

DRAFT
MARATHON COUNTY PARK COMMISSION

Date and Time of Meeting: December 1, 2020 at 10:30 am

Meeting Location: Conference Room 5, 212 River Drive, Wausau WI 54403

Park Commissioners present: Connie Conrad, Dawn Herbst, Jean Maszk-(via webex), Allen Opall, Pat Peckham, Rick Seefeldt-(via webex), James Wadinski

Staff present: Jamie Polley-Director, Marcus Aumann-Asst. Director of Community Services-(via webex)

Others present: Michael Van Offeren-(via webex)

1. Call to Order – President Conrad called the Park Commission meeting to order at 10:30am. Official notice and the agenda for the meeting was posted publicly in accordance with the State statutes.

2. Public Comment – None brought forward

3. Approval of the Minutes of the September 29, 2020 Park Commission Meeting – Motion by Peckham, second by Opall to approve the minutes of the September 29, 2020 Park Commission meeting with a change to sentence wording under the item Discussion and Possible Action Regarding Deer in Bluegill Bay Park to say that “People that feed the deer help keep the population above where it is sustainable and regeneration within forested areas at Bluegill Bay Park will be decimated by the deer if they continue to be at the current population. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 7-0.

4. Policy Issues for Discussion and Committee Determination

A. Discussion and Possible Action by Committee

1. Regarding 2021 Work Plan – Polley discussed some of the work that will done in 2021. Work includes an update to the City Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, complete a west side master plan, a sustainability plan, and a Rib Falls Park master plan. Playground replacements include Scholfield Park, Big Eau Pleine Park, 3M Park, and Dells of the Eau Claire Park. Other work will be to treat and remove Ash trees, plant 400+ trees, recruit staff members for Recreation Superintendent, Administrative Manager, and Maintenance Technician positions. Develop a short term and long term CIP plan, implement recreation software, upgrade electrical at Big Eau Pleine Park, work on a bike/pedestrian plan for Parks and County Highway Department. Some City small projects include a plan for the safe opening of the pools, repair of steps and wall at Stewart Park, self-watering flower baskets, renovate Brockmeyer Park west soccer field, work on the Scholfield Park parking lot and finish the Dog Park. Other tasks include developing a sponsorship and naming rights policy, and enhancing social media presence. Some County small projects include work on the Dells high bridge decking and overlook, utility mapping at Marathon Park, and repairs to the rubber flooring in the Ice Arena, the Big Eau Pleine Park road, and horse barn.

5. Operational Functions Required by Statute, Ordinance or Resolution: A. Discussion and Possible Action by Committee and B. Discussion and Possible Action by Committee to Forward to the Environmental Resource Committee for its Consideration - None

6. Policy Issues for Discussion and Committee Determination for Consideration by Environmental Resources Committee

A. Proposed Amendments to Chapter 19 of the Marathon County Code of Ordinances – Polley explained the proposed amendments are recommendations by the Recreation Deputies to clarify and enhance a number of ordinances where questions have arisen in the field over the past year. These amendments will allow the ordinances to be more easily enforced by the Recreation Deputies and Assistant Facility Managers. Any changes to the amendments will be reviewed by Corporation Counsel prior to coming back to the Park Commission in January. Some of the amendments will be taken to the City for clarification so their ordinances can be updated as well.

Deputy Van Offeren discussed some experiences the deputies had in the field this summer and said these rules allow them to have the authority behind their words to say a person has to stop a certain act. He said currently generators in general are not allowed and asked that be put into the ordinance. Polley is also going to clarify wording to prohibit “glass beverage containers” in parks instead of the wording “glass containers”. An exception will be made for fisherman that want to fish

after campground quiet hours. The intent of quiet hours is that they don't want a party in a campground to move to a beach or shelter after hours. Polley mentioned that E-bikes will be discussed at the Forestry Citizen Advisory Subcommittee before being brought to the Commission. Currently the State rules allow for E-bikes with restrictions on the type of bike and speed. Local municipalities can make more restrictive ordinances and not allow them. She noted that the Central Wisconsin Off-Road Cycling Coalition issued a statement that supports E-bikes in the parks and on the trails.

Two other questions are whether or not Commission wants to put anything in the ordinances relating to when or where or if metal detectors or drones can be used. The State and FAA regulate drones already. A municipality or government agency can put a restriction on where they can be flown and where they can't. Wadinski suggested requiring a permit as a way to control the use of them if they are allowed. Other Commission members agreed that might be a good idea. Peckham suggested if they are going to do any kind of regulating including permits, that they schedule it for a meeting and have a public hearing format because he believes there will be public interest. Polley discussed what some other communities are doing in the case of drones. She felt she had some direction and will discuss it with the Recreation Deputies and look at ordinance examples from other communities.

7. Educational Presentation/Outcome Monitoring Reports for Discussion

A. 2020 Year in Review - In 2020 the parks saw a significant increase in usage compared to other years. During the COVID-19 pandemic, citizens turned to our 3,401 acres of parkland and 29,848 acres of County Forest to recreate. According to a Google Community Mobility Report usage of parks in Marathon County was up 136% in July and August compared to an average year. 308.5 acres and 81,920 feet of trails were mowed which equals 7,676 hours of mowing; 402 trees were planted and 377 non-ash trees were removed; 1600 Ash trees were treated; the Emerald Ash Borer was found in Wausau; 195 family activity kits were distributed; new playground equipment was installed in four parks; new dasher boards, sound system and controller was installed in the Ice Arenas; Sunny Vale Softball Complex fields, fences, concession, etc. were updated; 200 acres of forest land were acquired; 4,417 boat launch, biking, and disc golf passes were sold. Camping had the busiest season in many years with a 35.6% increase in revenue over what was budgeted. Campers reserved 16,600 nights of camping this season. Many events and shelter reservations were cancelled due to COVID-19 but 566 still took place. Youth sports were delayed this year due to COVID-19 but 298 games were still played. Adult Softball was cancelled and the Wisconsin Woodchucks played 23 home games.

8. Announcements

A. Next Meeting Date & Time, Location – Tuesday, January 5, 2021 at 10:30 am, Rm 5 or via Webex, 212 River Dr., Wausau WI 54403

B. Future Agenda Items – none brought forward

9. Adjourn – Motion by Opall, second by Herbst to adjourn at 12:05pm. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 7-0.