funds cannot be used for operating costs.

Rick asked where the land for this project is. Mike Pigg said it is unclear yet where they plan to develop.

Michael Whitaker said staff plans to attend the meeting and stay engaged in the process. According to Comprehensive Plan, indoor recreation opportunities are very deficient in Billings. The Recreation Department plans to stay involved as a partner moving forward.

VIII. DIVISION UPDATES:

A. Recreation Division-Recreation Superintendent Kory Thomson:

Highlights from the written Recreation staff report;

- Summer Brochure is being completed and will be distributed in Simply Family Magazine
- The division is working on an awareness campaign with Q2 that will include social media and charter.
- The division is in the process of hiring 150 seasonal employees.
- Winter programs are wrapping up.

B. Park/Urban Forestry Division – Interim Park Superintendent Mike Pigg:

Highlights from the written Parks and Forestry staff report;

- Staffing levels reached 100% by filling the three open positions
- Seasonal employee meeting is scheduled for April
- Urban Forestry is working on Emerald Ash Borer Plan

C. Park Planning Division – Park Planner Mark Jarvis:

Mark had nothing to add to written report.

D. Volunteer Coordinator Report – Chris Waite:

Chris had nothing to add to written report.

E. Cemetery Division – Cemetery Superintendent Lee Stadtmiller:

Lee had nothing to add to his written report.

IX. AJOURNMENT – 12:37 pm