



PRC PARK BOARD MEETING MINUTES

RECORDED BY: Melonie Trang, Administrative Support II

MEETING PURPOSE: Monthly Meeting

MEETING DATE: November 13, 2024

LOCATION: Billings Parks & Recreation Office

ATTENDEES:

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

PRPL Staff Members: Cole McQuillan, Parks Superintendent; Kory Thomson, Recreation Superintendent; Marc Guaraglia, Parks Supervisor; Brandon Schmidt, Cemetery Supervisor; Jake Milliron, Community Outreach & Engagement Coordinator; Gayle Lam, Urban Forestry IRA Grant Technician; Ali Wang, Parks Maintenance

City Staff Members: Mayor Bill Cole, Assistant City Administrator Kevin Iffland, Elyse Monat, Active Transportation Planner

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:

Vice Chairman Jami Clark called the meeting to order at 11:00 AM

PUBLIC ATTENDEES:

Jenna Solomon, Kris Glenn

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA:

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Vice-chair Clark asked for approval of the October 9, 2024 meeting minutes. Board member Maia Dickerson made a motion to approve the minutes. Board member Jon Thompson seconded. On a voice vote, all were in favor and the motion passed.

DIRECTORS REPORT:

Director Mike Pigg was not at the meeting. Parks Superintendent Cole McQuillan and Recreation Superintendent Kory Thomson spoke on his behalf.

Updates:

- Employee Recognition: Parks Maintenance employee Ali Wang was recognized. She has been with the city for over 3 years. She started as a seasonal employee. Currently, she is maintaining park and trail areas in the heights.
- Draft CIP (capital improvement projects): Cole just returned from a meeting, biggest discussion

was South Park pool and looking at South Side TIF money to help fund project.

PUBLIC/BOARD COMMENT:

Active Transportation Planner Elyse Monat discussed the completion of the short segment of trail near Riverfront Park that connects the bridge over the city-county drain and the frontage road. She said they are also moving along with the Rose Park trail design. Construction should be done when the kids are out of school.

Assistant City Administrator Kevin Iffland noted that the Parks Department administration division will not be moving to the new city hall building as was previously planned. Everyone currently working out of the PRPL office/Community Senior Center will stay.

Mayor Cole made a suggestion for the parks board to start sending special invitations to members of City Council to attend the board meetings in which their ward is being discussed. He felt this would give us the opportunity to focus on and discuss their parks in their zone. It would also allow them to see how the department operates and ask questions. He felt this should be done yearly.

Cemetery Superintendent Brandon Schmidt reported there were 120 participants at this year's Patriot Run; doubled from last year and generated approximately \$4,000 in revenue with plans to apply those funds to the costs of the barrier along the Veterans section.

NEW BUSINESS:

A. Recreation Update-Kory Thomson, Recreation Superintendent:

- Winter Activity Guide went out and registration started November 1st; sent guide to over 10,000 households. So far, registrations have been picking up since it was sent out
- Working closely with Mark Sulser on middle school instructional programs for girls' and boys' basketball and girls' volleyball in the spring
- Recreation staff are working on the new mobile app

B. Parks Update-Cole McQuillan, Parks Superintendent:

- Wrapped up winterization in parks
- Continuing to mulch leaves
- Hired Nick Miller as our City Forester; Nick was one of our Senior Equipment Operator. He has been with the city over seven years. He has an extensive horticultural background.
- Upgrading the South Park pump station; installing it this fall so it will be operational in the spring
- Forestry division is still finishing cleanup from the August storm. We lost about 70 trees from that storm. Majority of those trees will be replaced in the spring of next year

C. Project Updates- Cole McQuillan, Parks Superintendent and Brad Wright, Project Manager:

- Contractor is working on the zipline and sidewalk repairs at Castlerock Park
- Mainline installation is nearing completion on the Grandview irrigation automation
- Contractor for the North Park adult exercise has fixed the incorrectly installed suspension trainer
- Demolition has started on the Castlerock restroom; plumbing should also be starting this week

