

PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING
Tuesday, May 8, 2018
4:30 p.m., Garden Room, Dubuque Arboretum & Botanical Gardens

PRESENT: Robin Kennicker, Richard Kirkendall, Rebecca Kuhle, Karen Lyness, Jennifer Tigges and Ray Werner

STAFF PRESENT: Marie Ware, Steve Fehsal, Dan Kroger and Eileen Trimble

MINUTES APPROVED; VOTE:

It was moved by Kennicker, seconded by Lyness, to approve the minutes of the April 10, 2018, meeting. Unanimous.

SPLASH PAD REPORT:

The City Council adopted a splash pad as a top priority on their policy agenda. Recreation Division Manager Dan Kroger researched splash pads and provided basic information on operations, staffing levels, types, etc. The report may be found as part of the original minutes.

Commissioners had general discussion on costs, water usage, sustainability, etc. Leisure Services Manager Marie Ware explained that the report was to share basic information and the same information will be shared with City Council. Water source, rest room, shelter, location, etc. are all things that would have to be considered if this becomes a project. There is no funding for a splash pad in the budget at this time but splash pads did come up in Imagine Dubuque.

Commissioner Werner said the report was well done. He would like to see splash pad(s) be free and located in underserved areas not too close to current pools.

DOG PARK ENGAGEMENT:

At the April meeting there was a discussion about a second pet park. Manager Ware told commissioners the discussions for another pet park will now be taken through an engagement process similar to selecting the Skate Park location. Staff will look at current department areas and other city-owned areas that could be used for a potential pet park. Past research and data will be reviewed and provided to commissioners. A representative group of people will be brought together to share fact pool regarding locations. Additional public meetings to engage people in areas being considered will take place. That information would then come back to the Park and Recreation Commission and City Council as was done with the Skate Park project.

General comments from commissioners: Kirkendall: how was the money set aside for the current proposed location; more economical, equitable and timely to allow pets in parks now as he feels all parks in Dubuque are appropriate for walking dogs. Werner: if the IDOT property is used would it be a lease and would there be a fee? He feels the current proposed IDOT property has safety issues that need to be considered including not being lit. Tigges: if the project moves forward using the IDOT property is it a permanent location? If we go through the same engagement process as skate park,

would it be a couple years before construction would actually take place? She is concerned about how dogs will react to the noise levels at this location. Lyness: the commission went through this process before and looked at numerous locations. One of them was the Thermolyne property – status has changed for this area so maybe it could be considered again.

Ms. Ware said the IDOT property was chosen as the location more than 8 years ago after extensive research when the commission went through the process and funds were available at that time. There may be a need for fundraising component as part of the process since the budgeted money relates specifically to that site. Funds for the engineering component are available July 1st, 2018. Staff will likely start the engagement process in the fall when other current large projects staff are involved in are winding down.

FIDO REQUEST TO RECONSIDER LOCATION OF PROPOSED PET PARK:

Lisa Johnson, Sheila Schneider and Melissa Klinkhammer were present representing FIDO (Friendly Intelligent Dog Owners) group. Their comments and request at this meeting were based on FY 2018 approved budget, and the March Park and Recreation Commission minutes which stated that the IDOT property was the set location for the park.

They were ecstatic to learn money has been budgeted for another pet park in FY 2019, but they feel IDOT property is not a suitable location. It is at intersection of two busy highways; not pedestrian friendly; pedestrian killed in that area; busiest intersection in Dubuque; the space is not 8 acres which is the most favorable size. If the location is going to be temporary, why spend tax dollars on an unsuitable location that is not friendly.

FIDO looked at other areas and they presented an idea for a pet park at the green space that is located by McGraw-Hill parking lot in Port of Dubuque (owned by the City). It is 9 acres, has ample parking in the area, rest room in the parking ramp structure, has downtown walkability, connects to the Riverwalk, high visibility and popular with tourists that bring families and want to bring their dog.

Commissioner Lyness said that area is used for festivals, etc. and generates revenue for the city plus it is slated for commercial use so if the pet park were to go there, it could be bumped out as soon as commercial use was set up.

One of the FIDO members said if the pet park is going to be placed at a potentially temporary site at IDOT property anyway, why not have a nicer pet friendly potentially temporary location like the Port of Dubuque? People will not feel safe in the industrial area. We need to make parks more pet friendly. It is important for dogs to have space and be able to socialize and be around other dogs.

FIDO appreciated the opportunity to speak and respectfully asks the Park and Recreation Commission to consider Port of Dubuque green area by McGraw-Hill as a location for the new pet park or at least consider their concerns related to proposed location on IDOT property by Julien Dubuque Bridge.

Commissioners suggested a few locations that could be investigated as possible sites: grass area between Grand Harbor and Riverboat Museum; by Kelly's Bluff where condos were going to be built; lower Bee Branch on either side of 16th Street. Ms. Ware said the grass area by Grand Harbor is only 2.5 acres so would not be large

enough and said part of the engagement process will help assist with pros and cons of different potential locations.

PRESENTATION ON SUMMER NEIGHBORHOOD PROGRAMS:

Recreation Division Manager Dan Kroger reported that the department continues to reevaluate the playground program. A focus is to be as accessible and equitable in locations for as many kids as possible. What can we do to provide a better service to kids? Staff visited 23 past and current playground sites and did an assessment of amenities to determine if our playground programs are really provided at the best sites. They looked at staffing levels and how we can get more little people to participate. AmeriCorps members will be placing door hangers this year in areas where we have programs scheduled to make people more aware of the availability.

