

MINUTES: DECORAH PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD MEETING

7:00pm, Thursday, January 20, 2022, Decorah City Hall

Rich Gaard, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. Board members present were Zach Kerndt, Benji Nichols, Brian Fuhrmann and Kathy Bakken; staff in attendance included Blake Moen, Jeremy Bril and Andy Nimrod; visitors included Bruce Ventura, Molly McNicoll, Josh Layer and John Nielsen. The meeting was offered in person and virtually via zoom.

Election of officers: Bakken nominated Gaard for Chair, Kerndt seconded, all approved. Fuhrmann nominated Nichols for vice chair, all approved.

Public comment: Nichols reported that he and Fuhrmann had met with Upper Explorerland researching potential grants for the development of Carlson Park. Wellmark Grants are due in February, and they were also looking into block grants for transportation. Their focus was on the park entrances and trail development.

Bakken motioned to approve the minutes from the December 16, 2021 Board meeting, Fuhrmann seconded, all approved.

Josh Layer of Burbach Aquatics gave a presentation in regards to the splashpad study the Board had hired them to do. The presentation and responses to questions from the Board included:

- There are two different kinds of splashpads, specifically a flowthrough system of untreated tap water and a recirculated system that treats the water like a swimming pool.*
- Reviewed the benefits of each type*
- Went through a cost analysis of each type and shared some rough estimates*
- He noted that the current swimming pool is a great site but that it doesn't save the city any money other than maybe parking*
- Shared maintenance expectations*
- He did not have a use for the effluent of a flowthrough system*
- A potential time line would include 6-12 months of fundraising and up to six months of construction*
- Life expectancy of a splashpad varies but plan on 50 years for the concrete, 25 years for ground sprayers, and 15 years for the spray features*
- Nimrod reported that the City's Sustainability Commission was interested in providing input*
- The Board indicated it would look through the information and discuss it further at the next Board meeting*

John Nielsen of Novak Electric gave a presentation regarding the use of solar at the Pulpit Rock Campground at the request of the Sustainability Commission and City Staff. The presentation and responses to questions included:

- In this proposal a private investor would cover the upfront costs, referred to as a PPA*
- Would take 7-10 years to pay for itself*
- It would take 300 solar panels on about one acre of land to create a solar field big enough to run the campground. The proposal has it located above Pulpit Rock in Will Baker Park.*
- Nielsen reported that he was not concerned with Alliant's time frame of tax credits and programs*
- The proposal does not take the Hideaway into account, 19 sites of long-term stay. Nielsen offered to work with Nimrod and check with MiEnergy (the supplier) on what including the Hideaway in this proposal would take besides needing to bore under Hwy 52.*
- City staff would be responsible for taking care of the maintenance of the land around the solar field*
- Nielsen was not concerned about potential vandalism in the proposed remote location of the solar field*

- *The project would have a 30–40-year life expectancy*
- *Nielsen said the campground was all set up to handle the power coming into the campground and the distribution*
- *The Board discussed the land usage of the area proposed for the solar field. Nimrod noted that the ownership of the property between the County and the City needed to be confirmed. Nimrod also relayed that campground staff had also been considering offering primitive camping in that area.*
- *The Board would also like to look into other areas as part of a bigger city solar project including the swimming pool, Wayside Park, and the north end of Wold Park.*
- *The Board indicated that they are in favor of the solar project and noted their support of the storage battery project in Vennehejm as an earlier energy project for Decorah. However, with all of the questions they were not ready to move forward yet. The Board directed Nimrod to look into the following for discussion at the February meeting:*
 - *Ownership of the land*
 - *Determine what percentage of electrical costs at the campground come from the Hideaway*
 - *Find a way to include the Hideaway as part of the project*
 - *Look into if a PPA is the only option the city should or can consider*
 - *Look into the electrical distribution throughout the campground and determine if this would be the time to upgrade the system.*
 - *Consider future energy needs of the campground and make sure they are taken into account*
 - *Continue to work with Molly McNicoll on the sustainability commission for communication*

Nimrod gave a report of the January 18, 2022 City Budget meeting, which was suspended after five hours of meeting. He reported that the Park-Rec budget was pretty much straight forward and that he had received positive feedback from the council on the DPR portion of the budget. The distribution of the Hotel/Motel revenue was not discussed at the budget meeting. Nimrod shared that this will still be an important piece for the department as these revenues have funded many of DPR projects including the Trout Run Trail, the waterslide at the swimming pool, the paving around Whalen Cabin and the park shop, cross country ski grooming equipment and was the main source of match money for the Iowa Great Places Grant. Fuhrmann and Gaard offered to attend the continuation of the budget meeting and will meet with Nimrod to go over things and be prepared.

Department reports: The park crew has finally had enough snow to groom cross-country ski trails and temperatures cold enough to add more layers to the ice-skating rink. The trails and rink have both been busy. Moen reported that Biddy Basketball was starting up in February. He also informed the Board that Judy Syverson had come back to work part time and was holding things together while the rest of the staff had all been out for one reason or another.

In other business Nimrod reported that he had met with City Manager Geodken in regards to updating the City's Park Policy manual and that he had suggested seeing what other cities in Iowa had.

The next meeting was set for February 17, 2022. Nichols motioned to adjourn, Fuhrman seconded, all approved.

Respectfully submitted,



Andy Nimrod

Director

Decorah Parks and Recreation