



PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

June 5, 2024

Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 6:23 p.m.

Roll Call

Present: Max Gibbs, Carl Johnson, Hannah Mico, Sam Moore, Marta Johnson

Others: David Marquardt, Michelle Slykhouse, Laura Cleypool (Grand Rapids Parks Department)

Approval of Agenda

Motion made by Carl Johnson, supported by Max Gibbs, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Max Gibbs, supported by Carl Johnson, to approve the February 7, 2024 minutes as presented. Motion carried.

Comments from Public

None.

Agenda Item(s)

August meeting location

Discussion took place regarding various parks and other meeting locations. Motion made by Max Gibbs, supported by Marta Johnson to hold the meeting at Richmond Park. Motion carried.

Urban Forestry Committee representative for 2025

Carl stated he is the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board representative on the Urban Forestry Committee (UFC) currently. Since his term expires at the end of 2024 someone else from the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board will need to be appointed to the UFC. Max and Hannah are both interested and will think about it further. This item will be discussed again at the next meeting.

Park project updates

David stated about 90% of the funding is secured from parks millage and Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. for Canal Park improvements. Construction is expected to begin October/November and will take about two years. There will be a multipurpose all-season pavilion and plaza space. A nature-based play space will also be built.

At Martin Luther King Park there is a new lodge building and pool house being built. Our Communities Children will have offices at the new building. State and Federal government grants have been received to pay for a portion of the project.

Plaza Roosevelt Park naming process will officially start this week.

Grand River greenway projects include Blue Bridge to JW Marriot, Fulton to Wealthy, and Leonard to Ann, and Oxford Trail (connection to Roosevelt Park). Sam asked whether Oxford and other trails could get some signage about current trail connections. Wayfinding signs along trails in general (Plaster Creek Trail) would be good.

Department updates on park operations and recreation programs

Laura stated pools will open June 7. Hannah asked about the onsite security guard. Laura stated due to the amount of people in the park while pools are open, the security guards (started a couple years ago) monitor the area.

Marta asked about policy for how to de-escalate a situation and the resources available to staff. Laura stated there is a policy in place at each of the pools.

Laura stated summer day camps start Monday, June 10. Camp registrations are full.

Free outdoor fitness is happening again this summer. Kayak rentals at Canal Park and family paddle nights will be offered.

Park security (additional lighting and gates, contracted security at downtown parks) is also being done.

Park Ambassadors monitor scheduled programs and events. Park Ambassadors report maintenance needs, lock restrooms, and provide visitor support as needed. Hannah stated Garfield Park Neighborhood Association is getting complaints about the pavilion rentals (litter and food waste left behind) and asked whether the Park Ambassadors could be stationed here as well.

Future agenda items

- Natural area plans for parks
- Parks master plan & forestry plan updates
- Plaza Roosevelt naming
- UFC rep for 2025
- Urban agriculture in parks

Comments from the board

Hannah asked about seasonal staff levels. Laura stated the weekend employees receive a stipend to work those days and that has helped.

Hannah stated there are students doing floral quality indexing in natural areas. There are 16 segments with over 25 segments done in the future. Understanding what is there currently and coming up with plans for future (Ken-O-Sha, Plaster Creek Family, Burton Woods, part of MLK, Woodlawn Cemetery). The first two years of the grant will be inventory and last three years on restoration and what to do (burn plans, foraging). Grand Rapids Public Schools may have a couple teachers who would want to get their students involved. Hannah stated it would be good to get them involved in the restoration and land management plans. Stacy with Friends of Grand Rapids Parks is leading the grant.

Hannah asked for information about urban agriculture in parks.

Marta stated recreation programming has been good for her kids.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:06 p.m.