

Cambridge Parks, Trails, and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes

Monday, January 8, 2024

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, a regular meeting of the Cambridge Parks, Trails, and Recreation Commission was held at Cambridge City Hall, 300 3rd Avenue NE, Cambridge, Minnesota.

Members Present: Commissioners Jeff Andres (Chair), Jeff Soderquist (Vice Chair), Kriste Ericsson, Christina Thayer-Anderson (Community Education Representative), Lindsay Rassmann, Josh Ryberg (Youth Representative), and Lisa Iverson (Council Representative)

Staff Present: Community Development Specialist Amy Norling

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Andres called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Agenda

Norling requested to add Item 5J Book Exchange Boxes.

Iverson moved, seconded by Ericsson, to approve the amended agenda. All voted aye, no nays. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes

Commissioners requested to change Tuesday to Monday in the second line; the first paragraph should say Parks, Trails, and Recreation Commission instead of Planning Commission; and it should be noted that Commissioner Ericsson was absent.

Ryberg moved, seconded by Soderquist, to approve the amended October 9, 2023 meeting minutes. All voted aye, no nays. Motion passed.

Public Comment

No one signed up for public comment

New Business

A 2024 Parks, Trails, and Recreation Commission Meeting Schedule

Andres clarified the dates listed should all be 2024, not 2023. All meetings are held at 7pm at Cambridge City Hall.

B Parks, Trails, and Recreation Commission Google Drive with Commission Bylaws and other reference material

Norling reminded Commissioners that a Google Drive folder had been created for the Parks, Trails, and Recreation Commission. This is a location for commissioners to be able to reference material

quickly and efficiently. This Google Drive folder will be available to commissioners only and will be shared via email. Please bookmark this page and keep for future reference and notify staff if you would like any additional information stored here.

Soderquist asked how often the documents were updated, Norling said on an as-needed basis when information or documents were changed.

C Adopt-a-Park Update

Norling said the Adopt-a-Park program is run by the Administration department, the city web page for the program lists the parks that have been adopted and the ones that are still available. It also has links to the necessary forms to adopt a park. City staff promote the program on social media and other outlets. Four parks have been adopted so far, the dog park has not been adopted, but City Park, Brown Park, and Watertower Park have been adopted.

Iverson asked if there was a minimum group size to adopt a park, Norling said there were no minimum requirements. Iverson asked if more than one entity could adopt a park, Norling said yes since the clean-up days are coordinated with staff. Spirit River was clarified as an adoptable park.

Commissioners asked if participants were limited to only clean-up, Norling noted that was the main focus but the website has a list of volunteer opportunities that gives participants an idea of what they can do as a volunteer.

D Parks, Trails, and Recreation Commission minutes will now be included in the City Council Packet

Norling said the minutes for the PTRC will now be included in the City Council packet to help keep the Council up to date on the Commissions activities.

E Discuss Adverse Weather Policy for Parks Programming

Norling noted parks programming has encountered a few instances of adverse weather affecting scheduled events, including high heat index, air quality, and heavy rains. The Commission had discussed implementing an adverse weather policy for parks programming at the previous meeting, so staff has brought forth an example from a concert series hosted by Buffalo. This example states staff consult with the performer and check local radar before they make the decision on whether to host the concert at the original location or to move it to their backup location.

Norling continued, a formal policy may not be needed, but having a consistent contingency plan will help our residents and performers understand our processes and reasons for them. A handout such as the one Buffalo has would suffice. The handout could be posted on social media and the city webpage on any days we have adverse weather during events, so that way we may inform the public of what to expect that day.

Commissioners asked the status of replacing the amphitheater, Norling said the project was scheduled for spring and has been coordinated with Public Works. Norling was hoping the structure

would be finished in time for the Concert in the Park series. The structure will be replaced with a similar structure to the one that was damaged.

It was asked if the policy covered winter events, Norling said she was specific in including concerts and kids events in the title of the policy since it does not pertain to Winter Fest, Art Fair, nor the street dances because they have different backup locations. Winter Fest held in 2023 was only 7 degrees and very windy, but the event was still successful.

It was asked if 2 hours before the event was enough time, Norling said the reason for being 2 hours is because kids events start at 10 am, and the decision would have to be made at 8 am when the work day starts. Commissioners agreed 2 hours was plenty, as things can change quickly in that time.

Commissioners asked if 'Cambridge Public Library' on the handout could be a different color than blue, as it does not stand out on the green background.

F Updating Parks Priority List

Norling said staff have received requests for amenities to be added to the Parks Priority List, including a tennis backboard at Central Green Park, picnic tables and signage at Parkwood Park, and a bench along 6th Lane SE.

Norling continued, benches have been added to the Parks Priorities List with a note that if a bench is donated without a specific location in mind, that it be installed on 6th Lane SE. There are two benches at Parkwood Park, but one has requested on the walking trail around the park. Affinity Federal Credit Union and the Lions Club have donated benches in the past, that might be an option.

Commissioners wanted to know location of other swings before adding more to the request list. Ericsson asked if there was much use of the handicapped swing at Parkwood Park, as she does not often see anyone using it. Norling was not sure its use has been tracked.

It was asked if the tennis back board was a request from a citizen, Norling said there was one email and two phone calls asking for this amenity.

Ericsson asked if Parkwood Park had been adopted, as herself and co-workers would be interested in adopting the park if it had not. Norling thought it had yet to be adopted.

Thayer-Anderson motioned, seconded by Ryberg, to approve the amended parks priority list. All voted aye, motion carried.

