

MINUTES: DECORAH PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD MEETING
7:00pm, Thursday, March 18, 2021, Decorah City Hall

Rich Gaard, chair of the Decorah Parks and Recreation Board opened the meeting at 7:00pm. The full Board was present: Rich Gaard, Cindy Albers, Kathy Bakken, Shirley Vermace and Brian Fuhrmann. Others in attendance included staff Andy Nimrod, Director and Wanda Hemesath, City Clerk and visitors Janelle Pavlovec and Bruce Ventura.

Public comment: Nimrod reported that he and Kathy Bakken had spoken with Mary Kay Lynch, 804 Oakwood Place, regarding the walking lane along Park Street as it enters Phelps Park and along the rock wall. The surface condition continues to deteriorate and walking in the street as it goes around the corner isn't any safer. Lynch wondered of the City had plans to improve the walkability of the area. Nimrod reported that he had talked to the City Engineer and they were looking for ways to improve it. Gaard reported that he had received lots of favorable feedback regarding the winter walking routes and the bonfires available at the park shelters throughout the winter. Vermace said the plowed walking routes were great.

Bakken motioned the approval of the minutes from the February 18, 2021 meeting, with the addition that "the Board had requested that copies of the master plan be purchased for and delivered to Rick and Dave Carlson for their families", Vermace seconded, all approved.

Nimrod reported that the planning for Mary Christopher Park and the Veterans Memorial was moving along. The next step will be finalizing some of the construction plans with the City Engineer and the engineer that is representing the fundraising group for the memorial. It appears that the memorial needs to be positioned a little further east due to the sewer service line that feeds the houses behind the park.

Nimrod shared a short list of potential capital improvements that the Board and staff have discussed in recent years, and asked for feedback over the next couple of weeks regarding their thoughts regarding prioritizing and funding of the items on the list. He noted that he will be working on the same plan with staff and will be sharing the list with RC&D and Upper Explorerland after gathering the feedback.

The Board discussed the upcoming retirement of long time Administrative Coordinator, Judy Syverson, and reviewed staff's proposal to restructure some of the positions within the department. Gaard asked if there would be any opportunity to discuss the wages of employees during the hiring process and noted that he felt the Board should support the staff if given an opportunity. He noted that upon seeing the salaries of city employees in the paper he felt that the low wage structure of the department might make it hard to hire as well as retain the current staff. Vermace moved and Bakken seconded a motion to support the restructure of the Administrative Coordinator and Recreation Superintendent positions as staff seemed appropriate to continue to grow as a department, all approved.

Department reports:

- Campground staff expects a busy season based on calls trying to make reservations*
- Park staff have built a new shelter in Phelps that replaces shelter #5 as part of a memorial project for the Ron Gesme and Bev Crumb-Gesme Family.*
- Recreation staff are looking at expanding the popular winter walking program and exploring new programs that might capture some of the same users*

Other business: Nimrod shared an email from an Alliant representative regarding a construction update on the battery storage unit at Vennehjem Park. Work is nearing completion and actually would be completed if some aspects hadn't been backordered. Alliant staff will work with park-rec staff on the final grade and cleanup after construction is complete.

Vermace asked about looking into a policy regarding trail usage and looking at areas in the parks where it might be asked that park users stay on the trail. Vermace and Albers agreed to meet with Nimrod before the next meeting to discuss and bring to the next Board meeting.

The next meeting will be April 15. Albers motioned to adjourn, Bakken seconded, all approved.

Respectfully submitted,



*Andy Nimrod
Director
Decorah Parks and Recreation*