

PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING
Tuesday, August 12, 2014
4:30 p.m., Prescott Neighborhood Resource Center

PRESENT: Bob Blocker, Paul Hoffmann, Robin Kennicker, Ken Klinge, Kate Lydon, Karen Lyness and David Schlueter

STAFF PRESENT: Marie Ware, Steve Fehsal, Dan Kroger, Eileen Trimble and Ryan Clancy (summer intern)

OTHERS
PRESENT: Ryan Larson

ADMINISTER
OATH OF
OFFICE: Oaths of Office were administered to Paul Hoffmann, Robin Kennicker and Ken Klinge and required papers signed.

ELECT
OFFICERS;
VOTE: It was moved by Lyness, seconded by Schlueter, to elect Ken Klinge as Chair, Kate Lydon as Vice-Chair and Robin Kennicker as Secretary. The motion passed unanimously.

MINUTES
APPROVED;
VOTE: It was moved by Lyness, seconded by Lydon, to approve the minutes of the July 8, 2014, meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

PARK DIVISION
REPORT: Park Division Manager Steve Fehsal informed Commissioners:

◆ Miller Riverview campground opened August 1st. Staff spent two weeks cleaning and getting it ready for opening. Cleanup cost is estimated at \$13,000 for rock, playground mulch and electrical work. City equipment and staff hours are not included in that amount. Public Works Department loaned the department their end loaders and then their street sweepers came through to help clean. Mr. Fehsal thanked staff and Public Works Department for all the help and hard work to clean the park. ◆ Staff continues to work on projects, mowing, getting fall flower baskets ready, etc. ◆ Civil Service tests have been completed for Maintenance Worker and Assistant Horticulturalist positions. ◆ Just received notification from another full time employee that will be retiring at the end of October. ◆ We are starting the RFP process for the skate park. There is \$600,000 budgeted for this project, plus \$200,000 that is to be generated from private fundraising. There is no location yet, that will be part of the process which will include public meetings and more. The two current skate parks will also be looked at to see what kind of life span they have left. *Commissioner Lyness commented that something is needed on the west end of town.*

Commissioner Hoffmann asked how bad in the hole the **campground** is due to the late opening. Manager Ware said \$80,000 was projected as revenue for fiscal year 2014 and the year ended at \$47,000. Fiscal year 2013 ended with just over \$46,000 and the campground opened at about the same time. It is hard to tell actual expense/revenue comparison because campground related expenses are not separated out, they are all under various line items in park areas activity. A good spring could rebound the revenues in this fiscal year.

Mr. Hoffmann asked if the **marina** is the same because the flood gates were closed. Manager Kroger said the marina was open 22 days of a potential 70 which is close to

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last year. We try to manage the expenses and did not have full staff when the gates were closed, etc. Manager Ware said word of mouth is kicking in and several boaters were on publicity shots that gave testimonials in the Boat Parade video. We are promoting ways to bring in revenue and cost control but Ware said every new business takes three to five years to get off the ground and get in the black.

Commissioner Blocker gave a hats off to crews that worked to clean and ready the **campground** for opening – they did a great job. This is the second year in a row that the park has been badly flooded. Can't we fill in that park so we can use it, or is it protected because it is in the flood plain? Commissioner Kennicker said that at one of the City Council meetings where Chaplain Schmitt Master Plan was discussed, it was noted that Miller Riverview is in a protected area so you can't do much for it.

Mr. Blocker said he works on the William Black in the Port of Dubuque during the week and there is not much traffic. We need to get the word out and get people down to the **marina** area. He stated our gas price is higher than anybody else's. Mr. Kroger said our price is competitive with other marinas. Blocker said we need to get the word out that you can rent a slip anywhere from one to ten days – there is a market for it.

Commissioner Klinge spoke with campground managers and they feel there should be some kind of minimum payment for the job even if the campground is not open. They may not be interested in managing the campground next year if that doesn't change.

RECREATION
DIVISION
REPORT:

Recreation Division Manager Dan Kroger informed Commissioners:

◆ Ben Alden the Facilities Manager for the Marina worked on a marketing plan for the lighted boat parade and started a Facebook page. Within a week there were 200 friends and now it is up to 1,000 friends. Over 4,800 people viewed the post on Facebook advertising the lighted boat parade. There were boaters from as far as Freeport, Moline and Nebraska. The boat parade weekend brought in \$13,000 in revenue – approximately \$7,000 of which was fuel purchases. Some people have already asked for next year's date and theme.