G Parks Update provided by Todd Schwab, Public Works Director

Norling provided the following updates from Schwab: the skating rinks are both open for business in between rains. City Staff provided labor to facilitate an outdoor Blue Jacket hockey game against Hibbing on December 21st. Due to the lack of snow staff has had time to do some tree work, dead and dying trees are being removed from Brown Park and re-forestation/buckthorn removal will start in

the spring. And the company that is providing the replacement shelter in City Park is in the process of sending engineered drawings for City approval. Once that is done, they will start manufacturing. A spring construction should be possible. The vandalism lessened considerably after the police department stepped up presence and we shortened the operating hours of the City Park restrooms. Just small incidents throughout the rest of the City after school started.

Andres said he received some negative feedback regarding the tree removal in the parks, but he felt it improved the look of the area and made it less of a fire hazard. Norling said city has received positive feedback and one boy scout troop requested to be involved in the re-forestation of the park. Commissioners asked if it were possible to be involved, Norling thought it would be and Public Works could coordinate involvement.

H Snowman Contest and Winter Festival

Norling said the second annual Winter Fest is fast approaching, it will be held in February this year instead of January. There will be open skate, snow sledding, bonfires and warming houses, cornhole, a DJ, craft and food vendors, dog sled rides, and a horse drawn sleigh! Hot cocoa and s'mores will be provided for free, while supplies last.

Norling continued, the 2024 Snowman competition has begun! Photos of entries are now being accepted. Photos of entries will be displayed during Winter Fest and attendees will be able to vote for their top pick in each of the four categories. The winners will be announced during Winter Fest at 4:30 pm and awarded prize baskets, which will consist of items primarily donated from area businesses. There are also trophies to be awarded for each category. The categories for the Snowman Competition are: overall favorite/best, most creative, best traditional, and best business. Last year there was a tallest snowman category, but it was not as much fun to vote for. This year it was replaced with overall favorite/best. Photos can be emailed, dropped off, or mailed in and are accepted until the day before Winter Fest.

2023 Winter Fest was approximately 10% of the Parks Programming budget, the 2024 Winter Fest is approximately 12%. The 2% increase is due to participating in the Snowflake Parade to help advertise and also due to paying a vendor to provide free cocoa.

Andres asked how much it would cost to add the City of Cambridge branding to the trophies, Norling did not have an estimate on cost, but advised Commissioners to stay within the budget.

It was asked if the dog sled team and horse sleigh rides have an alternate carriage or wagon option if there is not snow, Norling said there was for both.

Norling noted she was actively seeking vendors, and seeking an ice-skating rental company but has been unsuccessful so far. Soderquist mentioned that REI has a sports equipment trial program that may be worth looking into.

I Parks Programming Update

Norling detailed the 2024 Parks Programming events, there will be three kid's events, three concerts in the park, three Third Thursday Street Dances, an Art Fair and chalk contest, and the Winter Fest and a Snowman Competition. All events are booked except two Third Thursday events, where details are still being worked out.

Events that were well attended in the past, such as the petting zoo and the bounce house event, will be repeated and expanded this year. The petting zoo will include farm animals along with a reptile petting zoo and a handwashing station. City Park can only accommodate five bouncy houses with the amount of electricity available, so this year there will be music and bubbles. The last event is a kids musical performer called Bob the Beachcomber.

Concerts in the Park this year will be a Queen cover band, a Beatles cover band, and a women in country cover band. We are hoping these cover bands do as well as the Johnny Cash cover band did last year, which had high attendance.

Soderquist asked if generators were allowed in the park, and could be used to add additional bounce houses. Norling said the rental company required two outlets per bounce house, but she could look into it, as the event could use more than five houses.

J Book exchange boxes

Norling said a citizen requested to install book exchange boxes in four city parks. The boxes are the result of a college project, and likely there will not be any more available in the future. Brown and City Park were requested by the individual. Ryberg suggested Pioneer Park to help cover the east side of town. Commissioners also felt Peterson Park was a good option. Parkwood Park was discussed, but it was felt Peterson was a better option. Later talk Commissioners felt that Honeysuckle Park was more favorable than Peterson.

Soderquist asked who would maintain the boxes, Norling said Public Works would, but could be arranged for volunteers to help if requested.

Ryberg suggested reaching out to the library if restocking of the boxes is needed in the future.

Other Business/Miscellaneous

A City Council Update

Iverson said the Council held its Truth in Taxation public hearing last month. During the organizational meeting last week new committee assignments were chosen, Council member Bob Shogren was chosen as the Council representative for 2024 PTRC meetings.

B Commissioner Updates and/or Concerns

Andres thanked Iverson and Ryberg for their time on the board for 2023. He also announced that Commissioner Rassmann has resigned, so the board will be seeking a new member. Norling said Isanti County Parks Commissioner Susan Blom would join as a representative of the Isanti County Parks Board.

Andres proposed to pave and light the trail that runs from City Park south to the Community Gardens. Norling mentioned staff requested to use part of that trail for the horse drawn rides at Winter Fest.

Ryberg attended boys hockey game at Central Greens and felt it was a success, he would like to see a girls hockey game hosted there as well.

Adjournment of Council Meeting

Being no further business before the Commission, Ericsson moved, seconded by Thayer-Anderson, to adjourn the regular meeting at 7:59 pm. Upon roll call, all voted aye, no nays. Motion carried unanimously.



Jeff Andres,
Chair, Cambridge Parks, Trails and Recreation

ATTEST:

Amy Norling
Community Development Specialist