

**MEETING MINUTES  
BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS  
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2011**

- 1. Roll Call**
- 2. Approval of the July 6, 2011 Minutes**
- 3. Discussion and Possible Action on Formation of Pool Sub-Committee (Alderson Suomi)**
- 4. Discussion and Possible Action on Moving Memorial Park Playground Purchase to 2012 (Barb Jacob)**
- 5. Overview of Iverson Pak Restoration Work (Christopher Badtke)**
- 6. Update on Storm Damage (City Forester)**
- 7. Director's Report**
- 8. Adjournment**

**1. Roll Call**

Present: Bahling, Freckmann, Hall, McDonald, Okonek, West, Ald. Brooks  
Ald. O'Meara

Excused: Glodosky, Sorenson, Ald. Slowinski

Also Present: Director Schrader, Betty Bruski Mallek, Sabrina Bechtel, Logan Vocke, Christopher Badtke, Armin Nebel, City Forester Todd Ernster, Ald. Joanne Suomi, Santha Bickford, Sara Schierl, Betsy Barrett

**2. Approval of the July 6, 2011 Minutes**

**Motion made by Bahling, seconded by Hall, to approve the July 6, 2011 minutes and place them on file.**

**Ayes all; Nays none; Motion carried.**

**3. Discussion and Possible Action on Formation of Pool Sub-Committee (Alderson Suomi)**

Alderson Suomi informed the group present that she'll be hosting a meet and greet town hall meeting on September 22, 2011 from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. here at the Rec Center and special guest will be Mayor Halverson. Alderson Suomi read an email she received from Gail Skelton asking that the pool remain open through August and that some creative ways be found to keep the pool open. Alderson Suomi does not support Director Schrader's recommendations in the agenda notes about the citizen committee raising funds and not being an official sub-committee of the Commission. The main reason is that the Comprehensive Outdoor Recreational Plan (2010-2015) outlines two principal goals for the 2010-2015 planning period that would pertain to the pool:

1. To identify problems, trends, needs, opportunities and improvements for our existing parks and establish guidelines for the future of parks, recreation and forestry for the City of Stevens Point.
11. To aggressively seek permanent sources of funding that are adequate to provide high quality park and recreation opportunities for the community.

Alderson Suomi stated the revenue data provided shows the pool has lost over 341,000.00 in the past five years. She knows there are some serious financial problems with the pool. With the economy and budgets so tight this kind of money loss by the parks department cannot continue. As a City council member, she is publicly asking the Park Commission and the Stevens Point Park and Recreation Department to fix the problem. The solution she will not support is closing the pool but this

time should be used as an opportunity and/or challenge to do business differently in operating the city pool, hopefully starting this summer.

Sara Schierl spoke saying that nine years ago she was asking for the pool to be open in the mornings for younger children. The hours from 1-4 p.m. are during their nap times and by 7:00 p.m., young children are going to bed. Also, that break between 4 and 5 o'clock presents a dilemma for working parents because their children have nowhere to go for that hour.

Betsy Barrett from Park Ridge stated that we are fortunate to have a pool when so many across the nation are closing. She feels that the public pool offers a recreational opportunity for people of all walks of life. From a public health standpoint, we need to offer an opportunity for children to stay active.

Santa Bickford asked to speak on behalf of grandmothers and great-grandmothers who step in to help after the Boys and Girls Club activities stop in mid August until school starts. That is also the time the pool is closed and if it were open it would offer an alternative for children before school starts.

Ald. O'Meara agrees with doing a study. He did some research and found out that Hoyt Park in Wauwatosa just re-opened after being closed for three years. They sold subscriptions to the pool. He would suggest we study their successes and/or not successes and see if it fits us. We talk about the pool losing money but we don't talk about the city losing money on salting roads, or trash collection losing money or police and fire losing money. We need to determine how much is it worth to us and feels it's a real falsehood that the one part of government that has to be self-sustaining benefits our youth. He's in favor of doing a study to find out what is going on in other communities and have a structured committee raise money so the City's revenues aren't affected. We need to find ways to optimize the pool's use because we expended capital funding on it and it's a wonderful facility.

Sue Hall stated she's in favor of physical fitness for children and is in favor of extending hours.

Jeff Bahling asked if a pool study was in the Comprehensive plan and Director Schrader stated no there was not one.

Director Schrader stated what was pulled was a study on developing an aquatic center.

Jeff Bahling asked if any groups do "outside the box" thinking on funding public swimming pools.

Director Schrader stated the Park Commission and the Parks Department have by obtaining the free swims along with other things and this year the Willett sold advertising on the ice to obtain revenues.

Director Schrader informed the group attending tonight that he was told he needed to cut between \$100,000.00 to \$250,000.00 from his budget, not add anything. Big decisions will be happening in the next month with the next budget. With budget hearings, this year the City needs to cut 1.5 million dollars. Massive changes are in store. Parks and Rec is usually looked at as non-essential and people will be looking at it.

Ald. O'Meara stated that it would be up to the council members to prioritize items as essential or non-essential. Every budget line item will be studied.

Jeff Bahling was in favor of a citizen committee being formed to look at raising revenues. Some very good groups/community organizations like the Skate Park, Kash, Goerke, Dog Park and Green Circle to mention a few have built with private dollars.

