

MINUTES

City of Alpena Recreation Advisory Board/Planning Commission
Joint Meeting
October 11, 2023
Alpena, Michigan

CALL TO ORDER:

The joint meeting of the Recreation Advisory Board and Planning Commission was called to order at 5:03 p.m. by Nick Lee, Recreation Advisory Board Vice-Chair.

ROLL CALL: RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD

Present: Lee, Melville-Hall, Pattison, McCumber, Saddler, Barr

Absent: Kuznicki

Staff: Steve Shultz (City Engineer), Rachel Smolinski (City Manager), Montiel Birmingham (PDZ Director), Cassie Stone (Recording Secretary), Kathleen Sauve (Recording Secretary).

Others Present: Denise Kline (NEMCOG Deputy Director/Chief Planner)

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Review 2021-2025 Recreation Plan goals to Capital Improvement Plan and Recreation Plan Survey Results – Montiel gave a quick introduction and turned it over to Denise Kline. This project is in conjunction with Alpena County and the five townships: Alpena, Green, Wilson, Sanborn and Ossineke. The City's plan is being updated a little bit early to get the City on the same schedule as the county and all the townships and being able to share the survey. Denise stated half of the survey respondents were from the city. There is a joint meeting for all of the communities scheduled for November 9th at 6:00 p.m. at Ossineke Township Hall for anyone to attend.

Montiel stated the first two pages are the goals and objectives and asked what opportunities are still valid, need to be updated or are there any that should be removed. Rachel felt more recreation programming needs to be brought into the plan. There was some discussion on number 8 of the goals on maybe to broaden the expansion of acquiring new recreation land not just at Bay View and McRae Park as listed. Steve believes the McClay Trust funds as well as the Land Acquisition have been spent so number 4 under the objective section can be removed. Denise stated that its good that we are looking to see how much is in the CIP and how much was estimated in the other recreation plan as not all communities include these dollar amounts in their recreation action plan therefore, we do not necessarily have to say in the final product this is what we think we will spend. Denise added she would be in favor of action items not listing a price with Steve agreeing and adding its so hard putting a number out there not knowing what's going to happen within a five-year span. Sundin added he thinks if we aren't

going to list the dollar amount it should at least be in the CIP so we show it's a priority and it's in those documents and in what year. Rachel added she doesn't necessarily feel it's a bad idea to keep this as an internal document where we can hold all the recreation costs together and be able to update them annually. Montiel stated in the REC plan survey that signage, maps, and trees came up often and is definitely something that is ranked very important to people. Denise suggested maybe adding on there to update the Thunder Bay Riverscape Plan. Boboltz mentioned there is a huge invasion species problem in the sanctuary and maybe something needs to be put in that plan referencing that so it can get addressed. Montiel stated upgraded site amenities were mentioned in the survey for Sytek Park that are in progress. A bathroom option was also called out in the survey. Steve said that can get investigated. Avery Park was ranked at the bottom of the list for a low use park but has \$315,000 for planning for years 2023-2028 allocated to this park which really doesn't make sense. Steve stated the parks CIP was previously worked on on its own and the REC plan was never really considered. Two years ago, Shannon said this doesn't make sense and she basically built the CIP based on what was in the REC plan. These items listed are from 2020, 2021 that were in the REC plan and that's how the CIP got built and that's why there is so much money because that's just what people thought that people wanted back then. These items listed can be changed and modified and already have been discussed by the Recreation Board and felt that some of these ideas have changed and will review these CIP items this coming year. Rachel stated most of our park improvements are happening because of grants we have received. Steve added the City gets the grants because the projects are listed in our CIP. Montiel stated resurfacing the tennis courts and replacing the nets at Bay View Park was also mentioned a lot in the survey and is not listed in the current plan or in the CIP. Boboltz felt this is more of a priority now to maintain these since we no longer have the tennis courts at McRae Park or Mich-e-ke-wis. Sundin felt it should almost be put on a scheduled basis. Shultz said he will have to get a price because he was told it can't be resurfaced and the concrete all needs to get pulled out. Barr added to take a look at the adjacent basketball courts because they are in pretty rough shape as well. People ranked the Bi-Path System number 1 as their favorite recreation facility in the whole Alpena area. Signage and maps were ranked very important in the survey for the Bi-Path as well. Denise questioned if we had maps for public use available. Steve said we have maps on our website. We used to have some sitting out here at City Hall, but no one would take any. Steve added we are looking into getting some signs that can be posted out for the public that could withstand weather conditions like the ones NOAA has out. McCumber added a lot of signs that she has seen downstate have QR codes on them. Rachel stated there are some really bad areas that need to be fixed along the bi-path and it would be a good idea to reevaluate it. Montiel added people did mention roots and a lot of bumpy spots on the trail. A lot of people also mentioned the safety concerns on the Bagley Street stretch. Steve stated Bagley is not city it's the road commission so that's the first hurdle to get into agreement with them. It sounds like the road commission is open to it but there's a whole wetland issue. It's not as easy as throwing some gravel down and paving it. There's a deep right of way which would push us way off the road and into the wetlands. There are some grants that can be investigated as far as doing an elevated path. It is on the radar, and we are looking into some options. Sundin stated there should be an amount put into the budget for the upkeep of the bi-path because it is really an essential transportation element as much as our streets are that we put in our budget every year. Montiel questioned the large amount of money from the CIP for the years 2025-2029 that was put in for the Besser Lake Shoreline Improvements. Steve stated that came from the Thunder Bay Riverscape Plan. To be able to apply for grants it needs to be

