



PRC PARK BOARD MEETING MINUTES

RECORDED BY: Melonie Trang, Administrative Support II

MEETING PURPOSE: Monthly Meeting

MEETING DATE: July 10, 2024

LOCATION: Parks and Recreation Office - Conference Room

ATTENDEES:

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

PRPL Staff Members: Mike Pigg, Director; Kory Thomson, Recreation Superintendent; Marc Guaraglia, Parks Supervisor; Brandon Schmidt Cemetery Supervisor, John Gayvert, Parks Project Manager; Brad Wright, Parks Project Manager; Jake Milliron, Community Outreach & Engagement Coordinator, Parks Officer Schara

City Staff Members: City Administrator Chris Kukulski, Elyse Monat, Active Transportation Planner

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:

Chairman Thom MacLean called the meeting to order at 11:00 AM

PUBLIC ATTENDEE:

Alex Picicci, Kris Glenn, Matt Benowitz, Dick Zier, Inanna Hencke

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA:

Add for information the “Adaptive Performance and Concept for a recreation center at Amend Park” presented by Dick Zier, Board Chair for the South Billings Urban Renewal Association (SUBRA)

Add for information “Adaptive Performance” presented by Matt Benowitz

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: *No minutes to approve*

DIRECTORS REPORT: Director Mike Pigg recognized Parks Supervisor Marc Guaraglia and Cemetery Supervisor Brandon Schmidt. Marc Guaraglia supervises fifteen full time employees and over 50 seasonal employees. Brandon Schmidt has managed Mountview Cemetery at a completely different level and is doing an amazing job there. Mr. Pigg said they make his life easier.

Updates:

- Moving next month's meeting to Optimist Park new shelter
- High Sierra restroom was hit with graffiti following the 4th of July; it will be closed every night at 9pm
- Forestry Grant job position (project manager/outreach coordinator) is being posted this week.
- Parks Superintendent Cole McQuillan is making some changes to the City Forester position. Plans are to repost that position once those changes have been made.

PUBLIC/BOARD COMMENT:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

A. Recreation Update-Kory Thomson, Recreation Superintendent:

- Expecting it to be busy at the pools with warmer weather this week
- Started swim and tennis lessons this week
- Update on Lifeguards; we have enough lifeguards for Rose & South, some days we still struggle with coverage when someone calls in sick or is on vacation. Wading pools are still closed.
- Camps are full this week or at capacity
- Cheerleading camp started this week at North Park
- We have free swim lessons this week at South Pool

Board member Chuck Platt asked Kory how much the department is paying our lifeguards. Mr. Thomson said \$15 an hour

Board member Maia Dickerson asked how the Rec2U program was going. Mr. Thomson said it is going really well. He will have an update on numbers next month.

B. Parks Update-Marc Guaraglia, Parks Supervisor:

- New irrigation system is going in at Grandview this fall; as part of that project, we had to have the power source upgraded by Northwestern Energy. Northwestern Energy came out early to do the upgrade causing the power source to be too strong for us to run water. We have hired an electrician to run a temporary transformer line down so we can start watering again.
- Earthscapes is sending some of their staff to look at the swings at Castle Rock Park. The posts on the swings are wobbly. We may need to take them out of service.
- The zipline at Castlerock is still too fast, plans are to take it down. The contractor

will be coming back, probably not until this fall.

- Our staff has finished up the first round of fertilization in our parks.
- We currently have one full time employee spending half his days manually watering Harvest and Olympic. The system is over 40 years. It is causing power loss to our valves. We need to upgrade our system.
- All parks west of Shiloh are under voluntary water restrictions. Currently, we are having to do some creative programming with the irrigation systems.

Cemetery Supervisor Schmidt said over the weekend 22 Veteran headstones were ran over or damaged due to an accident. He said this is not the first time this has happened. Mr. Schmidt said back in 2020 a drunk driver took out about 29 stones. A lot of these stones were installed back in the 40s and 50s. The headstones around 450 pounds. He said many of the stones hit over there weekend were thrown about 100 feet. The driver was cited for careless driving. He said he hopes to have the headstones replaced around mid-September. Mr. Schmidt presented some ideas for barriers along the northside of the cemetery and Central Avenue; flowerpots, pre-made barriers, or a wall. He said it would all depend on funding and what resources are available.

Chairman MacLean asked Brandon if he could possibly provide costs for some of these barrier options to see people would be willing to help with funding.

Board member Dickerson asked if the 700 feet of unprotected area was located in the Veterans section. Mr. Schmidt said about 500 feet is.

Board member Clark asked if iron fencing is strong enough to protect the grounds. Mr. Schmidt said he is not sure based on how far he saw the 450-pound headstones thrown and how far the person drove into the section. He said we need something that is effective and attractive.

