



PRC PARK BOARD MEETING MINUTES

RECORDED BY: Melonie Trang, Administrative Support II

MEETING PURPOSE: Monthly Meeting

MEETING DATE: June 12, 2024

LOCATION: Parks and Recreation Office - Conference Room

ATTENDEES:

PRC Board Members: Thom MacLean, Jon Thompson, Melissa Henderson, Laura Drager, Maia Dickerson, Chuck Platt, Jami Clark, Mark Sulser

PRPL Staff Members: Mike Pigg, Director; Cole McQuillan, Parks Superintendent; Kory Thomson, Recreation Superintendent; Brandon Schmidt Cemetery Supervisor, John Gayvert, Parks Project Manager; Brad Wright, Parks Project Manager

City Staff Members: Elyse Monat, Active Transportation Planner

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:

Chairman Thom MacLean called the meeting to order at 11:03AM

PUBLIC ATTENDEE:

Amand Kelly, Peter O'Brian, Rusty Steele, Bruce Waage, Isac Augustine

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA:

Park Project added to the agenda

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: *Chairman MacLean requested approval of the May 8 and March 13, 2024, minutes. Board member Jami Clark made a motion to approve. Board member Melissa Henderson seconded. On a voice vote, motion passed.*

DIRECTORS REPORT: Director Mike Pigg recognized Parks Project Managers John Gayvert and Brad Wright. He said the reason for the department being able to work on projects and get so many done is because of Brad and John.

Updates:

- Due to the lack of enough lifeguards, the department will not be opening the wading pools. The state law requires wading pools to have at least 3 lifeguards, and we

currently do not have enough lifeguards hired to pull them away from South and Rose pools to cover them.

- Forestry Grant job description (project manager/outreach coordinator) has been approved; will be advertising the position at the end of the month and someone should be hired by the end of July.

Chairman MacLean asked if the department would be in charge of the tree board or someone else. Mr. Pigg said it would come under us but since it is a city-wide board, he hopes that someone from Public Works will also take some responsibility.

PUBLIC/BOARD COMMENT:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

A. Recreation Update-Kory Thomson, Recreation Superintendent:

- Started swim and tennis lessons this week
- Summer registration has had a tremendous start; camps are at or near capacity
- We have hired for all our camp counselors; still have a shortage of lifeguards, currently we are at 32 and we need around 40. Plans are to run another lifeguard certification class in hopes to attract 10-15 more lifeguards by July 1. We currently pay our lifeguards \$15 an hour. 15 years you can guard with limitations/16 years you can guard without limitations.
- Working with HR to increase seasonal wages
- Rec2U started this week, we have expanded to two more locations, attendance numbers are strong
- Doing swim lessons for about 80 students from Friendship House at South Park pool

B. Parks Update-Cole McQuillan, Parks Superintendent:

- Senior Equipment Operator position opened last week; this position is to replace Don Pulver who retired last month. Interviews should be held next week; this position is being advertised internally
- The new City Arborist started last month. His name is Brian, and he comes to us from CM Tree Service and is a certified Arborist.
- The cemetery also got a new hire, he was a seasonal for us and has been hired as a full-time employee
- School lunch programs start today in various parks throughout the city; Pioneer, Castlerock, Veterans and North Park
- Spraygrounds are open
- Cemetery Supervisor Brandon Schmidt has taken over Weed Abatement
- Starting our big events schedule which adds to our staff time; upcoming big event is Symphony in the Parks

C. Project Updates-John Gayvert and Brad Wright, Project Managers:

- Bid for Castle Rock parking lot was awarded to K2 Civil
- Bid for the Grandview irrigation automation was granted to Good Earth Works
- Playground at Highland has been installed; waiting for the fall protection to be delivered
- Adult exercise equipment has been installed; waiting now for replacement parts after it had been vandalized
- North Park restroom has been installed; waiting now for the final inspection
- Tennis courts at Pioneer Park are scheduled to be demolished the week of June 10
- K2 Civil is continuing the grade work at the Poly Vista parking lot
- Painting on the Skypoint poles will begin June 17th
- North Park dog park project is currently under way; completion is projected to be done at the end of June
- Spring improvements at Dehler Park are complete
- Out to bid on the Castle Rock restroom
- Disc golf tee installation is scheduled to begin at North Park the week of June 10
- Grand opening of North Park should be sometime at the end of June
- Shade structure for High Sierra Dog Park has been ordered from Playspace Designs. It is scheduled to be delivered sometime in September.

Elyse Monet said they are finally getting the Rose Park trail project kicked off. She also said the final “Mobilization Billings” art piece will be installed right next to North Park with the ribbon cutting on June 22nd.

D. Barn Swallow Boy Scout Project Update - Isac Augustin:

Isac Augustine said he did a Barn Swallow nesting site at Rose Park. The project was finished two months ago. He said the birds have shown some interest in the site. The importance of building this nesting site is due to the fact that the Barn Swallow is close to being on the endangered species list. Mr. Augustine said he is hoping that building this will help to increase their population and bring awareness to them here in Billings.

