

MEETING MINUTES

RECORDED BY: Melonie Trang

MEETING PURPOSE: PRC Board Meeting

MEETING DATE August 13, 2014
AND LOCATION: Community Center



ATTENDEES: PRC Board Members:
Rick DeVore, Dayton Rush, Marcia Clausing, Darwin George,
Alan King
PRPL Staff Members:
Mike Whitaker, Director
Jon Thompson, Park Superintendent
Kory Thomson, Recreation Superintendent
Mark Jarvis, Park Planner
Lee Stadtmiller, Cemetery Superintendent

I. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Chairman Rick DeVore called the meeting to order at 11:35.

A. INTRODUCTIONS

Nicole Cromwell, City Planner and Zoning Coordinator

B. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Chairman DeVore asked for approval of the June 13, 2014 minutes. ***Board member Alan King made a motion to approve. Board member Marcia Clausing seconded. On a voice vote, all were in favor.***

Chairman DeVore asked for approval of the July 9, 2014 minutes. ***Board member Dayton Rush made a motion to approve. Mr. DeVore seconded. On a voice vote, all were in favor.***

C. ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

None

II. DIRECTORS REPORT – Mike Whitaker

- The City Forester is currently being advertised.
- Our Volunteer Coordinator Chris will be sending out a monthly email blast to let the community know what programs and activities we are currently providing. We are using our data from RecTrac, which is our activities registration and rental software.
- We have been selected by MSU-Billings to participate in an in-service project. They will be working with us on what is called Parks and Recreation Awareness Campaign. Their marketing classes will be working on this project. This will help us in making the community more aware of the services we provide.

- We will be meeting soon with the Amend (Amend Park Development Council) and Stewart Park (Billings Softball Association) user groups to discuss their agreements with this department/city.

III. PUBLIC/BOARD COMMENT

None

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. City-wide Park District Projects 3-year Plan:

Some history on the City-wide District:

- Park District was completed in 2011
- It was funded in FY13
- We receive approximately 2 million per year
- 1.5 Million goes towards projects
- .5 Million goes towards ongoing maintenance.

Projects Completed:

- 2 water slides were replaced at Rose Pool
- Remodeled 6 restrooms
- Replaced 2 restrooms and added a new one at the Cemetery
- Upgraded the fall protection at 22 playgrounds
- Replaced batting cage equipment
- 6 courts at Pioneer and 4 courts at Rose were repaired. Part of the funds for this project were donated to us by the Billings Tennis Association.

Ongoing Maintenance Projects:

- Hired an Arborist and Park Maintenance worker
- Replacing 75-90 picnic tables once a year
- Vegetation program-weed and fertilizing management
- Established a community outreach program

Projects coming up:

- Parks and Recreation department wide comprehensive plan
- South Park sprayground.
- Stewart Park infrastructure improvements.
- Pioneer Park shelter in early spring next year.
- Amend Park water service upgrade.
- Developing a new 3-year plan (hope to present it to Council this winter)
- South Park playground equipment upgrade.

Review of Deferred Maintenance/Capital Project List

- Facility maintenance and upgrades: park signage, trail kiosk, batting cage renovation, Poly Vista fencing
- Irrigation automation for Parks and Cemetery

- Accessibility for sidewalks, facilities etc. within parks, park facilities and Cemetery.
- Sidewalk repair and maintenance
- Parking lot maintenance and repair including resurface, striping, paving and re-construction
- Roadway maintenance and repair at Swords Rimrock and Riverfront parks
- Building/shelter maintenance and repair
- Continue restroom upgrades
- Continue playground fall protection at Eaton, Streeter, Trails End, Welsh and Central parks.
- Aquatics Renovation and upgrades to pools, spraygrounds, wading pools, and bath houses
- Community/neighborhood centers maintenance and repair for North and Zimmerman Centers

Project Evaluation Criteria-use for creating list

1. Safety, health and welfare
2. Preventing closures/removals
3. State, city and federal compliance
4. Survey responses and public priorities
5. Efficiency savings

Board Suggestions:

- Rocks along the Rims that are on parkland. Add money to cover any costs associated with rock removal. It was suggested to have set aside at least \$40-50,000.
- More parking spaces at Stewart
- More drinking fountains
- Under the Project Evaluation Criteria, change priorities 2 and 3 with each other.

Additional Information:

- City Council approved the funds for FY15
- The assessment has not been approved yet but will be brought to Council for approval in September.
- Comment was made that if the Safety Mill levy is not approved, our funding from the general fund could be cut. If we do receive any cuts in the general fund, we will have to look at increasing our PD1 funds.
- There currently are no cuts in our FY15 budget.
- There is discussion that city departments including ours will have to start paying for water from Public Works. Currently, we do not pay any city water charges.
- Staff is working on a plan for the next 3 years.