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

- Starting the curbing at Castle Rock parking lot July 1; continued grading
- Waiting on the contractor availability to begin construction on the Grandview irrigation automation
- Highland playground installation is complete
- North Park adult exercise equipment and shelter are complete. Waiting for replacement parts following vandalism to the adult exercise equipment.
- North Park playground equipment installation is complete. Waiting for replacement parts for vandalized fixtures.
- North Park restroom installation is complete; waiting for final inspection.
- Weave Construction is finishing the demo and grading for the Pioneer Park tennis courts replacement. Renner Sports should be on site around July 15
- Poly Vista parking lot is complete; landscaping work is in progress
- North Park Dog Park project is underway
- Spring improvements to Dehler Park are complete
- Bids on the Castlerock bathroom are under review and will go before City Council

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- Waiting on a set of plans for the Optimist Park lighting
- Disc golf project at North Park is complete; have chosen a contractor for the wall demo and lighting installation
- Shade structure for High Sierra Dog Park has been ordered and should arrive sometime in September
- Sails for Skypoint should arrive around July 24
- Waiting on the design proposal for the Dehler Park protective netting

D. Adaptive Performance:

Matt Benowitz spoke on the Adaptive Performance Center which is a fitness center for Veterans. He said the center is a holistic health and wellness center. There is a monthly event called “Walk the Bridge” which is an event to raise awareness for the 22 veterans who commit suicide every day. He said they walk 2.2 miles on the 22nd day of every month at 6:00pm at Swords Park. He is looking for people to promote their event. Mr. Pigg said the department would post their event and Chairman MacLean said he works for an organization that would also be willing to get the information out.

E. Adaptive Performance and Concept for a Recreation Center at Amend Park:

SUBRA Chairman Dick Zier presented the concept for a recreation center at Amend Park. Mr. Zier said they will be meeting with City Council members this next week to discuss the project. The center would be for all ages; from young kids to older adults. He said it would be a help in the safety of our community by keeping young people busy with sports and also be an economic driver for the City of Billings.

The renderings show four basketball courts that can be converted to eight, and ice arena and a possible pool if there are enough funds. He said they are also looking at adding another all-weather turf soccer field.

Alex Picicci of Signal Peak Energy said they received from their board a major donation to kickstart a project like an ice arena. He said the company would like to give back to the community by helping to construct an Ice Hockey arena. He said they would like to team up with SURBA on their project and be the major donor for the ice arena. The ice arena would be run and operated by the non-profit Yellowstone Ice Association. Mr. Pigg said it would be along the lines similar to our relationship with Oasis where we deed the land and then let the build and operate it.

Board member Thompson asked Mr. Zier if there was a size comparison between their recreation center and the proposed recreation center that failed to be approved by voters last July. Mr. Zier said it is the same size.

Mr. Zier described the pool as being attached to the gyms and then the hockey would be a separate building.

Board member Platt asked if the pool would be 50 meters. Mr. Zier said no it will be 25 yards with eight lanes and possible leisure pool or Lazy Susan.

Board member Henderson asked if the basketball courts were covered or indoors. Mr. Zier said the four courts are all indoors but would like to put some outside eventually.

F. Park Police Officer Updates-Officer Schara:

Officer Nate Schara spoke on the social media report of an attack that happened at North Park with a machete. He said the incident happened on the north side of 6th on the boulevard. He reported that a family member called in the attack. On the arrival of the scene the victim and those who were there at the scene were uncooperative with Police. The police did not find the weapon used and it was unconfirmed if a machete was used or something else. The victim did have non-life-threatening injuries and was taken to the hospital. The incident was not actually in the park. Officer Schara did speak with the victim and the victim did tell Officer Schara that he did not want the police involved and no charges filed. He believes this was an isolated incident.

G. Condition of Parks Presentation-Director Mike Pigg:

Director Pigg gave a presentation on the current conditions in our city parks. He touched on the shortage of staff to manage all the parkland, we are short over \$2.7 million in daily maintenance, at capacity on the recreation side of things; cannot add any more programs, South Pool is deteriorated, aging playgrounds need replacement, sidewalk damage repairs, fences need repairs and parking lot repairs/replacements. He said as things continue to fail and we are unable to fix these things, the community will start to see it in the parks. Mr. Pigg commented there is no way to generate more funds for the department. The board expressed the need to get the word out on the current situation of the department and for the need of support from the community.

H. Parks Board Discussion:

None

AJOURNMENT – Chairman MacLean asked for a motion to adjourn. Board member Clark motioned to adjourn. Board member Melissa Henderson seconded. On a voice all were in favor and the board adjourned at 12:45 pm.

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