- Going out to bid on the Optimist Park lighting
- Demolition will start the first week of December on the North Park racquetball court wall, weather permitting
- Shade structure at High Sierra Dog Park should be under construction starting today
- Working on contracts and bids for the Arnold Drain Trail/Big Ditch Trail, and Centennial Sidewalk
- Dehler Park infield sod has been pushed back until the spring of 2025

D. Veterans Section Barrier-Brandon Schmidt:

Cemetery Supervisor Brandon Schmidt said installation of the barrier for the Veterans burial section has begun. He has ordered 12 3x3 concrete flowerpots to place along that section. He said in the meantime Lockwood Precast has lent us jersey barriers while they are making the flowerpots. Lockwood Precast has also donated a bench to be placed in the cemetery.

E. Amend Recreation Campus Update-Kory Thomson:

Kory Thomson said two RFP's have gone out. A selection committee was formed, it included Parks Board chair Thom MacLean and several other members of the community. The selection committee reviewed the RFP proposal for the recreation campus site plan. They have chosen a firm and are now working on a contract. The second RFP that went out is for a public/private partnership opportunity for an outside entity to find a space to build an indoor recreation offering. We received only one outside entity proposal from the Yellowstone Ice Foundation. We are currently working with them along with the Legal Department on a lease agreement.

F. IRA Grant Update-Gayle Lam:

- Meeting with citizens groups
- Busy making connections
- Did first tree planting at 1889 Brewing Company
- Working on the tree inventory for the boulevards located in the grant area

G. Tobacco Free Parks Discussion-Jenna Solomon:

Jenna Solomon gave the results from their survey on tobacco free parks. Results below:

- Conducted the survey both online and in person
- Received about 294 respondents
- Attended various events around town; Gardener's Market, North Park grand reopening, Shakespeare in the Park, Symphony in the Park to name a few
- Majority of the surveys were conducted online
- About 70% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that city parks should be tobacco free (tobacco free means any tobacco products in the park)
- About 70% of park users agree or strongly agree that they feel safe in our parks and trails
- 68% of respondents said they see less trash as a benefit with having tobacco free parks
- 64% of respondents said they see cleaner air as a benefit with having tobacco free parks
- Only 19% of respondents did not see any benefits from having tobacco free parks
- 29-30% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with having tobacco free parks
- Most of the respondents use the parks several times per week
- Respondents' comments were: "It would be a nice idea but find it would be difficult to enforce with so many people vaping now", "Having signs up to reduce would be great", "I have asthma and would appreciate a smoke free environment".

Ms. Solomon said the next steps after hearing comments from the Parks board, is to discuss an internal plan, look at signage, installation costs and development of the plan further. Plans to come back to the board in the spring.

Parks Boards comments:

Board member Thompson asked if there were any Montana communities who have designated park areas tobacco free. Yes, Missoula did their city parks and Lewis and Clark County did a city initiative. Ms. Solomon said there are also several other communities working on making tobacco free parks in some capacity.

Ms. Henderson said Carbon County has signage in their parks but was not sure if it was an ordinance. She was pretty sure though that it was just an educational campaign.

Chairman MacLean said he likes this initiative but does not believe it is an issue our parks. Ms. Henderson said she has taken her children to the playground at Pioneer Park and is shocked at how many people smoke at that playground.

It was suggested to maybe put up signage asking people not to smoke in areas such as the playgrounds, ballfields, and tennis courts.

Several comments from the board mentioned how impossible it would be to enforce tobacco free parks. They also shared concern using the free signage from the state where the symbol seemed to show it being law and not suggestion. It was suggested as being a good idea to place some sort of signage asking for people not to smoke or use tobacco products in parks/ park areas such as playgrounds.

It was suggested to look at installing signage in natural area parks like Phipps and Riverfront.

Suggested putting signage up just in the areas around playgrounds, basketball courts, and tennis courts.

H. Parks Board Discussion:

None

AJOURNMENT – Chairman MacLean adjourned the meeting at 12:54 pm.

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