

August 20, 2019

CITY OF WASHBURN PARKS COMMITTEE MEETING

5:30 PM Washburn City Hall

Present: Members: Jennifer Maziasz (council rep), Jamie Cook, Erika Lang, Wendy Reese, Kyleleen Bartnick

Municipal Personnel: City Administrator Scott Kluver, City Administrative Assistant Tony Janisch, Public Works Director Bob Anderson, Mayor Richard Avol

Excused Absence(s): None

Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 5:32 pm by Maziasz.

Approval of the July 16, 2019 Parks Committee Meeting Minutes

Motion made to approve minutes by Bartnick; second by Reese. Motion carried unanimously and minutes were approved.

Update on West End Park Boat Ramp

An update was given on the repair work/reconstruction work that is scheduled to occur on the West End Park Boat Ramp. Several bids came into the City of Washburn but they were all over budget. Because of this, the City Council rejected all of the bids, and is going to go out to bid again soon to begin work hopefully late summer 2020. By soliciting bids over the winter, the City hopes more bids will come in next time, and from local contractors as well who may not have been able to bid the last time around as the request for proposals may have come out too late for them to coordinate their schedules.

Discussion and Recommendation on Walking Trail Maintenance Plan

Committee members reminded meeting participants that we have been discussing an update to the walking trail areas' management for several months. This is necessary for several reasons - to produce a more user friendly document; to include components that are missing from current plans; to build on and complement the Expansion of Thompson's West End Park Report and overall management direction; to reflect on current on-the-ground conditions; to evaluate what is working well and what isn't; to adopt Best Management Practices and best science for natural resource management; to balance diversity of community values; and to facilitate the City's planning and budgeting.

Lang and Bartnick have been working on preparing an updated draft management plan for the Parks Committee to review. A draft management plan was circulated in preparation for the meeting. This is the first step of gathering community input. Lang and Bartnick gave a brief presentation and made the following points:

- The plan is currently in draft form.
- The area considered is the section of the trail and habitat areas between Thompson's West End Park and the Washburn Marina.

- While the plan is comprehensive in scope, the majority of it focuses on vegetation and habitat management.
- Input was sought from various natural resource professionals who live and work in the area.
- An evaluation of on-the-ground current conditions was completed and the following observations were made:
 - Some infrastructure, such as signage, benches, and bridges, is wearing and will need to be fixed or replaced.
 - Vegetation management has not been done according to existing plans. Mowing is being done down to the ground. On steep slopes, this is causing erosion which is costly to fix and damages water quality. There has also been very little action taken to remove/control invasive plants over the years.
 - In terms of view corridors, approximately 45% of the linear lakeshore is a view corridor from the walking trail.
- In terms of what will remain the same in the updated plan, this includes:
 - Actions will continue to support the direction of and complement existing plans related to vegetation management.
 - Existing view corridors from the trail will be maintained. Further, with the removal of invasives, some areas may result in improved views.
 - Existing trail and infrastructure will be kept.
 - The updated management plan will balance multiple uses including recreation, wildlife, and lakeshore access.
- In terms of what has been adapted or clarified in the updated plan, this includes:
 - Use of native and culturally important plants.
 - Addition of edible plants if desired in appropriate locations.
 - Refined view corridor maintenance techniques.
 - Refined reasons for mowing.
 - Refined timing of mowing practices.
- In terms of what has been added to the updated plan, that includes:
 - Invasive plant removal and control actions.
 - Existing and future ideas for infrastructure.
 - Wetland protection and management actions.
 - Protection of lakeshore slopes as possible and following best management practices.
 - Climate resiliency management considerations.
 - Pathogen considerations.
 - Use of clean fill if possible.
 - Regular monitoring to inform decisions.
 - Technical and financial assistance opportunities (such as partners and grants).
 - Suggested priority activities and a timeline.
- Lang and Bartnick also pointed out that some questions remain including:
 - Who is responsible for carrying out various actions? It doesn't just have to be the public works department, as capacity is limited. The Parks Committee, volunteers, and interested organizations can help.
 - We may need to further identify our priorities and identify funding for actions.
 - Is anything missing from the plan?