◆ Leisure Services cosponsored a color run that had over 850 runners and department received a check for just over \$6,000 which will be used to help with expenses for some of the subsidized free programs. ◆ Fall brochures will be mailed on August 22nd. ◆ Dubuque is hosting the Fall Iowa Park and Recreation Association Workshop September 15th through 17th. Commissioners are invited to the luncheon at 11:30 a.m. on September 16th for the Keynote Speaker.

Commissioner Kennicker suggested maybe have an event where boats could decorate for a Halloween theme. Commissioner Lydon felt staff did a phenomenal job on the event, the Riverwalk was packed. She suggested that next year the itinerary for the entire day be put on Facebook because there were a lot of fun things to do and it was a great event. Commissioner Lyness asked if the Marina does much business during the Taste of Dubuque and Mr. Kroger said they are not too busy during that time.

MANAGER
REPORT:

Leisure Services Manager Marie Ware told Commissioners:

◆ An architect has been chosen for the renovation work on the second floor of the Multicultural Family Center. ◆ Mary Bridget Corken-Deutsch has been hired as the

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new AmeriCorps Director; she starts August 18th. This is a grant-funded position. ♦ Dan and his supervisors have done all the work for the upcoming IPRA fall workshop that is being hosted by Leisure Services. We are excited to have people from around the state here. ♦ Work on budget will begin soon. There were a lot of cuts in capital improvements so when we do the facilities tour we will talk about cuts, budget shortfall cuts, new projects to request and priority choices. ♦ Internal audits are being done with all city departments to check out their practices, which resulted in some changes on how money is taken in and deposited, etc. ♦ Steve was a part of the Parks to People Initiative and attended many meetings involving Jones / Jackson / Dubuque counties. It could mean a couple million dollar grant to bring people to parks in these three counties. The money is meant for planning. The money has already been appropriated at the state level. Ware gave kudos to Steve on his efforts. There were a lot of positive comments on the tours that were held in Dubuque and how organized this three-county group was compared to some of the other groups visited. ♦ The EB Lyons project is moving along; it is a great partnership.

**CHAPLAIN
SCHMITT ISLAND
MASTER PLAN:**

The Chaplain Schmitt Master Plan was adopted by the City Council. This is a concept / starting place. It will be guidance as staff starts to look at the plan and avoid environmental issues and transportation issues so traffic will flow smoothly through the area. Both the City Council and planning staff recognize this is a concept master plan and they are working on some first steps to do.

**FACILITIES
TOUR:**

Manager Ware reminded commissioners that it was decided earlier in the year to go on a tour of facilities in September before budget time.

**AMEND DOG
SECTION OF
PARK AND
RECREATION
ORDINANCE;
VOTE:**

Commissioner Lydon drafted a proposal regarding dogs and cats in parks. Commissioners were sent a redline and a clean proposed ordinance accepting Ms. Lydon's changes. Both may be found as part of the original minutes.

Commissioner Hoffmann wanted to let commissioners know that he received a call from an attorney who was not in favor of pets in parks. The gentleman had two concerns: 1) if a citizen at any public forum said they were afraid to go to parks because of dogs it could be considered discriminatory; and 2) he thinks we need to look at the liability – is the city sheltered from the liability? Ware will talk to the City Attorney's office. Mr. Hoffmann asked what happened to compromise. It seems like it is the proposed amendment or nothing. He feels Lydon's proposal has completely taken away the compromise without the commission discussing it. Mr. Hoffmann said his son plays baseball in Cedar Rapids at city parks where pets are allowed. It is usually very chaotic with dogs barking and dog fights and sometimes they even have to stop the games.

Ms. Lydon felt there is compromise with Marshall Park and the Arboretum, and commissioners have discussed it at several meetings. Pet owners are just asking for some tolerance. There have not been any issues with pets in the places they are allowed. Dubuque has worked to become very inclusive but we are alienating a huge segment of the population by not allowing pets in parks. She feels we need to allow pets in Eagle Point Park. Lydon told commissioners there were 151 new signatures on the online survey supporting pets in parks; the petition was never closed. She distributed a copy of some of the comments received from people who signed the online survey. The last section of the proposed ordinance does say that pet owners are responsible for the actions of their pet. She reminded commissioners that she felt

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this was the time to bring this issue back before the group since funding for the second pet park was cut due to budget shortfall. When the tobacco people came to a commission meeting, this group was pretty staunchly opposed to infringing on somebody's rights if what they were doing was legal. You can smoke in city parks and you can have a firearm in city parks but you can't bring a puppy to the park. Ms. Lydon has asked citizens what they think would change if pets were allowed in parks and most said that more people would go the parks.

