

## **MINUTES: DECORAH PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD MEETING**

### **7:00pm, Thursday, June 11, 2020, Virtual Zoom Meeting**

Welcome and visitors: *Chairman Gaard opened the meeting at 7:00pm. Board members included Rich Gaard, Cindy Albers, Brian Fuhrmann, Shirley Vermace and Kathy Bakken. Staff included Andy Nimrod and Erika Randall. Visitors included Ben Grimstad, Paul Scott, Madelyn Jermier, Jennifer Jones, Jeremy Bril, Allie Bachelder, Dr. David Bakken, Alecia Bucksa, Ann Grimstad and Joie LaFrentz.*

Visitors/Public comment: *There was no public comment*

Approve minutes of May 21, 2020 meeting: *Albers motioned to approve, Fuhrmann seconded and all approved.*

*With the large crowd regarding the pool, Chairman Gaard moved up the Swimming Pool discussion on the agenda. Director Nimrod gave a brief report on what the office had received in terms of comments, and asked if there were any the Board had not been made aware of. Nimrod said the office had reported nine emails and calls, and that he had shared them all with the Board as the calls came in, and that there were no new comments. Three were in favor of keeping the pool closed for this season and six were for opening it. Gaard asked if anyone else would want to comment on the swimming pool decision, and received the following comments:*

- Ben Grimstad shared that he thought the Board should open the pool. He felt it important for kids to have something to do, and it was also important for older kids to get back to work.*
- Jennifer Jones supported opening the pool and thought there were steps we could take to help keep things safe.*
- Allie Bachelder echoed Ben Grimstad's comments and hoped things could keep getting better.*
- Alecia Bucksa spoke as a representative of the Decorah Swim Team and said they would like to see the pool open, and would have volunteers to assist at the pool if that would help manage things. The swim team was not planning any meets with the exception of a possible inter-squad type meet.*

*Gaard asked Nimrod if the pool were to open, what would it look like and what considerations would need to be decided. Nimrod said there were no clear guidelines from the state and that decisions would need to be made at the local level. Nimrod worked with staff to come up with a plan that took current restrictions in place and included extra safety measures that would be manageable for staff to implement. The following are some of the key elements of the plan.*

- Staff would create a capacity limit that would keep attendance manageable.*
- All staff and patrons would be screened for body temperature and questioned before admittance to the pool.*
- All staff and patrons would be asked to wear masks entering the bath house.*
- Efforts would be made to help with social distancing while waiting in lines and on the pool deck.*
- No concessions would be provided and no swimming lessons would be offered.*
- An hour at the end of the day would be set aside for a less busy time for families (all youth would have to be accompanied by an adult.*
- Create a team of volunteers to help manage the new regulations.*
- No pool parties would be allowed.*
- Staff would review the process daily and make adjustments as needed.*

*More discussion and comments followed:*

- Brian Fuhrmann spoke in favor of opening and thought the benefits outweighed the risks.*
- Kathy Bakken wondered if it would be easiest to open with lap swimming and work into public swim times.*
- Shirley Vermace shared her concerns and thought it was just too early to open, and that the responsible thing would be to wait until next year.*
- Cindy Albers asked about the status of neighboring swimming pools and added she would prefer opening just to the Decorah School District, if possible.*
- Ann Grimstad noted that as a health care professional she understood the risks, but also thought that if we were going to start getting back to normal and get kids ready to go back to school in August, the pool seemed like a good place to start. She also noted that if things regressed, we could close if needed.*
- Rich Gaard asked Kathy Bakken if her husband Dr. David Bakken had any new information the Board should be aware of. Dr. Bakken had shared information regarding the virus a couple of weeks ago. Dr. Bakken joined the meeting and discussed how viruses can be transferred and how managing them can be difficult. He compared the COVID pandemic to the polio*

*epidemic he lived through as a kid and how staying home and away from others was the best practice then and distancing is still the best practice now.*

- *Gaard asked Nimrod if he thought we could make the swimming pool safe. Nimrod replied that he couldn't promise making it perfectly safe, but promised that staff would give 100% effort to do the best they could. He also added that pool staff were going to need help from the community to make it happen.*
- *Vermace said there were just too many unknowns.*
- *Fuhrmann said he was for opening the pool with restrictions knowing that it could always be shut down if needed.*
- *Albers noted she would be much more comfortable if only residents of the Decorah School District were allowed in.*
- *Joie LaFrentz spoke in favor of opening the pool and that she thought that being able to go to the pool would be good for people's mental health.*
- *Gaard asked for a motion, Vermace motioned to leave the pool closed for the summer, there was not a second. Fuhrmann motioned to open the pool the week of June 29 with staff making the operational and managerial decisions from here, Albers seconded. Motioned carried 4-1 with Vermace being the one no vote.*

*Gaard offered to help serve on a committee to help staff with COVID concerns and how they would be managed at the pool. Albers and Ann Grimstad also volunteered. Nimrod said that he and Craig Spilde would organize it and get ahold of the others.*

*Review request to consider selling land next to campground: Nimrod gave a brief background and reported that the Bjorks had been taking care of it for years, and that they wanted to build a house there. When asked for a motion to sell, there was none made to consider selling the property.*

*Review and approve plan set for Dry Run Plaza: Jeremy Bril, City Engineer gave a brief background regarding Dry Run Plaza and shared an updated rendering. Vermace motioned to approve and Albers seconded, all approved.*

*Review financial reports: Nimrod reported that the endowment balances had rebounded somewhat since the May meeting.*

*In other business the Board looked at renderings of an updated plan from the Decorah School District to improve seating and restrooms at the #1 diamond that would be similar to the baseball field. Nimrod said the concept would probably be on a future Board agenda requesting acceptance.*

*The Board discussed meeting outside at Whalen Cabin for its July meeting. Nimrod will check on availability and let the Board know as it draws nearer. Gaard motioned to adjourn, Fuhrmann seconded, all approved. Meeting adjourned at 9:05pm.*

Respectfully submitted,



Andy Nimrod  
Director  
Decorah Parks and Recreation