- What needs to change for this plan to be supported by the committee and then City Council?

Before opening the floor to the public, Committee members made the following points:

- It would be a good idea to eventually add the section of trail along Pumphouse Road to the management plan. It would be nice to make this section of the trail more utilized, as it is currently hard to find. It would be nice to connect the parks better, and to also make the trail's path through the marina more defined.
- The map in the draft plan showing Area 6 needs to be edited so it doesn't include the marina.
- The plan needs to allow for the mowing of the grass areas including those around the parking areas, exercise equipment, beginning of the trail, parking areas for Book Across the Bay, etc.
- For planting plans, it would be nice to come up with a couple of example plans to help guide the City.

The Committee then opened the floor to the public; motion made by Lang, second by Bartnick. Comments included the following:

- Thanking the committee for addressing the outdated plans.
- There are grants available, including from Wisconsin Coastal Management Program and the DNR trails aid program, to help do this work.
- Bayfield County will be updating its Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, and we should ensure that the City's plans for its parks are included.
- Signage to direct people to the walking trail area would be helpful.
- The City may wish to add to the invasive plant species list as there are additional invasives in the walking trail area included a cranberry specie and a willow specie. The City needs to determine if they want to work to remove all or just certain invasive species.
- While viewing corridors are valued by some, the vegetation does help block the wind which is also helpful.
- Loss of wetlands and other vegetated areas results in more erosion and a loss of wildlife habitat, especially for birds.
- Keeping ravines vegetated will result in less erosion. Erosion compromises water quality as well as fishing opportunities.
- Existing bird inventories and vegetation surveys exist and could be incorporated as an attachment to the plan.
- Instead of lots of brush, it would be nice to establish more trees that is easier to manage around, still provides habitat, and also provides views. Some residents want to see more of the lake. However, it shouldn't be overlooked that shrubs help provide habitat for wildlife such as birds.
- There has been confusion among residents about the recent actions of the city such as the heavy mowing of Area 2 and Area 4. People are confused and don't understand why certain actions are being completed. Money is being spent and it is to do things that aren't good for the lake. Clearing areas is also resulting in more invasives.
- Therefore, it is helpful to have a plan that sets goals and acts to guide the city. It isn't about micromanaging but instead guiding.

- It is great to ask for input from citizens and the City Council.
- Linking City staff to local experts is helpful as there are things that we don't know and they can help.
- Many citizens and other groups want to help and likely would be willing to volunteer, such as the Washburn Heritage Association and Chequamegon Audubon Society.
- The history of the area is important and it is important to share this history.

The Committee thanked the public for attending and providing input. A motion to close the floor at 6:45 pm was made by Bartnick; second by Cook.

The Committee identified next steps:

- City staff will provide edits to the draft plan to Lang and Bartnick or Janisch (who will forward to Lang and Bartnick) by September 10. Specific edits will be most helpful, rather than comments that relay actions will be too hard to implement or too expensive. Funding may exist from grants to do many of the actions.
- The draft plan will be further discussed at the September Parks Committee meeting to gather more public comment.
- If we are ready in September, the Parks Committee will recommend a version of the plan to City Council for consideration.
- Grant proposals to Wisconsin Coastal Management Program are due the November 1, 2019. Many activities in the draft plan would be a good fit for this funding program. Even if there isn't time for City Council to review and adopt an updated management plan, perhaps the City Parks Committee can identify some actions that everyone will agree to take, and these can be written into the grant proposal so we can take advantage of this opportunity.

Future Topics

A couple of Parks Committee members pointed out that they will be unable to make the scheduled October meeting, so we may need to find an alternate date if we meet that month.

For the September meeting, the following topics were identified:

- Walking Trail Management Plan Update - continue discussion and move to decision if ready
- Discussion & Recommendation on Dog Park Location and Plan Details
- Updates from Public Works (this should become a standing agenda item)

Adjournment

Motion made by Lang to adjourn meeting at 6:57 pm, second by Bartnick. Motion approved unanimously.