Commissioner Schlueter said the commission did discuss it at previous meetings and as a whole wanted an ordinance that had as little confusion as possible. Commissioners Lydon, Blocker and Lyness visited with the Arboretum Board and the Veterans' Memorial groups to get their input. Mr. Schlueter said if Dubuque wants to attract more young professionals, being pet friendly is an issue for them. The people we are worried about are already in violation of city ordinance by not having their pet licensed, not having shots, etc. He is leaning toward agreeing with Ms. Lydon and feels allowing pets in parks would help promote economic growth. She came up with the best motion and he feels the commission should just vote on the proposed ordinance and go from there. What Lydon has for the amendment is as good as it can be; Blocker and Kennicker agreed.

Commissioner Kennicker feels the economic growth would explode because possible newcomers are looking for a place to take their pets and it would draw people to Dubuque.

Commissioner Blocker has only received one call and it was a person that was opposed to allowing pets in parks. Mr. Blocker walks the Riverwalk every morning and has seen lots of litter and cigarette butts but no pet waste on pavement. He asked again why Dubuque is so out of line with other cities in Iowa and Illinois. There may be some risk involved but he feels the gain outweighs the risk and we can't protect people from every possible risk that is out there.

Commissioner Lyness is still on the fence about allowing pets in Eagle Point. There are so many events at the park and many people have commented to her that they will not go to Eagle Point Park if dogs are there.

Manager Ware reminded commissioners that Legal Department would have to review the proposal if passed.

Mr. Ryan Larson was present in support of allowing pets in parks. He is a responsible dog owner and when he looks at this issue he feels respect for both sides but does not understand how Dubuque can call itself an "All America City" and vote against allowing pets in parks, unlike all the other cities in Iowa. He feels if pets were allowed in parks it would open the parks to more usage because pet owners will come to the parks. He asked, "Please open all the parks to pets and at least give it a try. You can always change the law later if it doesn't work out."

Park Division Manager Fehsal said his biggest concern is enforcement. Night staff work from May to October and we don't have staff to enforce so he hopes to get huge support from the pro-pets in parks groups and others about helping to educate the public on ordinance and where pets are allowed, etc.

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It was moved by Schlueter, seconded by Kennicker, to vote to recommend changing the pet section of the Park and Recreation Ordinance as proposed by Commissioner Lydon. The motion passed 4-3, with Blocker, Kennicker, Lydon and Schlueter voting yes; Hoffmann, Klinge and Lyness voting no.

Ms. Ware said the next step is to have Legal Department review the proposal.

Mr. Schlueter suggested keeping the September meeting for the facilities tour so it coincides with timing of budget process. This will allow time for Legal Department to review the proposed ordinance changes, place the pets issue on October agenda and schedule a public hearing.

There was general discussion on whether a **public hearing** would be needed: Ms. Lyness said we received all the public input when the issue originally came up. Ms. Kennicker said it was already in the newspaper that a public hearing would possibly be held in September so would we be bound by that – do we legally have to have a public hearing?; Mr. Schlueter said the importance of the public meeting is that we owe the citizens a chance to voice their opinions. Ms. Lydon asked if more public input would change commissioners' vote or not. Ms. Lydon volunteered to draft a letter from the Commission which staff would forward for suggestions / approval from other commissioners. Once letter is finalized, it will be printed on official letterhead and sent to Mayor and Council from the Commission asking if the Council would like them to hold a public meeting on this issue again.

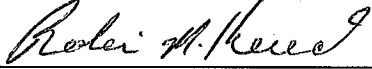
OTHER
BUSINESS:

Commissioner Blocker asked where the city was on the vandals from the damage at Eagle Point Park; has anyone been charged and will the city be able to recover the money? Mr. Fehsal said four individuals age 14 through 17 have been charged and each will pay around \$2,300 in restitution, plus community service hours.

ADJOURN;
VOTE:

It was moved by Hoffmann, seconded by Lydon, that the meeting be adjourned at 6:15 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.


Chairperson


Attest