E. Coulson Park Eagle Scout Project - Emerson Eckhardt:

Emerson Eckhardt said she is doing an Eagle Scout project to clean up Coulson Park specifically start at the first parking lot and clean up all the overgrowth and trash along the path(s) until you get the bridge and the area around the path(s) to the river. She said her plans are to do the cleanup on June 27 and 28.

F. Skate Park Group Update - Peter O'Brian:

Peter O'Brian did a presentation on the design rendering concept for the Skate Park.

- Separate areas; beginner and intermediate sections
- There is no bathroom in the rendering; feel it is not safe. Working on a different location and restroom for the park.
- Alley next to park would be walking access only

- Updating the parking lot attached to the park; closing it off and using it for public events such as concerts

He said they are working with Musco Lighting to put up six lights. Northwestern Energy has agreed to service those lights for free off one of the light poles.

Board member Thompson commented there should be a restroom at the park.

Board member Platt asked if there was funding to make the changes to the park. Mr. O'Brian said no but they are doing fundraising.

Board Chairman MacLean commented his concern for the lack of green space shown in the rendering. He hopes to add green space to the parking lot area. Mr. O'Brian said with the parking updates he hopes more green space will be added. He also commented that he has not seen people using the current green space in the park for such things as frisbee or volleyball. Mr. Pigg said the parking lot will be more of a park atmosphere than a parking lot with areas of green grass for people to sit and enjoy concerts.

Board member Thompson asked if we are working with the Parking Division on the parking lot overall concept. Mr. Pigg said yes, that is the plan.

Mr. O'Brian said they are planning to take the concept to City Council for their input.

G. PRPL Budget Update - PRPL Staff:

At the regular City Council meeting on Monday June 10, City Council approved the FY25 Budget. Included in the Council's approval of the FY25 Budget, funds were cut from PRPL budget to help fund additional Police officers. The board expressed their frustration and concerns on how much was cut from the department's budget.

The board expressed they would like to see the department receive an additional Park Police officer(s).

City Council approved to increase the Parks Program Fund by \$615,000 to fund the Stagecoach trail. Mr. Pigg said he agreed that we need this trail, but something will have to give to maintain that trail. Chairman MacLean asked where the money for the Parks Program comes from. Mr. Pigg said we generate funds from things like the lease for cell tower at Stewart Park and those funds are pulled out of that account and put into the Parks Program Fund.

Board member Thompson said he is seeing a decline in the maintenance of our parks but said it was not due to anything the department is doing but because of lack in funding to maintain parkland. He feels the department is being stretched too thin.

It was commented that if things do not change for the department, the parks are going to suffer and start failing.

Mr. Thompson asked if City Council was interested in going back out to the voters to do another PD1. Mr. Pigg said no.

Board member Dickerson asked if staff keep track of what is actually failing in our parks or what we have to replace because of vandalism or things happening in parks that cannot be controlled. Mr. Pigg said, more or less everything is lumped together.

Board member Platt asked what percentage of city's budget goes to the Police Department. Mr. Pigg said 93% of the general fund goes to Fire and Police.

Mr. Pigg said staff is currently working on another presentation that will be back to the board that will show what things are failing in our parks and why they are failing. He said they will also show this presentation to Council.

H. Art Park Projects - Mike Pigg:

Councilman Boyett has presented to staff two art projects he would like to have installed along Skyline Trail. The first piece is a large metal tricycle, second piece is two metal flowers. Concerns and comments from staff and board on the tricycle; tricycle could be used as a play piece, does not show to have a really secure way of attaching it down, could be removed and used as a projectile over the rims, does not really fit the location, no money for maintenance or to cover any vandalism. The flowers could be easily vandalized, artist is expecting the department to pay for installation and maintenance and there is no funding available for that. It was expressed to speak with the artist over concerns to see if they would be willing to make any changes and felt there was nothing wrong with the look of both pieces, they were great pieces.

The second art piece presented was from a woman who would like to install Native American Boards on the Rims. Mr. Pigg said he spoke with her to tell her that she would need to get approval from the Executive Director of the Western Heritage Center Kevin Kooistra for facts and historical validation. Mr. Pigg said Mr. Kooistra has reviewed the information but has said he will not approve the boards; they are not historically valid, verbiage does not fit, and there are misspellings in the information.

Board Chairman MacLean said the board should reject the tricycle due to liability issues; they should reject the flowers due to the artist not willing to pay for installation or maintenance. Mr. MacLean asked for a motion on the tricycle and flower pieces.

Board member Laura Drager made a motion to reject the two art pieces as presented to PRPL staff and board by Council Member Boyett because of risk, liability issues and maintenance concerns. Board member Chuck Platt seconded the motion. On a voice vote, all were in favor and motion passed.

At this time no motion was presented on the Native American boards.

I. Parks Board Discussion:

None

AJOURNMENT – *Chairman MacLean adjourned the meeting at 1pm.*

(Please note these are summary minutes; this meeting is audio recorded and available to the public for any additional information discussed)