

PARKS & RECREATION BOARD
AUGUST 19, 2020

Members Present: Jim Anderson, Abdirahim Hussein, Rand Middleton, Chloe Quinn, Val Swanson

City Council Members Present: Julie Asmus

Staff Present: Rob Baumgarn, Britta Diem, Curt Hein, Rachel Lawton, Ryan Scheffler, Alex Sobieck

Chairman Jim Anderson called the meeting to order. Rob called roll call.

Jim started by asking if there were any public comments, but there were no public in attendance.

Jim asked for a motion and second to approve the July 15th minutes. Val made a motion to approve, seconded by Rand.

Jim asked for a motion and second to approve the August 10th, Special meeting minutes. Jim made a motion to approve, seconded by Rand.

Jim moved onto the third item on the agenda and asked Rob to introduce new employee Rachel Lawton. Rob said that Rachel has been a great asset to the department already even in her short time there. Rachel is able to do some things that Becky couldn't that will really help him as well as the department out.

Rachel introduced herself to the board. She gave a brief introduction about herself and what she likes to do.

Jim then handed it over to Alex to talk about Youth Recreation.

Alex said that the summer had many challenges to overcome with Covid-19. Including lower enrollment numbers, sanitizing, keeping kids in pods and staffing.

She included that she was able to run her 3 & 4th grade baseball, 5 & 6th grade baseball and softball, kinderball, volleyball, basketball, movies in the park and some football camps.

She added that the department did unfortunately have to cancel the remaining of their summer programs due to inadequate staffing with Covid-19 concerns.

Julie asked if the baseball boosters was in competition with the Parks and Rec baseball programs.

Rob responded that there is a lot of history with traveling baseball and Rec Ball. The growth of traveling baseball has really expanded in the past 6-8 years. Competition and player selection is a key factor why traveling has expanded. Parks and Rec have been trying to make their leagues more appealing with

getting area teams to play in a league format. The department is trying to rebuild the leagues after past staff went away from the league format and went with an in house program. He states that baseball program is a work in progress, but that they are building each year. The relationship with the baseball boosters is strong and is heading in the right direction.

Jim calls Ryan to talk about Adult Recreation and Facilities.

Ryan said that he was able to have Church and Men's softball this summer, just starting later and a shorter season. There were not enough sign-ups for a Co-Rec team this summer. He said that fall ball will be starting September 14 and will have a Men's and Co-Rec league.

Ryan stated that summer ice in the Blue Line Arena has been going very well. He has only heard good feedback about the programs and how all the safety concerns are being handled.

Ryan included that the department is taking a lot of shelter rentals right now. The 4-season shelter was able to be rented five times this summer. And there were 225 field requests.

Rob added that with the road construction he was told it would be starting after the last Rockin Robbins, so they did not book any of the shelters when people would request them earlier in the year. So when people call now to book he feels that it would be unfair to let them book it if we had denied so many other people before.

Rand asked Ryan how many teams he had for softball this summer. Ryan told him ten Men's teams and five church teams.

Julie asked when the field work would be started. Rob replied it would hopefully start mid-October.

Ryan added that they would not be touching green field so he can utilize that if construction were to begin sooner.

Jim calls Britta to talk about the Community Center, Bikes and Splash Pad.

Britta says the splash pad opened mid-July and had great feedback about their safety measures. She said the Bike Share program was also going well, average about 52 rides a week. The Community Center has been having good turnouts for meals and programs.

Jim called Rob to talk about Fall/Winter programming.

Rob stated that they are moving forward with programming, but he is worried about facilities. If the schools go into full distance learning. All facilities inside and outside would be closed for any public use. Rob stated that the department relies heavily on the school facilities for their fall/winter programs.

We are looking into intramural sports for Middle School and High School. Another thing that is being debated is putting ice down for winter sports.

Discussion was had about what other facilities Park and Rec would have to use.

Julie asked if the ice fees could be lowered so they could possibly get more use. Rob said that is something they are discussing.

Jim asked Val to talk about the Tobacco Policy.

Val said that there should be a new tobacco policy in Willmar. The one the city has is ten years old and a lot has changed since then. The city would need to draft a new policy and get new signage. Discussion was had about what changes would need to be added.

Val is going to work with Rob on this policy. More information will be presented later.

Jim started the Willmar Stingers Field Rental discussion.

Rob explained that the owners of the Stingers approached him about cutting their field rental price in half, because they were limited in the number of people they could have in the stadium due to Covid-19. Discussion was had about the Stingers different options, including applying for a small business loan grant, a different reduction rate, or approving their request.

Concern would be made one gets a discount does everyone.

Jim made for a motion and second to approve the 50% discount for field rentals for the Willmar Stingers. Jim made the motion to approve and Rand seconded.

More discussion was had about the Stingers field rental request.

Jim called a vote. All in favor, Jim, Rand, Chloe and Abdirahim. All opposed, Val.

The board recommended the 50% discount for field rentals for the Willmar Stingers. Jim added this is more a council decision.

Jim asked if there was any other discussion the members wanted to address.

Rand brought up the option of naming the 4-season shelter after Dale Johnson. Discussion was had.

Jim made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Second by Val. Jim asks for all in favor say I. All say I.

Motion carried.