Ald. Suomi is not in favor of a citizen committee because she's been trying to interest people since April and because of the goal stated in the Comprehensive Plan that it's up to the Parks Department and the Park Commission to come up with "out of the box" thinking to sustain a recreational facility that is running in the red. It's up to the Parks Department and staff to fix the problem.

Jeff Bahling suggested private people stepping in to help with funding.

Director Schrader asked why does the Park and Rec Department always have to break even. Other departments aren't asked how much revenue do they generate. Pools don't make money but it's a service residents want. Realtors state the two reasons people want to relocate to Stevens Point is because of the schools and the "quality of life". The Parks Department did raise money this year at the Willett by advertising on the ice. Service organizations are hit up day after day for donations.

Ald. O'Meara stated the \$120,000.00 needed to operate the pool is less than the cost of resurfacing two blocks of a street. It's something we need to prioritize and we haven't chosen to.

Director Schrader explained that the Green Circle is a good example of a private group that goes out and fundraises \$50,000.00 each year to maintain trails. Director Schrader is looking to the future for a group "Friends of the Park" who would organize and raise funds for the parks, not to take anything away from the pool but to keep all the parks operating. He envisions a Foundation be formed to accept donations for park operations.

Acting President Liz McDonald stated that if there is a group of citizens out there wishing to have longer hours at the pool they should come together to brainstorm to find ways to raise revenue. If a non-profit umbrella would be needed to go under, the Community Foundation would be a good vehicle to start with.

Jeff Bahling asked what is proposed for the pool next year. Director Schrader stated right now in the preliminary stages it would stay exactly the same as this year, however, there would not be swimming lessons next year.

Acting President Liz McDonald asked Ald. Suomi if she understands correctly that at this time she is withdrawing her request for the formation of a subcommittee.

Ald. Suomi responded yes she withdrawing her request at this time.

Acting President Liz McDonald asked that the interested parties wanting to keep the pool open get together and talk among themselves to come up with ideas for the pool.

#### **4. Discussion and Possible Action on Moving Memorial Park Playground Purchase to 2012 (Barb Jacob)**

Barb Jacob was not present but Director Schrader reported that playground equipment for Memorial Park is budgeted for upgrading in 2014. Barb Jacob had a meeting with the Mayor and the Mayor indicated if she could raise \$12,500.00, which is half of the cost, he would have it placed in the 2012 budget. Barb Jacob is in the process of fundraising for the playground equipment.

**Motion by Ald. O' Meara, seconded by Okonek, to approve the request of Barb Jacob to move the funding up to 2012 for playground equipment in Memorial Park if the funds are available and she raises the other \$12,500.00.**

**Ayes all; Nays none; Motion carried.**

## **5. Overview of Iverson Pak Restoration Work (Christopher Badtke)**

Chris Badtke, working with the Wisconsin AmeriCorps Program: Central Wisconsin Resiliency Project updated the Commissioners on the work done in Iverson Park. A lot of the work done this summer centered around the island north of the beach area. The dredging of a channel after the 4<sup>th</sup> of July opened the channel up and water is flowing. They cleaned off a lot of the rocks and were quite impressed with the quality of rocks that were uncovered. After the storm in July, his group helped the Parks Department with the downed trees. The DNR will be assisting them on the other side of the river with a fish habitat. The DNR drew up a plan for them and will re-write the permit to include the dredging on this side of the river including the fish habitat.

Director Schrader stated one of the remaining problems at Iverson Park is the roadways and the parking lots. An estimate for the repair is \$250,000.00, which would be the entire budget. There is some talk if the City borrows for blacktopping, maybe the City could come in and redo the roads and parking lots.

## **6. Update on Storm Damage (City Forester)**

City Forester Todd Ernster updated the Commissioners on the work done since the storm of July 20. In the City 97 street trees were lost which is 1 ½ percent of the tree population. In an average year, about 70 trees are lost and these 97 were lost in a day. About 20 trees still need to be taken down by a contractor. About 230 trees were lost in the parks and cemeteries and 91 stumps remain from these trees. Bids are being accepted for stump removal until Friday, September 9<sup>th</sup>. Soon afterwards, the work will start to grind the stumps. 25 hazardous stumps have already been removed from walkways. The City Forestry Department worked with the Parks, Water and Streets Department in clearing brush and trees from the roadways. They in turn helped clean-up the parks. All the help was appreciated. Zblewski Brothers volunteered a lot of time in aiding the Parks Department. Todd referred to the brochure prepared about 3-4 years ago showing the tree-mendous benefits. The measureable assets of the 97 street trees lost were about \$150,000.00 and a loss in yearly benefits provided is about \$10,000.00. Todd explained that he'd be meeting with service groups about replanting trees as he's had assistance from the Audubon Society and other groups in the past.

## **7. Director's Report**

Director Schrader reported:

- Willett Arena will open this Saturday. Repairs may be finally complete after the flooding. 340 gallons of water got into the 5 miles of underground piping and needed to be removed. They will be looking into getting a backup pump.
- The Spud Bowl/ Pink Bowl is this weekend at Goerke to raise money for scholarships and cancer awareness.
- Art in the Park is scheduled for next weekend.

## **8. Adjournment**

**Motion was made by Hall, seconded by Okonek, to adjourn the September 2011 meeting at 7:20 p.m.**

**Ayes all; Nays none; Motion carried.**