The Boys' and Girls' Club is assisting with food-based locations to expand this year to other sites that met requirements. Breakfast/lunch or snack/dinner will be offered at ten sites this summer.

This summer staff will be at several smaller pocket parks to meet kids and families and walk them to a playground site like Rocco Buda to Avon Playground which is a site where two meals will be provided. Audubon School will have a playground this year with two meals provided and then staff will walk the kids to an afternoon program to Comiskey Park which will also have two meals provided. This year we will be able to feed a lot more kids and provide full day services in limited locations.

Traditionally the playground program ended the second week of August. This year the program will operate at a few select locations until the end of August when school starts.

Manager Ware said we would not be able to do what we are doing with food and having extra staff available without our partnerships with Boys' and Girls' Club and AmeriCorps.

Commissioner Kennicker asked if any programs would be held at the band shell on Bee Branch. Mr. Kroger said the Audubon/Comiskey playground program will be doing a lot of their activities along Bee Branch.

PARK DIVISION REPORT:

Park Division Manager Steve Fehsal reported:

- Creek Wood Park: after online votes and votes from public input meeting, Option 1 playground was selected. Staff is working now on purchasing this playground. Construction will be bid in mid-June.
- Skate Park Project: KIDS Skate received a \$65,000 grant from Wellmark, so they reached their required fundraising goal. The skate park plans are 90% completed. The construction project will be bid in early June.
- Flora Park Playground: Public was notified of opportunity to vote on the three playground options for the new 2-5-year-old Flora Park playground. Letters were sent to neighbors of the park, news release was publicized and it was on the city website. Online voting is open until Noon tomorrow.
- Miller Riverview Park remains closed; the river crested today. We anticipate being closed for Memorial Day holiday; hope to be able to reopen in June.

- Greenhouse operation is busy – hanging baskets will be placed at Millwork District next week; before Memorial Day baskets will be hung at Bee Branch and the Riverwalk; planted some of the pansies at City Hall and Port; annuals will be planted in the next couple weeks.
- Boy Scouts have their pancake breakfast at Eagle Point this weekend on Mother's Day.
- Kids to Parks Day is Saturday May 19 and there is free admission to Eagle Point Park.
- Dubuque Trees Forever has a tree planting scheduled for this Saturday, May 12th – 35 trees will be planted between the curb and sidewalk and/or in some private yards.
- In honor of National Historic Preservation Month and to celebrate the listing of Eagle Point Park in the National Register of Historic Places, the Historic Preservation Commission is sponsoring free admission for the first 200 cars that enter Eagle Point Park on Saturday, May 12.
- Dubuque received the 2017 Tree City USA award in April in partnership with Dubuque Trees Forever. Dubuque is one of 70 cities in the state that received the award. Park Division Manager Steve Fehsal and Forester Tom Kramer went to Des Moines to accept the award.

RECREATION DIVISION REPORT:

Recreation Division Manager Dan Kroger reported:

- Painting and repair projects at the swimming pools are completed and the pools look great.
- Most of the staff needed for summer has been hired.
- Marina: • Flood gates closed the day before the marina opened but the convenience store is open. Staff used the time available for extra training for new employees. • A lot of boat slip reservations have been made; almost full for weekend of America's River Festival.

PRIORITIES TO SHARE WITH CITY COUNCIL:

All commissions have been asked to complete forms provided by the City Manager on behalf of the City Council. The Commission will list successes as a commission and the impact of those successes, plus issues or projects the commission plans to address during the next year. The deadline for forms to go to City Council is July 30th.

The commission shared the priority ideas they were to bring to this meeting and will work on priorities, forms and list at the June meeting.

- Fully fund staff positions in Park and Recreation Divisions. Amenities keep getting added for department to maintain but short staffed. The staffing level history from the Park Division Review will be updated and provided to commissioners for reference.
- Leashed pets in more city parks. Do we want to identify specific parks where they would be allowed, or would it be easier to identify parks where leashed pets would not be allowed? Commissioners Kirkendall and Werner mentioned that they have requested information from Police and Health Services regarding dog bite info from before and after leashed pets were allowed in some areas and animal incident reports in Bee Branch since it opened.
- Promote mobility through interconnected bikes and trails.

- Build partnerships with neighboring and regional areas as well as our own parks regarding trails.
- Offer more adult enrichment programs – which coincides with promoting healthy lifestyles requested in Imagine Dubuque initiative.
- Update swimming pools.
- Outdated structures – park and recreation structures, greenhouse, offices, rest rooms, etc.

MANAGER REPORT:

Leisure Services Manager Marie Ware reported:

- The department received notice from Commissioner Klinge that he has resigned from the commission. Ms. Ware encouraged commissioners to inform anyone they thought might be interested to apply online.
- The consultant for the Five Flags study and assessment will report to the City Council on Monday, May 14th at a special work session. Wednesday, May 16th there will be a public input session with the Civic Center Commission at Five Flags. Ms. Ware encouraged commissioners to attend and encourage others to attend and give their input.

ADJOURN; VOTE:

It was moved by Kirkendall, seconded by Kennicker, to adjourn the meeting at 6:45 p.m. Unanimous.