listed in the CIP. Montiel stated there is a lot going on for the marina and the items from the Marina Master Plan. The addition of trees and green space was mentioned at the marina. More picnic tables were mentioned for the Duck/Island Park as well as improvements to fishing platforms which included in the REC plan but not in the CIP. We did receive a grant from the DNR for the pavilions and bathrooms which are in progress. Montiel stated we don't want a pavilion and bathrooms at every park. We want every park to look and feel a little bit different from the others. Rachel stated one thing she noticed about LaMarre Park is people love to fish down there and eat their lunch. With the one section that is all milkweeds, maybe incorporate something educational there. Montiel stated McRae Park did not receive any funding in the budget this year. What people really called out for was upgraded playground equipment and upgraded site lighting. Community building upgrades or replacement, upgraded site amenities and just general upkeep and utilization was also called out. Rachel stated there is a lot happening at that park and a lot of opportunities. The Lion's Club has recently adopted the park. Rachel feels it should maybe be a goal to develop a McRae Park Plan to incorporate all of the different users. Sundin added McRae Park has always been a not as popular park as the others that bring in tourism and is more of a neighborhood park. The community building needs work but he doesn't feel we need to spend \$250,000 on concession stand. Kathleen said its great to get all of the little groups to pitch in and she is all about fixing up McRae Park without a lot of money invested in doing so. Boboltz stated it is really important to figure out who is in charge of what there. As a member of The Lion's Club, he stated all that has really been done so far is picking up trash around the park. He is really pleased that different groups are pitching in and helping out around the park. Rachel stated there are conversations happening and McRae Park is on her priority list. It definitely needs some TLC and a plan needs to get put together. McCumber stated there has been some improvements done and more on the radar in the future to get done so that will help with the beautification of the area. Montiel stated the playground equipment upgrades at Mich-e-ke-wis Park was called out for in the survey as well as the parking area improvements in which Montiel added some of the parking area improvements were addressed this week. General upkeep and utilization was also called out. Mich-e-ke-wis Park was ranked second for the least favorite park. Rachel said it was recently discussed about updating the Mich-e-ke-wis Park Plan. Sundin said it was previously discussed to make this park more winter friendly for activities. Rachel stated Ice Fest has been helping make this happen and although we don't get a lot of snow, just having a sledding hill was a huge success. McCumber added it would be great to have a couple different sledding hills at various parks around the City. Montiel stated shade trees were called out for North Riverfront Park. Steve stated the Lighthouse Walkway Construction was put together as part of the Thunder Bay River Scape Plan. Steve added there are a lot of non-city related things in the plan. The City doesn't own the lighthouse or any of the property leading up to it past North Riverfront Park. Steve did say he received a phone call from one of the people in the group that own the lighthouse and they want to fix up the lighthouse so he is going to be meeting with DPI to set something up. More seating and trees as well as expansion were called out in the survey for Starlite Beach. Rachel stated she received a call from a citizen that would like to see a changing area in the restroom and if anything can be done to the existing structure. McCumber stated in Traverse City as changing rooms they have open areas outside of the restrooms and it's a concrete platform with tall walls and its just walk in rooms and a bench to put your stuff on. Rachel suggested signage that shows where Starlite Beach parking is located might be helpful. Montiel stated there wasn't a lot of comments on Thomson Park but it is a very well liked park. Parking and access was called out and accessing the park safely while crossing the street. Any

upgrades for access would have to be worked out with MDOT since the road is owed by the state. Montiel stated parking lot upgrades and upgraded site amenities were mentioned for Washington Avenue Park as well as goose poop issues. There were no improvements noted in REC plan for Riverside Skate Park, Culligan Plaza or 11th Avenue Boat Launch. Montiel added there was a call out in the survey for a kayak launch as well as parking improvements. Kemp stated it would probably be a good idea to add the Bi-Path improvements in either the CIP or the REC Plan in case there are grant opportunities. Denise finished up the meeting stating over the next couple of weeks she will work on putting all of this stuff together in one document so we are not just seeing pieces of it. The goal is to have that completed by the end of October so it can be reviewed before the November 9th meeting for those that would like to attend. Denise also added that if anyone would like to give feedback to MDOT on where they would like to see trails and paved shoulders there are maps available to draw lines on.

ADJOURNMENT: *Motion made by McCumber, Seconded by Melville-Hall, to adjourn the meeting, motion carried.*

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:44 p.m. by Vice-Chair Nick Lee.