MINUTES: DECORAH PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD MEETING

5:00pm, Thursday, June 20, 2024, Decorah City Hall, Council Chambers

Rich Gaard, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:00pm, Kathy Bakken, Brian Fuhrmann, Zach Kerndt and Benji Nichols were present. Others in attendance included Travis Goedken and Logan Hahn.

Public Comment:
Kathy Bakken noted that she received positive feedback on the city's street department installation of a speed bump in Phelps Park.

Approval the minutes of the April 18, 2024 and May 17, 2024 meeting:

Motion was made by Kerndt to approve, seconded by Bakken.
Roll Call Vote – Ayes: Nichols, Bakken, Gaard, Fuhrmann, Kerndt; Nays: none; motion passed.

Update on Parks and Recreation Director Position – Marc Holtey joined the meeting via Zoom and was introduced as the new Parks and Recreation Director by Goedken. Holtey gave his background and expressed excitement to get started.

Horseback Riding in Van Peenen – The Board heard comments from public in attendance on thoughts on use within the Park. Comments included not all trails built by Decorah Human Power Trails volunteers were not safe for use for horseback riding. However, some trails could potentially handle. Comments also included that the original use and trails in the park were for horseback riding. Members Fuhrmann and Nichols stated that there should be no horse riding until further discussion is had by the Board. Goedken noted that after the last meeting, staff place horse riding back on the website; noting that after the public comment at the May meeting that it could be addressed at the staff level. Nichols objected, stating that was not a decision of the Board and was public comment. Kerndt spoke on disappointment that previous horse riding path signage was removed at some point. Goedken noted that if three board members wanted it removed from the website, then they can direct it.

Motion was made by Fuhrmann to remove mention of horseback riding in Van Peenen from website, seconded by Nichols.

Motion was made by Nichols to table, seconded by Bakken.
Roll Call Vote – Ayes: Nichols, Bakken, Gaard, Fuhrmann, Kerndt; Nays: none; motion passed.

Motion was made by Kerndt to install a no parking sign at the entrance to Louge Trail, seconded by Bakken.
Roll Call Vote – Ayes: Nichols, Bakken, Gaard, and Fuhrmann; Nays: Kerndt; motion passed.

Discussion on Donation Policy – Goedken presented that the Board should establish a written donation policy as fundraising efforts are currently underway for Carlson Park by an independent group and the City will begin fundraising efforts for the Dahlen Property soon. A pamphlet that is used for donations of park benches, trees, garbage cans, etc. expresses that if an item purchased through donation needs to be removed, the City will attempt to contact the donor to give them the item. Also, Park Board Rules do govern a section on Donations, Memorials, and Gifts; however, does not address the removal of a donation prior to end of useful life or natural damage.

Decorah Human Powered Trails Update

- *Discussion and possible recommendation for a Memorandum of Understanding with Decorah Human Powered Trails. – Nick Pearch gave background, including a meeting with Goedken, where it was noted the relationship*

with the City would be different if DHPT were to become a separate organization. Goedken stated that since DHPT is now a separate organization, an MOU is probably not the best solution, but a service agreement would be needed.

- *Communication received proposing signage at Louge Trail – A request was made from DHPT to install no parking signage at the entrance to Louge Trail and a trailhead sign across the road. Discussion was had on support of a no parking sign, but concerns on actual ownership and encouragement of parking adjacent to private property if a trailhead sign is installed.*

Motion was made by Kerndt to install a no parking sign at the entrance to Louge Trail, seconded by Bakken.
Roll Call Vote – Ayes: Nichols, Bakken, Gaard, Fuhrmann, Kerndt; Nays: none; motion passed.

Capital Projects:

- *Carlson Park – Goedken gave an update on Carlson Park Phase 1B deliverables from Schubbe Consulting and has asked for proposal to redo Phase 1A. Goedken noted that Council approved a State Recreational Trails Grant application for both Phase 1A and 1B.*
- *Miller Trail – Goedken gave an update on Miller Park Trail and it being 98% complete, waiting on seeding and last little stretch. Looking at project closure soon and have heard lots of positive.*
- *Dahlen Property – Goedken noted that the Council issued a Request for Qualifications on consulting firms to plan and design the first phase of construction at the property. A scoring committee has been established that includes two park board members to make recommendation to the Council for award. Kerndt and Gaard volunteered to serve on scoring committee.*

Department Reports:

- *Campground – Kerndt gave an update on the campground that operations are going well. Campground currently has four commercial smokeless fire pits, two permanently installed and two available for rent; but they are very hard to clean out compared to the traditional.*
- *Recreation – Written report from Moen was distributed. Report included Free fishing Day on June 8th had fewer people than last year, but weather was rainy and cool. Summer rec programming and swim lessons are ongoing. Park-Rec night at Decorah softball game is scheduled for June 21st. Seasons of a Prairie event at Community Prairie is June 23rd, and G2G at the Fair June 12th and Fair Fun Run on June 13th.*
- *Swimming Pool – Goedken noted that use has been high. Approval on the new diving system is still awaiting State approval. Acid leak occurred in the acid room; staff has updated procedure and vent added to the building. Looking at additional improvements to alarm of dangerous conditions.*
- *Parks – Hahn gave an update on the parks system. Bollards have been installed in Miller Park to keep vehicles from entering the trail. Park has also been cleaned up with the play equipment. Free fishing weekend event went well at Twin Springs. Crater Run and Scholastic Bike Race were successful. Did have damage to a memorial bench with juvenile identified and paying for repairs. DHPT has started work on trail at Plisades.*

Update on Parks and Recreation Director Position – Goedken reported that 18 applications were received and 5 interviews were scheduled.

Update and discussion on City Council Joint Work Session – Goedken gave background on the discussion at the May 6th council meeting and an update that the Council wanted to hold a joint work session on June 24th at 5:45 PM to discuss the Park Board of Commissioner's code section and their responsibilities.

Other business – Goedken noted that during these meetings, staff are paid hourly to sit and give a few minute update. Goedken stated this should be done by the Parks and Recreation Director and hourly staff time is better utilized for work in the parks system or with recreation programming. Future agendas will have department reports earlier to allow hourly staff to leave after reports directly involved in.

The next meeting was confirmed for 5:00pm, July 18, 2024. Nichols motioned to Fuhrmann, seconded by Bakken, all votes aye; motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Travis Goedken