B. Cell Tower (Wireless Communication Towers) in Parks:

- All cities, counties and states must follow the FCC (Federal Communications Commission) regulations.
- All user groups wanting to put up a tower must follow the FCC regulations.
- Most Montana cities do not have a policy in place that pertains specifically to parks.
- Great Fall MT does have a policy that does include special consideration to parks.
- The FCC preserves local authority over zoning and land use. The city can develop guidelines where towers can be placed; what zoning areas and how the land is used. The city though cannot discriminate.
- All cell towers must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act and National Historic Act. They must also notify the FAA.
- The city developed a policy back in 2001, which includes standards for wireless communication facilities, standards for wireless communication facilities and antenna support structures located in parks.
- For the Parks Department to accept a tower on its property, it must have staff, Planning, PRC board and City Council's approval.
- User groups can pay up to \$10-12,000 a year
- Verizon is currently looking at putting up 15 new towers.
- We have one cell phone tower and it is located at Stewart Park.

It was suggested that a list of parks be made that would be considered to have a tower placed in. Mr. Whitaker said that staff will look at parks to consider for usage and bring that list back to the board for review.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Emerald Ash Borer:

- Considered an exotic beetle. It was imported. Probably came in on a shipping or packing material.
- It was first discovered in Michigan in 2002
- So far, the beetle has killed tens of millions of ash trees in southeastern United States. It is located in 22 states. They have discovered the beetle close to home in Colorado and Minnesota.
- Beetles spread from one tree to another.
- The beetle can be transported also in fire wood and can live in the wood for up to a year.
- Feeds on all species of Ash trees
- Adult beetles are metallic green and about ½ inch long.
- It attacks the trees vascular system. Adult beetles eat on the Ash foliage but cause little damage to the tree. The larvae feed on the inner bark of the Ash tree, disruption the tree's ability to transport water and nutrients causing the tree die.
- Experts agree it will eventually hit Montana

- 40% of the trees in Billings are Ash. 21% of those are in our parks.
- It will take billions of dollars nationwide to deal with the problem.
- Once a tree has been killed, it has to be removed.
- There are preventative sprays that work up to 2 years.
- We are looking for the beetle as we trim and work on them.
- We are working with Federal and State agencies.
- We are putting together a city-wide preparedness response plan.
- Once the beetle has been found within the city, the USDA will come in and quarantine the city. The dead and infected trees will not be allowed out of the city and a disposal plan must be in place.

B. Richardson's Ground Squirrels:

What they are:

- North American ground squirrel.
- Sometimes called gophers.
- Dig burrows/tunnels (we found them all over in some of our parks such as Centennial, Amend, and Stewart.
- They produce 1-2 litter's per year.
- They feed on green succulent vegetation.
- They come out early spring around April and then begin to hibernate in late August early September when the vegetation dries.

The state regulates how we can control these squirrels.

What our department has done:

- Flooding the holes with water. This is time consuming and not very effective.
- Put up exclusion fences. Currently have one up at the community garden.
- Burrow fumigants-can still be used but it is not very effective
- Aluminum gas was used up until recently. It is effective but there are extreme restrictions on it. It is considered very dangerous.

There are several other ways to control them but most are ineffective, illegal, and unsafe for children and animals.

Burrow Blocker Machine:

- Cost to use this machine is around \$19,000
- Fills holes in about 3 minutes
- Using sand and water mix to fill holes

Plans are to do more investigating on this prior to making any final decisions.

ACTION/ADDITIONAL ITEMS

- Poly Vista-we are looking at programming that facility this fall with a kick-ball and co-ed softball tournament. We are also looking at other opportunities with other user groups. The Park staff have been there doing a lot of repairs.

- Continue discussion on PRPL agreements. Priority agreements are Amend and Stewart. Look more at Par3 and Dehler Park at an upcoming meeting.
- Build accreditation into the strategic plan.
- Check into using Poly Vista ballfield for a dog park.
- Continue discussion on the priority list of projects for the next 3 year plan for District 1 funding to the agenda.
- A request was made to recognize the Forbes family for their donation of parkland. Staff will be looking into options for that recognition.

VI. DIVISION REPORTS

A. Recreation Division-Recreation Superintendent Kory Thomson:

- We are putting together a pocket schedule similar to the one the Mustangs have. We plan to put those up around town some time at the end of the month.

B. Park Division-Park Superintendent Jon Thompson:

No additional information.

C. Park Planning Division-Park Planner Mark Jarvis:

No additional information.

D. Volunteer Coordinator's Report-Chris Waite:

No additional information.

E. Cemetery Division-Cemetery Manager Lee Stadtmiller:

No additional information.

I. ADJOURNMENT

1:35 pm