Minutes: DECORAH PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD MEETING
7:00pm, Thursday November 17, 2022, Decorah City Hall, Front entry way

Board chair, Rich Gaard called the meeting to order at 7:00pm, board members Benji Nichols, Brian Fuhrmann, Kathy Bakken and Zach Kerndt were present. Staff members present included Scott Vande Krol, Scott Ihde, Jon Geiger and Andy Nimrod. Visitors included Nick Pearch, Hans Larson, Dan Bellrichard, Andrew Bailey and Justin Rilling.

Hans Larson came for public comment and shared with the Board that he is a disc golf enthusiast and wanted to let the Board know that there would be considerable interest from the community in adding a disc golf course to the parks system. Larson noted the masterplan in Carlson Park, and wanted to let the Board know that disc golf is one of the fastest growing sports in the world. Larson stated that the addition of an 18-hole course at Carlson Park would be of great interest to the community, and would also increase tourism. Larson said that besides himself there were many people willing to help fundraise and volunteer to help manage the course, much like DHPT. Andrew Bailey offered that Luther College would be interested in helping to expand disc golf opportunities in the community. Dan Bellrichard said he thought Carlson Park was the ideal place for a disc golf course. Justin Rilling was also in attendance to show support.

Nimrod reported that the lights at the Vet's Memorial had generated some comments. The Vet's group is working with the electrician to try and turn down the brightness, and to guide the light more onto the memorials rather than across the street.

Nick Pearch, president of DHPT, reported that he had several complaints about the damage to the off road trails from horses, and that he was in attendance to see if there was a way to try and work out a solution to the reoccurring problem. Fuhrmann noted that using the opinion of costs in the masterplan for Carlson Park, the value of the off road trails already in place in Van Peenen, Ice Cave, Dunning's and Palisades would be a couple million dollars. Fuhrmann questioned, if the City isn't going to allow people to damage other assets of the City why would we allow it on our trails? There was some discussion on the interpretation of the wishes of the Van Peenen's noted on the deed when the land was given to the parks system. Discussion continued, and questions arose regarding whether horses could be banned from the trails in Van Peenen Park that were not built to handle horses. Parks Superintendent Ihde noted that many of the trails were built without permission. Pearch noted that it was his understanding that DHPT had received permission from the previous Director of Decorah Parks and Recreation. Nichols was asked if horses on trails could be part of future policy and code review, and Nichols responded, potentially. Pearch said that he was willing to meet with horseback riders to see if something could be worked out to plan an acceptable route for horses.

Nichols motioned to approve the minutes from the October 22, 2022 meeting, Bakken seconded, all approved.

Campground Superintendent Vande Krol shared a season end report from Pulpit Rock Campground. Attendance and revenue numbers were excellent. Vande Krol noted recent work in the bathrooms has helped with cleaning. The solar project was under construction and the new transformers were going to allow the campground to increase a number of 30 amp sites to 50 amp.

Campground fees and policies were discussed. Discussion ranged from increasing fees substantially one time versus spreading it out to a little at a time over multiple years. The rates and reservation policies in the Hideaway have already been set for the 2023 camping season. Kerndt motioned to increase the base rates of the campground $2 per night each year for three years starting in 2023, and to not make any other changes to the reservation policy, Fuhrmann seconded, all approved. Kerndt added that he would like to see the Hideaway go to a reservation policy that would have the renter be responsible for the whole season instead of allowing each renter to choose their dates for the season and asked to revisit the discussion in a year.

The Board reviewed plans and estimates for Miller Park Trail. The board discussed whether to move forward with a plan that would be completed in phases versus moving forward with a plan that required requesting more funds to complete the project all at once. Although costs are higher than expected, both the staff and the board felt the best plan would be to get it all done during the next construction season as opposed to trying to stretch it out over a longer period citing that they did not expect construction costs to go down. Plans would include rerouting and paving Miller Park Trail, adding a trail crossing at Pleasant Avenue and a "trail" driveway access into the northwest corner of Carlson Park.

Gaard shared that he had asked to keep the Splashpad on the agenda since the Board has been discussing capital improvements. There has been lots of interest over the years and he really wants to create something that once built, families can use for free. Bakken asked if Phelps Park had been considered as a location. Gaard added that the location has been a challenge but wants to be ready if the opportunity arises at Wold Park or at the pool which were the two top locations Burbach Aquatics had recommended. Gaard also added that he thought a splashpad could be built for less than Burbach Aquatics had shared.

Fuhrmann shared that he wants to keep moving forward with Carlson Park development. Fuhrmann expressed frustration that City Administration and the City Council have not been better informed, potential grants through Destination Iowa were not applied for, and that no progress has been made. Fuhrmann asked if fundraising could begin, when plans could be designed and what the best way to inform council members would be? Nimrod reported that the budget for Fiscal Year '24 would be on the next agenda and reported he would ask about setting up a meeting with city administration to lay out a potential course of action.

Nimrod shared the balances of memorial funds and recent donations. He also noted that the final request from the Iowa Great Places grant was being worked on and hoped that it would be complete by the December meeting.

Department updates:

- *The campground hosted trick or treaters for the first time and it was a huge success*
- *The annual Turkey Shoot was held November 8 and there was an excellent turnout*
- *The Recreation Winter Activity Guide was recently released*
- *The patch job on Trout Run Trail crossing of Charlie Miller Drive was complete*
- *Parks staff are ready for winter*
- *Winter trail etiquette signage was being updated and reprinted*

Nichols reported he hoped to have some plans sketched out to begin conversations on policy and code review for the next meeting.

Gaard and Nimrod gave an update on the hiring process for the Recreation Superintendent position.

The next meeting was confirmed for December 15, 2022. Bakken motioned to adjourn, Kerndt seconded, all approved, 9:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Andy Nimrod
Director
Decorah Parks and Recreation