

November 20, 2018

CITY OF WASHBURN PARKS COMMITTEE MEETING

4:30 PM Washburn City Hall

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

Municipal Personnel: Mayor Avol, City Administrator Scott Kluver, Assistant City Administrator Dan Stoltman

Excused Absence(s): None

Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 4:34 pm by Maziasz. Roll call attendance – all 5 Parks Committee members in attendance.

Approval of the October 22, 2018 Parks Committee Meeting Minutes

Committee members discussed making the following addition to meeting minutes: notifying the Chequamegon Audubon Society about the location for the future outdoor exercise equipment, as it will be placed near the native plant garden that their members installed. Motion made by Bartnick to approve minutes with addition; second by Cook. Motion carried unanimously and minutes were approved.

Review of Agenda

Discussion and Recommendation on Possible Dog Park and Possible Locations

Discussion about this potential project was already started at the October 2018 Parks Committee meeting as illustrated in the meeting minutes. Kathy Imboden from a group of citizens who has been working on this initiative attended the November meeting to provide additional information and to answer questions. She informed the committee members of the following:

- there is a lot of support for this in the Washburn community
- this citizen group has already collected signatures on a petition in support
- the goal is to establish a fenced-in off-leash dog park that is well maintained and utilized
- an easily accessible location would be best
- separate areas for large dogs and small dogs would be ideal

Committee members discussed the following:

- There should be a management/maintenance plan for this park to ensure it is kept up and doesn't burden city staff
- The dog park should be in an easily accessible location to ensure it is used

Referencing a map of City-owned properties, the following lots were identified as warranting additional consideration via a site visit, speaking with community members, etc.

- Lot 17 - this could be a potential location. This is next to Hillside Park.
- Lot 19 - this lot is next to the cemetery off of Woodland Drive. Part of the lot could be used, and there would still be space if the cemetery needs to expand in the future. The site has already been cleared and is relatively flat. Soil type is sandy, well drained soils. This lot is near the Washburn school forest, and that might be inviting for pet owners who desire further exercise and a trail.
- Lot 9 - this could be a potential location. It is near the walking trail along Lake Superior. However, barking dogs may disturb wildlife that use the lakeshore habitat and may disturb walkers.

Committee members identified these next steps:

- members will visit the lots and make a list of pros and cons. They will bring this information to the Parks Committee's meeting in January 2019.
- some outreach to landowners near these locations will be conducted (using social media (Dan and Kyleleen will head this up) neighborhood networks (Jen will help with this), 1:1 meetings, etc. to see if there would be support for this project before it would be considered by City Council.

Discussion and Recommendation on Updates to the Walking Trail Maintenance Plan

Committee members agreed to open the floor to include public comment during the meeting. Committee members recognized that this project will require additional discussion and outreach. Many things need to be considered, and many stakeholders included in the discussion and decisions. We also need to evaluate what has been done, what is working well, what isn't working well, and what is missing from this maintenance plan as well as the documents it references - including a management plan for the walking trail and a conservation plan. Committee members discussed the following:

- while it is recognized that people in the past put time and resources into developing these documents, one stream-lined document would likely be easier to follow and use especially as a guide for the City's public works department who does much of the work
- this plan has been interpreted both correctly and in-correctly through the years
- much of this plan's recommendations are based on USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service materials, some of which have been updated, and some of which are not a good fit for the walking trail area
- some things in the plan are outdated, while other things are not applicable
- we recognize that the walking trail is mentioned in the management plan for Thompson's West End Park, and that updates to the walking trail plan may or may not align well with West End Park's plan and that is okay
- rather than going section by section, we should look at the entire area
- multiple users and uses should be considered, including wildlife and people. A compromise will need to be found, and a balance between idealism and practicality.
- we may want to break community discussions into topics so stakeholders can more easily participate and so the process is more manageable and organized

Ryan Brady, a biologist with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources who lives nearby offered the following points:

- the area along the walking trail provides wildlife habitat, especially to migratory birds due to the area's proximity to Lake Superior. As such, Ryan is not in favor of the mowing, cutting, and clearing practices that have been taking place.
- while the plan references ground nesting birds and providing habitat to them via mowing practices, ground nesting birds will not use those mowed areas because they are too small to be utilized
- when updating the plan, one should consider various goals including wildlife species and their habitat needs as well as the needs of the community (such as view corridors, recreation, etc.). A balance can be found.

Committee members identified these next steps:

- Bartnick and Lang will work on a framework that will be used to help guide the update process of a plan that incorporates information from the existing maintenance plan, management plan, and conservation plan. They will bring ideas back to the committee in January 2019.

Future Topics

Committee members will not meet in December due to the holidays. The Parks Committee will meet again in January. Agenda items will include the potential dog park as well as the Updating the Walking Trail Maintenance Plan.

Adjourn

Motion made by Cook to adjourn meeting at 5:47 pm, second by Bartnick. Motion carried unanimously.